



Jon Wilby - head of  
Litigation Department

## *It's not too late to plan for swine flu absenteeism*

With Department of Health (DoH) officials predicting a 'worst case' scenario of 30% of the population succumbing to swine flu, a local solicitor is advising businesses to consider how the pandemic may affect their ability to meet their responsibilities.

"No one is suggesting that one worker in three will be off work at the same time, but this is nonetheless a serious situation that we must all be aware of," says Jon Wilby. "The government is even considering introducing 14-day self-certified sick leave without a doctor's note, so you could be without key members of staff for a considerable period."

Businesses can do much to soften the impact, however. "You should certainly look closely at every part of your business to identify which are the key areas that may need extra support," Jon continues. "In addition, you should work out which of your staff are the most indispensable over the months to come. Then consider carefully how you can ensure that these areas are covered should the worst happen, and you find you are several staff down at the same time. This might include training people how to cover for one another's jobs."

Jon adds: "Don't forget about your suppliers. If they suddenly cannot fulfil your orders, this too will impact on your clients and customers and possibly cause you to fail to meet your own contractual obligations. Ask them how they are planning to cope."

Jon also recommends that businesses take the opportunity to consider how to make more of their investments in Information Technology. "It may be quite straightforward to enable people to start teleworking from home more and using mobile devices so that they don't need to come into the office," he continues.

Band Hatton<sup>LLP</sup> is very experienced in helping businesses negotiate with clients and customers should they be unable to deliver on their promises. As Jon Wilby says, "Proper preparation should help keep your customers happy. But if you feel that you are in danger of reneging on a contract through no fault of your own, we can certainly help. Call our commercial team on 024 7663 2121 for a preliminary discussion."