

## Employment – 20:20 vision

Providing clarity and insight on employment law matters

### How to practise safe working in labs and research facilities



Life sciences companies are at the forefront of this country's response to the Coronavirus Pandemic. R&D facilities have been re-purposed to create a vaccine to prevent the ongoing and devastating loss of life caused by this virus and to enable society to return to some sense of normality. This critical work is creating high risk work environments and yet employees continue to be committed, despite the great personal risks they face. Now more than ever, it is crucial that employers in this sector do, and are seen to be doing, the right thing by their people. To help these employers meet their legal and moral responsibility to protect employees from risk to their health and safety, we have distilled the Government's guidance on working safely in labs and research facilities to some key dos and don'ts.

#### DOs

- ✓ Do carry out an assessment of the risks of Covid-19 in your facility in consultation with the health and safety representative (either a member of a recognised trade union or a representative chosen by the employees) and ensure it is shared with your employees
- ✓ Do disinfect all surfaces and equipment regularly and minimise the need for employees to share these
- ✓ Do practise social distancing wherever possible and where this is not possible due to the layout of a lab or research facility, take steps to reduce the risks of close contact by working back to back, using screens/barriers to separate individuals and using fixed teams to limit the number of people employees come into contact with
- ✓ Do stagger departure and arrival times to avoid overcrowding at entry points and lifts
- ✓ Do ensure you have enough Personal Protective Equipment to allow employees who require it to do their job
- ✓ Do remind employees of the importance of personal hygiene - washing hands regularly and disposing of used tissues

## DOs

- ✓ Do provide additional parking and bike racks where possible to enable employees to avoid public transport. Consider speaking to the landlord to facilitate this, particularly where R&D facilities or labs are situated on science parks
- ✓ Do remove access controls on low category labs so that employees do not have to use access cards
- ✓ Do clearly display your revised practises and protocols around the facility
- ✓ Do make adjustments to items coming in and out of your facility. Consider reducing frequency of deliveries, having single workers load or unload vehicles where safe and encouraging drivers to stay in their vehicles

## DON'Ts

- ✗ Don't require people who can work from home to come into work. Ensure you have the minimum number of people needed on-site to operate safely and effectively
- ✗ Don't let employees take lab clothes and equipment home, wash this on site
- ✗ Don't overcrowd labs, use fixed teams or adjust booking processes to reduce the number of people in a lab at the same time
- ✗ Don't encourage direct contact between employees. Introduce processes for employees to avoid passing things to each other for example a put down, pick up method
- ✗ Don't ignore the continuing impact this may have on the mental health and wellbeing of your employees

We have a dedicated Covid-19 team of employment lawyers keeping up to date on the latest developments and who are available to answer any questions you may have. You can find more information [here](#).

Please do get in touch with Anne Pritam, Natalie Edwards or your usual Stephenson Harwood contact.

In the meantime, we hope that you, your families, and loved ones stay healthy and safe at this difficult time.



**Anne Pritam**

Partner

T: +44 20 7809 2925

Email: [Anne](#)



**Natalie Edwards**

Associate

T: +44 20 7809 2510

Email: [Natalie](#)