



## Ready to Return?

The Government may not yet have revealed its lockdown release date, but many organisations are already in recovery mode and thinking through whether they need an office at all, which staff will return if any, when, where and how.

Many employees will also be forming their own views on what's best for them. For those who have been arguing for years that they can be productive from home, and are now saving a fortune in petrol and time without a commute, the appeal of an office may feel very distant. But for those shielding or with a vulnerable family member, returning to an office may well be a source of intense fear.

The challenge for those with responsibility for people and managing talent is meeting competing needs and allowing a staged, safe return for those that need an office base.

In readiness, here's some considerations teams might want on their discussion list:

- What physical materials are needed – protective screens at reception, more hand sanitisers, wipes on every desk, spaced desks, temperature screening...what needs to be ordered now?
- What additional services are needed – extra cleaning, a deep clean before the office reopens (is there an opportunity for repairs and redecoration during this time), additional security? More regular cleaning throughout the day around higher risk areas,
- Who can't return to work, who has to in order to fulfil their job description, who wants to and who doesn't? What happens when someone doesn't fall neatly into a category, say if they are fearful of returning to work, but can't do their duties without doing so?
- How will desks be organised. Is there a need to reconfigure office based to ensure a 2 metre gap. Will protective screens be required between staff?. Will I need to fit a protective screen at reception or issue guests with masks and gloves?
- If there's a phased return to the office, what will be a fair selection process?
- What's the plan if another lockdown happens? What would we have done differently the first time around if we'd had more notice and what lessons did we learn from that experience?

- How are high traffic areas such as communal kitchens or toilets going to be managed? What's the process, and how can we ensure everyone follows it. Is there a clear requirement in your employee terms if they don't follow health and safety guidance?
- Can your induction process be adapted for returning staff? Treating it as their first day back, with new procedures to learn?
- What's the organisational view on travel outside the office? To community group meetings, business networking, training and conferences? What about getting groups of people together; say customer consultation events or even resident scrutiny panel meetings.
- The ema team is ready placed to support clients with their planning. Please email Anne Elliott on [anne.elliott@emaconsultancy.org.uk](mailto:anne.elliott@emaconsultancy.org.uk) for further information.