

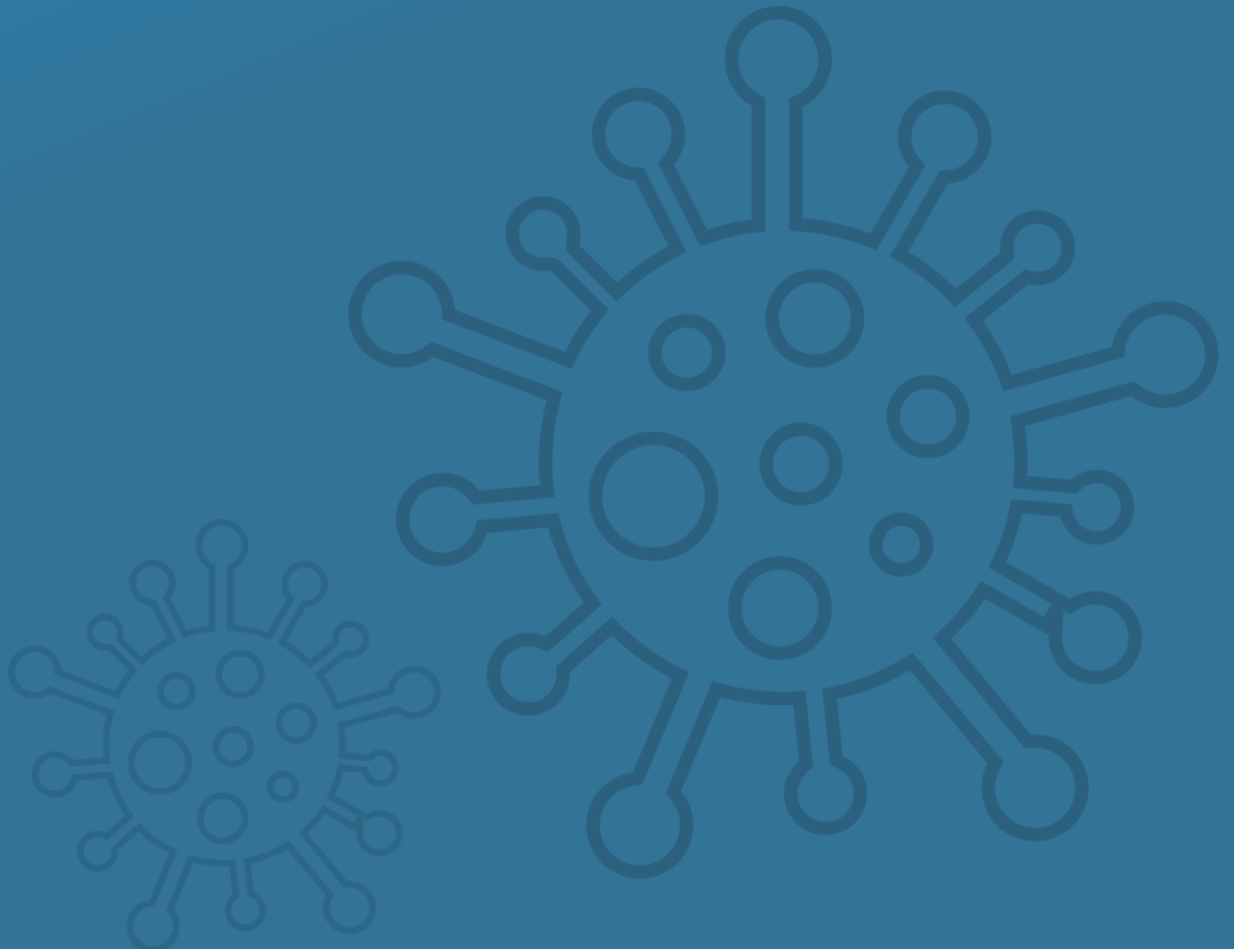


Fáilte Ireland

National Tourism Development Authority

FAQS

**HR FOR RE-OPENING – YOUR
QUESTIONS ANSWERED
WEBINAR, 3RD JUNE 2020**





1. What questions do we need to ask employees before they return to work?

The Return to Work Safely Protocol states the exact questions needed to be asked of the employee. However, for ease of follow up, an example of questions are enclosed below:

