New Policies Surrounding Returning To Work Safely, Offering Covid-19 Testing To Employees

Many businesses are keen to find efficient solutions to protect their staff returning and travelling to and from the office, but many of them are unclear about how best to integrate a Covid-19 testing service into their business or how to navigate the changing laws and regulations.

It's important businesses find reliable, knowledgeable, accessible, and clinically robust testing partner that will ensure staff have access to excellent testing services as and when needed.

As we go back to a 'new normal' world of work, there are some key areas HR and business leaders need to be mindful of.

Personal Rights - Can Businesses Enforce Vaccines?

Most will be in agreement that the vaccine can help protect the health of employees personally and the wider teams within shared working spaces.

Of course, businesses and employees want to go back to work and into a safe environment, but mandating vaccines are not going to be popular for many or possible for all.

Legally, there are no statutory provisions that could force employees to become vaccinated. Any medical treatments such as a vaccination, requires an individual's informed and voluntary consent.

There are also individuals that may claim anti-vaccination positions due to personal beliefs or health claims and be further protected by Human Rights, Equality Act 2010 and Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

However, employers still have a duty of care to staff. The wellbeing of British workers can't be overlooked by businesses in this difficult environment.

Vaccinated Staff - Can They Still Get And Spread The Infection?

Whilst the vaccine may protect staff from getting severe illness from Covid-19, it does not protect them from not getting it at all. This also means they can still pass the infection on to others.

As a result, it is vital to still make sure we protect others who may not have had the vaccine or cannot have it. Make sure they still continue to follow hand hygiene, face-covering, and social distancing measures even after you've had the vaccine and encourage employees to take regular tests to monitor infections rates.

Health & Safety Policies - How Will Covid-19 Safety Measures Be Managed In Offices?

With the continually changing workplace landscape it's a good idea for businesses to update, carry out and monitor risk assessments (as obliged under Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005).

The purpose of these assessments is to identify health and safety risks within the workplace and then take the necessary steps to remove or minimise such risks as identified. With or without a vaccine, the health of staff always needs to be monitored/updated.

Regarding the increased risk of Covid-19 and the option of taking regular tests, a reasonable step for an employer to take in minimising the risks, would be to encourage staff through incentives and education, to make the most of testing kits, rather than imposing ultimatums on vaccinations.

Communication And Transparency - In A Quickly Changing Environment How Can Businesses Quickly Adapt?

Giving regular updates and being open about business decisions can help your team understand what to expect and builds trust.

If there needs to be a change in policy due to new risk assessments, be realistic about what you are expecting of employees. Changes, if not managed well, can cause massive anxiety with employees, so be sure to discuss any new expectations with staff members directly. Have regular check-ins to make sure they understand the benefits and consequences and look for ways to streamline any transitions if possible.

Ongoing health and wellbeing management and support needs to be born from transparency and collaboration between staff and employers. Develop long-term, meaningful health and wellbeing packages, through membership packages and lunch and learn sessions to better support the individuals and business as a whole.

What Testing Is Available?

- **Lateral Flow Tests**

Lateral flow tests help you to efficiently detect and contain coronavirus within your workforce. You can ensure that your employees are safe in the office and give them peace of mind when returning to work.

Tests can produce results within 20 minutes and accurately confirm the presence or absence of Covid-19. Employees can be tested prior to coming into work and on a recurring basis, to suit your schedule.

LFD tests can be used for Return to the UK testing, for any employee population that is travelling, through the use of the virtual consultation with a professional Health Advisor. Some countries allow a negative LFD test result to gain entry.

- **PCR And Travel Tests**

PCR testing can be used for travel purposes (Fit-to-Fly, Test to Release and Day 2 and 8 testing) to ensure your employee population is able to travel. Results are available within 24 hours (from receipt of sample at the lab). For businesses, Covid-19 testing is available as part of a recurrent testing plan or on a one-off basis, to help keep employees safe.

- **Employee Health Check**

Health Checks allow employees to better understand their health and how to manage and improve it. The Health Check includes: an extended panel of blood tests, mental health screening, vitals check, post-Covid check and a management plan tailored specifically to the patient's results.

The purpose of health checks is to gain a thorough medical understanding of an individual with the aim to create a robust management plan so the person can lead a healthier life. Ultimately, this can result in less sick days across your workforce, allowing your company to become more productive and profitable.

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