

This [webinar](#) features Louise Ward, the Health, Safety and Environment Director of Siemens Mobility, and David Whincup, who leads our Labour & Employment Practice (L&E) at our London office, in conversation with Matthew Kirk, international affairs advisor.

The conversation offers many pointers to how businesses can think about getting back into operation as and when the lockdown measures are eased. The process of coming out of lockdown will contain almost as many vexing legal and practical HR issues for which there is no precedent as there were going into it and therefore in no sense is it too early to begin considering how to approach them.

Siemens Mobility has remained largely in operation through the lockdown and has therefore learned much about how to sustain its business while protecting its employees and others from the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). Louise explains what her company has done to maintain its essential public transport activities despite the real and understandable concerns of the workforce in relation to the coronavirus.

While the detailed steps each business should consider will vary with its own particular circumstances, and while there is no perfect solution, some common themes are clear: not only is this about taking care of returning staff, but also about being seen doing so in a way that leaves as little objective cause as possible for employees to fear about returning to the workplace. In addition, while urgency and government diktat left both employers and employees little room for manoeuvre on the way into lockdown and the suspension of work activities, there will be less direction and more discretion around the restarting of those activities on the way out of it, and (we anticipate) a less forgiving attitude on the part of unions and employees who will then see more options by way of challenge.

Our speakers address some HR-related issues that are concerning many employers, including:

- Is maintaining a two-metre separation an absolute rule in the workplace, or are there other mitigating steps you can take?
- What practical steps can you take to facilitate the continuation of social distancing in your premises?
- How do you engage and prepare employees for their return?
- Can employers compel employees to come back work in certain conditions? What if they refuse for fear of infection?
- What if employees have to travel in a vehicle together?
- Should employers make temperature testing a condition of return, and what data privacy issues does this create?
- How important to your legal position is compliance with government guidance?

Many other HR-related decisions will need to be made by employers around the ramping back up or restarting of their operations. Will they need everyone back immediately, or at all? How are you going to determine who comes off furlough and when? Will compulsory home working have transformed employee or corporate attitudes to flexible working? Will you look again at company cars or car allowances as a means of mitigating your employees' exposure to public transport?

Our Labour & Employment team has been dealing with all these questions, and many similar, and would be happy to share that insight and experience with you.

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