- How are you feeling?
- Do you have symptoms of cough, fever, high temperature, sore throat, runny nose, breathlessness or flu like symptoms now or in the past 14 days?
- Have you been diagnosed with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 infection in the last 14 days?
- Are you a close contact of a person who is a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19 in the past 14 days (i.e. in contact less than 2 metres for more than 15 minutes accumulative in 1 day)?
- Have you been advised by a doctor to self-isolate at this time?
- Have you been advised by a doctor to cocoon at this time?
- Are you fit to return to work, if you have previously been certified unfit by your Doctor? (Please produce 'Return to Work Cert' for your HR file, if previously certified unfit)
- Is there anything the Company can do to help or support you at this time?
- Please provide details below of any other circumstances relating to COVID-19, not included in the above, which may need to be considered to allow your safe return to work.
- Any other comments

See suggested Template for Mandatory Pre-Return to Work Form on our HR for Reopening Business Supports page: <https://covid19.failteireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/May27Covid-19-Pre-return-to-Work-Form.pdf>

2. The Return to Work Safely Protocol states that we must provide induction training to our staff, what is the most effective and safe way to do this?

The Government guidelines confirm that training should at a minimum include:

- The latest up to-date advice and guidance on public health
- What a worker should do if they develop symptoms of Covid-19
- Details of how the workplace is organised to address the risk from Covid-19
- An outline of the Covid-19 response plan
- Identification of points of contact from the employer and the workers
- Any other sector specific advice that is relevant.

These are the measures that you will have identified when you did your risk assessment in order to proceed with training employees in relation to Covid-19



2. The Return to Work Safely Protocol states that we must provide induction training to our staff, what is the most effective and safe way to do this? (cont'd.)

In order to complete the training to the standard required it does require the Company to have in place certain items such as social distancing measures, preventative control measures, PPE (if applicable to your business), and certain other HR elements as indicated in the Protocol.

When you have your preventative measures in place the next step is to decide how to roll out training. If you have the manpower and time in order to get a presentation ready and organise your team for on-site training (completed via social distancing), then this may be the most cost-effective way for your business. Alternatively, plan a remote learning webinar option

Key to all training is having a record of the training delivered, to whom and on which date, time and you should also include the content record of what was delivered. It will also be important that your staff verify they have attended, completed and understood the requirements of them. A good suggestion might be to provide them with a handy training tips reminder guide.

See www.hsa.ie for Induction training checklist: https://www.hsa.ie/eng/topics/covid-19/return_to_work_safely_templates_and_checklists/employers_checklist_no3_induction1.pdf

3. Do we need to prepare new contracts for employees returning after being on lay-off?

A new contract isn't a necessity after COVID19 has ceased as the employee terms and conditions (pay/title/place of work etc.) all remain the same.

If the company has engaged in consultation to change the terms and conditions of the employee on their return from lay off, a letter on same should indicate any temporary changes, with a clear date as to when this will be reviewed.

Finally, if the employee was consulted and agreed to permanent changes to their terms and conditions such as a permanent decrease in hours or a permanent pay cut then it is advisable to issue a new contract and accompany this with a letter on same explaining the process that was engaged in for the company's future protection against a claim.



4. If a staff member returns to work, is it possible for them to go back on PUP at a later stage if we have no work for them?

We are currently awaiting a Government update in respect to the extension of both the COVID Pandemic Unemployment Payment and the Government Temporary Wage Subsidy Scheme. The COVID Pandemic Unemployment Payment was put in place until 8th June 2020, whilst the Temporary Wage Subsidy Scheme was for a period of 12 weeks from 26 March 2020, with an expected end date of 18 June 2020.

Therefore, the answer is potentially "yes", if the scheme remains in existence and is given an extension via the government and the reason for the unemployment is due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We will update this FAQ with this information once we receive it.

Its important to note that as of 5 June 2020 the government announced an [extension of the availability of the Pandemic Unemployment Payment](#) (PUP) from 9 June until Phase 5 of the Roadmap for Reopening Society and Business (currently scheduled to begin on 10 August) - therefore the answer is yes within the set timeframes if the role ceased due to COVID19.

