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**COVID-19 - Pay Policy Q & A**  
**Last updated on 6th April 2020**

**Q1. Will the Council continue to pay staff who are ‘vulnerable’ or ‘shielding’ and sent home but cannot work due to nature of their role (e.g. catering staff)?**

A. The government issued Guidance on social distancing for everyone in UK on 16th March. This guidance strongly advised people with a range of pre-existing health conditions to socially isolate immediately. Further information about those conditions is available [here](#).

The Council is committed to supporting our staff in this position and has made arrangements for those who can work from home to do so with immediate effect. Further guidance for management arrangements for these colleagues will be issued shortly.

We know that it is not possible for all staff to work from home due to the nature of their roles. We will issue further guidance to managers on how to effectively support this group of staff shortly.

*Current position - Staff will receive **full pay** regardless of whether they are able to work from home or not.*

**Q2. I live with someone who has been advised to ‘shield’ and I cannot work from home due to the nature of my role. How will my pay be affected?**

The government published [‘shielding’ advice](#) on 21st March for adults and children who are defined on medical grounds as extremely vulnerable to severe illness as a result of contracting coronavirus. Individuals with conditions listed within the guidance will be contacted directly by their GP, however, they are now strongly advised to stay at home for the next 12 weeks, and to avoid face to face contact. People who live with adults or children with these conditions are also strongly encouraged to stringently follow the social distancing methods described previously [here](#).

In consultation with Public Health colleagues the decision was made on 24th March to send home with immediate effect critical staff who live in the same household as adults or children who have received advice from their GP on ‘shielding’. This is because there is a significant increased risk of severe illness resulting from COVID-19 infection, which is likely to result in hospitalisation.

*Which people are classed as ‘extremely vulnerable’?*

People falling into this extremely vulnerable group include:

Solid organ transplant patients

People with specific cancers, including:

- People with cancer who are undergoing active chemotherapy or active radiotherapy for lung cancer
- People with cancers of the blood or bone marrow, such as leukemia, lymphoma or myeloma who are at any stage of treatment
- People having immunotherapy or other continuing antibody treatments for cancer
- People having targeted cancer treatments which can affect the immune system, such as, protein kinase inhibitors or PARP inhibitors
- People who have had bone marrow or stem cell transplants in the last 6 months, or who are still taking immunosuppression drugs

People with severe respiratory conditions including all cystic fibrosis, severe asthma and severe COPD

People with rare diseases and inborn errors of metabolism that significantly increase the risk of infections (such as SCID, homozygous sickle cell).

People on immunosuppression therapies sufficient to increase the risk of infection

Women who are pregnant with significant heart disease, congenital or acquired

Staff who live with people who have been advised to 'shield' regardless of whether they are able to work from home or not should now be at home, and their pay will consequently be unaffected for the period that 'shielding' is deemed necessary by the government. This stance will be reviewed and updated in line with developing Public Health advice.

*Current position - staff will receive **full pay** regardless of whether they are able to work from home or not.*

### **Q3. Will the Council continue to pay staff who are unable to come into work due to school closures?**

The government announced that schools will close from Friday 20th March, as well as encouraging private nurseries, colleges and independent schools to follow suit. In addition the government stated that school provision would remain open for 'key workers', children on Education, Health and Care Plans as well as vulnerable children who have a social worker.

[Guidance has now been issued by the government](#) on the definition of 'key workers' and how services for children on Education, Health and Care Plans as well as vulnerable children will operate.

These arrangements are only for children who absolutely need it therefore if staff have alternative arrangements (e.g. partner at home who is not a key worker) the expectation would be that the child remains at home.

Where staff have children who will not be able to attend school and nobody available who can safely care for them then we will:

- Relax the rules around home working so that those staff who are able to can work from home and look after their children. We are developing further guidance on how managers should approach managing a dispersed workforce, as well as thinking creatively about when and how employees can work. This will include being flexible about when staff work, as we know that it will be challenging for staff to juggle a standard working day and caring for children. We will continue to pay staff as usual who are in this situation.
- Where staff are unable to work from home due to the nature of their roles (e.g. catering staff) we will continue to pay them in full too.

Current position - staff will receive **full pay** regardless of whether they are able to work from home or not.

We will continue to review this situation, and may ask staff who aren't 'vulnerable' but at home to do some other duties. These plans are currently being developed, but caring responsibilities will be considered when identifying staff who could be temporarily redeployed.

Planning for temporary redeployment will be based on service need, appropriate skills matching, and availability of training.

#### **Q4. What are the arrangements for COVID-19 sick pay?**

A. Employees who report that they have become ill with COVID-19 will be paid as sick pay. If as an impact of staff becoming ill with COVID 19 will go on half or sick pay as a result, full sick pay will be extended for the period of sickness.

To ensure that the Council is able to monitor the numbers of available staff and provide returns on absence levels; staff should contact their line manager to inform them that they are unwell, even if they are already at home (e.g. due to being classed as "vulnerable") as managers will need to record on Mi Team that they are ill with COVID-19 symptoms.

Where staff are self-isolating due to family sickness with COVID-19 then they should also contact their manager to advise them and will receive paid special leave for that period.

In both scenarios managers should ensure that they record the details in SAP as follows, so that accurate workforce planning is possible:

## **Sickness**

Staff who confirm they are absent with COVID19 should be reported through MiTeam as normal using the new reason code in the drop down menu within SAP

## **Special Leave**

Staff who are advised to self isolate but who can work from home should be reported through the MiTeam tab using the new code **8153 COVID19 Isolate WFH (P)**

Staff who are advised to self isolate but who cannot work from home should be reported through the MiTeam tab using the new code **8154 COVID19 Isolate NWFH (P)**

### **Q5. Will COVID-19 sickness be counted towards triggers?**

A. No, COVID-19 sickness absence will not be counted towards sickness triggers.

### **Q6. How will the Council approach pay for casual staff impacted by COVID-19?**

A. Most casual staff work in outward facing roles. Where the Council has sent home casual staff to support the government policy of social isolation and social distancing, then they should receive their normal pay based on an average of 13 weeks, which is the current basis for calculating holiday pay. From April the reference period for holiday pay will change to 52 weeks, therefore, pay from this date will be based on a 52 week average.

The Council will continue to explore opportunities for temporary redeployment for casual staff who are able to work and not considered to be vulnerable due to underlying health conditions.

Some casual workers may still be called on to work to support priority service delivery and will be paid as normal. Usually if they are unable to attend a shift due to sickness they would not be entitled to sick pay, however, if they are unable to attend because they have COVID-19 symptoms 'normal' (average) pay would be provided based on the explanation above.