



**Covid-19**

**SSP Factsheet for SMEs**

# SSP advice to SME businesses about the coronavirus COVID-19

## Statutory Sick Pay where employees are required to self-isolate

New sick leave procedures and pay apply to anyone who is ill with Covid-19. It is important to remember that to prevent infection, if someone has been told to self-isolate, they will not be able to obtain a doctor's sick note for the 14 days of absence.

The government has made clear that if NHS 111 or a doctor advises an employee or worker to self-isolate, they're entitled to statutory sick pay (SSP). If the employer offers contractual sick pay, it's good practice to provide this.

### Important Information:

- SSP will now be paid immediately upon leave, provided your employee is off sick due to the Covid-19 virus.
- Covid-19 specific SSP will be government financed.
- At present your employee must be earning at least £118 per week to get SSP.
- For the 2019/20 tax year SSP is £94.25 per week. From the 2020/21 tax year it will be £95.85 per week.
- If you tell your employees not to come into work, they should be paid as normal. The exception to this is if you inform your employees not to come in because:
  - i) Your employees are showing symptoms of the Covid-19 virus.
  - ii) Your employees have come into contact with an individual who has the Covid-19 virus.
- Employees will soon be able to obtain a sick note alternative by contacting 111, should you wish to have evidence

### Additional Information:

- Should an employee unexpectedly need to care for a sick dependent, or a child, they are entitled to have a reasonable time off (beginning with 2 days). There is no statutory requirement to pay the employee during this time. Any additional time could be agreed to be taken as paid holiday or unpaid leave.
- Should an employee self-isolate to prevent infection or contamination with coronavirus disease, in accordance with guidance published by Public Health Northern Ireland, are unable to work for that reason will be entitled to SSP.

In other words, this extends the current entitlement to SSP to those employees who are self-isolating for 7 days due in accordance with Public Health advice to having a fever and/or new persistent cough.

## Certifying absence from work

By law, medical evidence is not required for the first 7 days of sickness. After 7 days, it is for the employer to determine what evidence they require, if any, from the employee. This does not need to be fit note (Med 3 form) issued by a GP or other doctor.

Your employee will be advised to isolate themselves and not to work in contact with other people by NHS 111 or PHE if they are a carrier of, or have been in contact with, an infectious or contagious disease, such as COVID-19.

We strongly suggest that you use their discretion around the need for medical evidence for a period of absence where an employee is advised to stay at home due to suspected COVID-19, in accordance with the public health advice being issued by the government.

## **Additional Information**

Should you require any additional information on how to handle or treat certain situations due to the Covid-19 virus, please contact our offices and speak to a member of our team.