The introduction (from Phase 3 of the Roadmap 29 June), of a two level payment structure to link the Pandemic Unemployment Payment level to prior earnings. One of the issues identified with the Pandemic Unemployment Payment is that a minority of recipients who previously only worked a small number of hours received significantly more in the Pandemic Unemployment Payment than while in employment. In order to address this issue the PUP will now be paid at two levels:

- For those whose prior employment earnings were €200 per week or higher (about 75% of recipients), the PUP rate will remain at €350 per week
- for those whose prior employment earnings were up to €199.99 per week (about 25% of recipients), the PUP rate will be €203 per week - the primary rate of payment of the Jobseeker's Benefit scheme.
- No person on the lower rate of payment will receive less on PUP than they were previously paid by their employer.

5. What well-being initiatives could I put in place for my staff to boost morale and create a healthy workplace?

Improved workplace well-being can lead to sustained improvements within the workplace including increased creativity, employee loyalty, greater productivity and better overall customer satisfaction.

In light of this, many employers are now concentrating on workplace well-being initiatives and have achieved considerable improvements from doing so. Ensuring wellbeing is inherent in the workplace will give rise to benefits such as retention of healthy happy employees, decreased rates of illness/injury, reduced absenteeism, increased productivity, increased morale and satisfaction. How can you introduce wellbeing into your workplace?

- **EAP:** To help support employees an Employee Assistance Programme could be offered free and confidentially to the employee. This is a service that provides advice and counselling supports to employees in times of need. EAPS are generally available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year and are accessible by phone, email and online. The service is designed to help employees with a wide range of work, family and personal issues. Topics include, but are not limited to: Relationships, Health and well-being, Debt, Disability and illness, Bereavement and loss, Stress, Elder care etc. The benefits to the employer of introducing the service are vast and overall will result in improved employee performance and motivation. Staff will feel valued, making an EAP available to staff results in enhanced employee retention with lessened employee grievances. It can increase cost and time savings through reduced absenteeism and presentism. Employers will also reap the rewards of a happier, healthier and more productive workforce. Fáilte Ireland currently have a range of well-being supports available for Tourism and Hospitality Businesses to offer their staff. For further information and to access these supports for your business team visit <https://covid19.failteireland.ie/business-supports/employee-wellbeing/>
- **Information:** According to the findings by the Nutrition and Health Foundation (NHF), many of Ireland's workers want to become healthier and would like to see their employers playing a role in this. Provide information on general wellness ideas i.e. group walks after work, charity events. e.g. the Pieta House Darkness into Light initiative, nutritional ideas, following Operation Transformation etc. when circumstances permit.
- **Communication:** Meet with employees on a regular basis (adhering to social distancing) one to one to discuss performance and goals. Have brainstorming sessions with your team for improving happiness and well-being at work.
- **Culture:** Create an open environment for employees to learn about their own well-being and share ideas with their colleagues.
- **Identify and Assess:** Review the organisational systems e.g. material conditions, work, productivity, income levels, stability etc. Understand that these elements intertwine with employees' well-being on factors such as autonomy, competence, feeling safe and secure, being connected with others to create happiness at work.

5. What well-being initiatives could I put in place for my staff to boost morale and create a healthy workplace? (contd)

- **Training:** Provide training on a number of topics to help reduce stress or to create awareness; time management, well-being and mental health awareness, dignity and respect etc.
- Fáilte Ireland currently have available free online training for Tourism and Hospitality businesses to provide to their staff in a range of topics from F&B Operations, to Compliance training and some management programmes, with Service Excellence being added shortly and a new online COVID 19 Infection Control Programme to be made available from Late June. To register your business to access these supports, logon to the Fáilte Ireland [Trade Portal](#), and [register your business](#) to access our Suite of Tourism & Hospitality eLearning [courses](#) for your staff.

6. Who is best placed to take on the role of worker representative in my Company?

According to the Covid-19 Specific National Protocol for Employers and Workers an employer must appoint at least one Covid-19 lead worker representative to work alongside the employer to implement Covid-19 preventative measures and monitor adherence to these measures to prevent and protect against the spread of the virus.

