

Living with the Enemy

As businesses get used to operating in what is becoming a new-normal, some leaders are still not sure how to handle the effects of the pandemic when it comes to staff who are affected by Covid-19.

Here are some top tips:

Q: I have an employee who is quarantining or self-isolating. Do I still need to pay them?

A: If the staff member is still able to work (albeit remotely from home or on flexible hours), they should continue to be paid as normal.

Standard pay can be stopped if they are unable to work (in which case they are classed as sick and unable to perform their role). Check three points before taking any action on their pay:

- Have they been told by a medical expert to self-isolate?
- Have they had to go into quarantine?
- Is the employee abroad in an affected area and are not allowed to travel back to the UK?

If an employee **chooses** to self-isolate (so does not have a medical recommendation), then as their employer you may consider allowing them to take holiday to cover the absence.

Q: Can I insist that an employee self-isolates even if not medically advised?

A: If the staff member presents a genuine risk to the health and safety of others in the office maybe as a result of having travelled to one of the government's blacklisted countries, then they should not attend work and it may be a breach of your employer duty to permit them to come in. If, as the employer, you insist the person does not attend work, they should still receive full pay.

Q: What should I do if an employee refuses to come to work because they are worried about Coronavirus?

A: Advice from the UK government and each of the devolved administrations is currently to work from home wherever possible. However, as an employer you need to look at each instance, case by case. For employers who can easily provide homeworking it is much more likely to be reasonable to allow this. However, if a staff member unreasonably refuses to attend work this may be grounds for disciplinary action. Always check the person's contract of employment and staff handbook or consult HR.

Don't **assume** anything.

While the vaccine roll out is progressing, the pandemic affects people in different ways (both mentally and physically). Not every case at work should be treated the same. Don't assume you know the impact on staff, or you know their personal circumstances. Video calls give an insight into people's homes that we may not have had before, but out of shot, you can't tell what is happening.

For further information and assistance on updating your HR documentation or GDPR queries, please contact me at kwatkins@ihrsolutions.co.uk or call me direct on 07566 766954 or call our helpline on 01604 709509.

[Connect with me on LinkedIn](#) or visit our [website](#).

About the Author

KATHERINE WATKINS

Katherine has over 20 years' international experience working in HR, across various sectors, including financial services, insurance and regulated environments. Over the years, she has collaborated with some exceptionally talented HR professionals, with whom she has joined forces on special projects. Her network of HR professionals provides advice and training to companies and other HR teams.

In her role with UKGI Group, Katherine heads up the Human Resources Consultancy and provides objective support to firms on employment law and HR issues. She uses her extensive skills and knowledge to work with firms to help them develop strong and resilient HR strategies and establish healthy organisational cultures.

Katherine holds a degree in Business Administration and Management from the University of Northampton and a Postgraduate Diploma in Human Resource Strategies from London Metropolitan University. She is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (FCIPD).

