



Covid 19 Support

Your rights as an employee - furlough, state help, sick pay, childcare and more

With many likely to have to take time off work due to sickness, self-isolation or caring for loved ones, or even losing their jobs, it's vital to understand your rights as an employee. Here's what help's available...

- **State will pay 80% of your salary, up to £2,500/month.** This is officially called the Coronavirus Job Retention scheme, and it allows employers to put staff who can't work on 'furlough' – ie, on hold – and the Government will cover their salary. Think of this like a job being put on standby. The idea is you go into sleeper mode during the crisis, and then when it's over, they can instantly restart things and get the economy running again.
- **Your employer can choose to 'top up' the Government grant.** It can pay your full salary while you're furloughed – but it's not obliged to do this. And indeed, many won't have the funds to be able to do this.
- **It's up to your employer to decide and define who is furloughed.** It could be because you've no work to do, but it can also because you have to be home to look after children or you're self-isolating. The key to this is the state is looking to support people, so this isn't about loopholes to catch people out, it's about a broad sweep to gather people in.
- **You'll still need to pay tax and national insurance contributions on this wage.** And while you're on furlough, you'll still have the same rights as you did when you were employed – including any entitlement to statutory sick pay or maternity pay, as well as redundancy payments.

Lost your job due to coronavirus, or were in process of changing job? Furlough may still be available - but it's up to your old employer

Before the furlough support was announced, many people were laid off by panicking firms. And then there were some unlucky people who resigned one job to go to another, but who were then informed that their new job was delayed or didn't exist.

We've had it confirmed that in either of these scenarios, you could be eligible for furlough, but only if your old employer agrees to take you back on to its payroll AND you were on its payroll on 28 February. Sadly, there are no guarantees that you'll be offered furlough retrospectively, but speak to your old employer anyway and ask it to help you.

If you're an employer, we'd urge all employers to do what you can – you're not playing fast and loose doing this, you're doing what's intended.

You're entitled to statutory sick pay from day one

The NHS is asking anyone with a high temperature or cough – or living with someone with a high temperature or cough – to 'self-isolate'. This involves staying indoors and avoiding contact with other people, in some cases for up to 14 days.

If you need to take time off work due to becoming unwell from coronavirus, you'll be entitled to your usual sick leave and sick pay.

If you're self-isolating on Government advice, and would usually qualify for it, you should be entitled to statutory sick pay – though employment body the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) says it's "good practice" for your employer to pay your usual sick pay as outlined in your contract.

Statutory sick pay currently stands at £94.25 a week – you must be employed and earn an average of at least £118 a week to be entitled to it (see [full eligibility criteria](#)).

The Government has confirmed that statutory sick pay is now payable from day one, not day four. Here's what we know so far about the rule change:

- **It applies retrospectively from Friday 13 March.** The Government has introduced emergency legislation for this, which passed through the House of Lords on 25 March and is now law.

- **The extension in statutory sick pay relates to those self-isolating due to coronavirus.** If you are off sick for any other reason, standard rules apply and statutory sick pay will kick in from day four, not day one.
- **You must be self-isolating for an official reason.** These are if you have coronavirus or if you or someone in your household has coronavirus symptoms, or if you've been told to self-isolate by a doctor or NHS 111.

Employers should also be flexible about requiring evidence for sick leave from employees, for example if you're unable to provide a doctor's note due to being in self-isolation.

If you're not unwell or in quarantine but your employer asks you not to come to work – for example, because you've recently been abroad to an affected area – you should receive your full pay.

For full help on your employment rights during the coronavirus outbreak, see the ACAS website.