Ideally it will be a person within the workplace who is willing to take the responsibility of such a task. Many companies are experiencing circumstances whereby there are no employees willing to take on such an onerous role.

If your business is in the position whereby there are a few interested parties in the role, the Company should ask for a submission of interest so that all interested parties can apply, so that a fair process is invoked. You can do this via a memo so that all employees are included in the communications. If there are a number of candidates interested in the role, you may consider forming a committee whereby the role is shared. This has the benefit of ensuring that a representative is available at all times when other committee members are on annual leave, on sick leave etc.

Alternatively, if your business is struggling to appoint a worker representative at the moment, you may need to sit and discuss with Management regarding who can take up the role alongside their existing responsibilities, if there isn't a demand for, or interest in the role. For Worker Representative Role Checklists and templates:

https://www.hsa.ie/eng/topics/covid-19/return_to_work_safely_templates_and_checklists/worker_representative_checklist_no_71.pdf



7. How many hours per week would this role take up?

The Return to Work Safely Protocol doesn't state this but this will be entirely dependent on the size of your business and how front/customer facing the business is. Realistically for the first few weeks before opening or when trying to implement to Return to Work Safely Protocol it may take an hour or so each week to discuss with Management and get a plan in place. After the Protocol has been implemented it may be an hour a month (or less) to meet Management to discuss updates, suggestions for improvements, feedback from employees etc.

8. What type of training should they receive for this role?

They ideally should be supplied with training from an experienced training provider with a background in Health and Safety. The type of content would cover such aspects such as:

- Health & Safety Legislation
- New COVID-19 Legislation
- COVID-19 Overview
- Role of the Covid-19 Lead Representative
- Defending against spread of COVID-19
- Managing workforce safety
- Safely maintaining & adapting the premises
- Communications to employees and customers
- Risk Assessment and Management
- Checklist for the lead worker representative

There are many providers of Health and Safety delivering Worker Representative training you can consider if you wish.

9. We need to make staff redundant but can't afford to pay out statutory entitlements, what financial support is available from Government?

There is currently limited financial support from the Government.

There is a scheme called the Social Insurance Fund (SIF) available, but this is only guaranteed when the insolvency is formal, namely when the company has been formally wound up at the courts. An employer is considered insolvent if the company went bankrupt, has been put under administration/liquidated, filed for insolvency (either in Ireland or in another EU Member State) or is legally administered because of the death of the entrepreneur. Examinership and winding up of partnerships are excluded. In the event of employer insolvency, affected employees are paid statutory minimum payments - statutory redundancy (if applicable), unpaid wages - through the government's Social Insurance Fund (SIF), which is administered by the Department of Social Protection. To apply for support, employees have to complete the relevant forms and submit them to the insolvency administrator who checks them and confirms them at the guarantee fund, the SIF. The SIF pays the claims to the insolvency administrator who forwards them to the employees after deducting taxes and similar. The insolvency administrator is also responsible to answer employees' questions regarding the extent of the claims.



9. We need to make staff redundant but can't afford to pay out statutory entitlements, what financial support is available from Government? (Contd.)

If you as an employer are unable to pay the redundancy lump sum but are not insolvent, the amount paid by the Department on behalf of the employer is recorded as a debt to the SIF. If the Department believes that an employer had the capacity to pay but did not, they were designated as 'defaulters' and 100% of the debt was recoverable. No interest or charges are applied to employer debts. The Department seeks to recover the payments made under the schemes from the relevant employers. The employer would be required to include a letter with the form from an accountant or solicitor stating that the employer is unable to pay the redundancy lump sum and is accepting liability for 100% of the lump sum owing to the Social Insurance Fund. Documentary evidence such as audited accounts should also be included.

Limited information is available at the below links:

<https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/observatories/emcc/erm/support-instrument/social-insurance-fund-sif>

<https://www.audit.gov.ie/en/Find-Report/Publications/2015/Chapter-18-Management-of-Redundancy-and-Insolvency-Scheme-Debts.pdf>