



From mountain to sea

# **COVID-19 (Coronavirus): Guidance and Information for Managers and Employees**

Living with COVID -19 .....	2
Test and Protect .....	2
Recording of COVID Related Absence .....	3
Health & Wellbeing .....	5
Vaccination.....	5
Distance Aware Scheme .....	6
Long COVID Support.....	6
Annual Leave .....	6
Travel & Subsistence .....	6
WorkSTYLE.....	7

## **Living with COVID -19**

From March 2022 most of the remaining legal requirements for Coronavirus regulations were removed, specifically the:

- requirement to collect and share visitor information
- requirement to have regard to Scottish Government guidance about minimising risk of exposure to coronavirus on its premises
- requirement to take reasonably practicable measures, as set out in the guidance, to minimise incidence and spread of coronavirus

Key changes made from the 18 April 2022 included:

- Wearing of face coverings become guidance on public transport and in indoor settings such as workplaces or shops.
- The request for everyone to regularly test if they have no symptoms will end. (Council facilitated community testing will end in line with this.)
- The remaining requirement to wear face coverings in schools (where they still exist) are to be moved to guidance.

## **Test and Protect**

Most people no longer need to take a coronavirus test and should follow the [Stay at Home](#) guidance if unwell. Testing is still available to [specific groups](#).

Free lateral flow devices (LFDs) for the purposes of twice weekly routine testing are no longer available for the general population given the changing advice, but will continue to be free for any purpose for which testing continues to be advised – for clinical care, for health and social care workers and for people visiting vulnerable individuals in care homes or hospitals

You can order free tests if:

- you work in the NHS health or social care settings
- you have a health condition which means [you're eligible for new coronavirus treatments](#)
- you're going into hospital for surgery or a procedure
- you're visiting a hospital or care home
- you're an unpaid carer
- you're applying for the [self-isolation support grant](#)

Health and Social Care staff, who are eligible, will continue with twice weekly asymptomatic LFD testing. Test results should be reported on the NSS testing portal.

Health and Social Care staff who work with patients and service users in a face-to face setting, who have symptoms of a respiratory infection and a high temperature or do not feel well enough to attend work, are advised to take a lateral flow device (LFD) test as soon as they feel unwell. The result of the LFD test should be reported to their line

manager. If the LFD test result is negative, they can attend work if they are clinically well enough to do so and they do not have a high temperature. Further specific guidance and advice for HSCP staff can be found [here](#).

## **Symptoms**

Public Health advice for people who feel unwell, have symptoms of a respiratory infection such as coronavirus and have a high temperature or do not feel well enough to go to work or carry out normal activities is [Stay at Home](#) and avoid contact with other people to reduce the risk of infecting others.

Symptoms of coronavirus, flu and common respiratory infections include:

- continuous cough
- high temperature, fever or chills
- loss of, or change in, your normal sense of taste or smell
- shortness of breath
- unexplained tiredness, lack of energy
- muscle aches or pains that are not due to exercise
- not wanting to eat or not feeling hungry
- headache that's unusual or longer lasting than usual
- sore throat, stuffy or runny nose
- diarrhoea
- feeling sick or being sick

## **Recording of COVID Related Absence**

Employees who are affected by COVID, but continue to work from home, should log hours as normal and maintain contact with line manager. All COVID-19 absences where the employee is unfit to work or is unable to work from home should be recorded as sickness absence for the reason of 'Covid'.

Where an employee is currently on Paid Special Leave (PSL) due to Covid, if their absence extends beyond 1 July 2022 the PSL period should be ended and their continuing absence recorded through the normal sickness absence procedure as 'Covid' via askHR/ People Manager. The manager should also advise the employee of the change in status of their absence.

## **NHS Isolation Notes**

When an employee is affected by COVID and remains unfit to work after 7 days of self-certification an [NHS isolation note](#) will be required to be submitted covering the period from the first day of illness to day 10 of the absence **or** a GP's certificate from day 8

until fit to return to work. All absence extending beyond 10 days will require to be covered by a GP's certificate.

**Example:**  
 On 1<sup>st</sup> August, John is feeling unwell with Covid-related symptoms and is unable to work from home. He remains unwell up until 15<sup>th</sup> August and returns to work on 16<sup>th</sup> August.

**Timescales & Actions Required**

Period	Recording of Sickness Absence
1 <sup>st</sup> to 7 <sup>th</sup> August	John's period of absence is covered by self-certification
8 <sup>th</sup> to 10 <sup>th</sup> August	John should obtain (i) an isolation note with a start date of 1 <sup>st</sup> August covering the period up to 10 <sup>th</sup> August or (ii) a Fit Note from their GP and submit this to his line manager.  Note: the line manager should forward the isolation note/fit note to Payroll.
10 <sup>th</sup> to 15 <sup>th</sup> August	John should obtain a Fit Note from his GP for this period of absence and submit this to his line manager.  Note: the line manager should forward the fit note to Payroll

On his return to work on 16<sup>th</sup> August, John should input his absence end date of 15<sup>th</sup> August into ESS to end and self-certify his absence, **or** this can be done on his behalf by his line manager or relevant administrative staff.

There is an exception to this, for front line **Health & Social Care employees required to undertake regular testing for Covid, as part of their role**. When testing positive, these employee absences should be recorded as paid special leave (PSL) for up to a maximum of 10 calendar days.

For these specific employees in the Health & Social Care Partnership:  
 Record absence as Covid Self isolating (Unable to WFH) PSL via People Manager /Paid Special Leave Form. Close PSL leave period once recovered, minimum of stay at home for 5 days to maximum 10 days.  
 After day 10 and still unwell, close the PSL period and record the continuing absence through the normal sickness absence procedure as 'Covid' via askHR / People Manager.

The Council also has a legal duty to report any cases where an employee has been diagnosed with Covid-19 that may be work related.

Covid 19 cases need **only** be recorded in the Corporate Accident and incident reporting database where there has been incidental exposure to the virus. An example of incidental exposure would include providing care for a resident of a care home who is known to have Covid-19. It does **not** include cases where Covid-19 is potentially

transmitted through general transmission within the workplace either from another employee or a member of the public.

Link to [Corporate Accident Reporting Database](#)

## **Health & Wellbeing**

COVID-19 is still a public health risk. You can catch it even if you've been vaccinated or had it before.

By continuing to care for ourselves and others, we can help slow down the spread of the virus, enable workplaces to operate safely and reduce pressure on health services.

## **Vaccination**

To help keep yourself and others safe:

- [get the vaccine](#) or [the vaccine booster](#)

Further Coronavirus (COVID -19) guidance from NHS Scotland and Scottish Government, including protective measure, how to get a test and how to self-isolate can be found at <https://www.nhsinform.scot/coronavirus>

## **COVID -19 and Vaccines in Pregnancy**

The information and advice on vaccines for COVID-19 was updated on 11 April 2022 with the following key message:

- COVID-19 vaccines are strongly recommended in pregnancy. Vaccination is the best way to protect against the known risks of COVID-19 in pregnancy for both women and babies, including admission of the woman to intensive care and premature birth of the baby.
- It is important that you are protected with all your vaccine doses to keep you and your baby safe. Don't wait until after you have given birth.
- In the UK, all adults including pregnant women are urged to book a COVID-19 booster vaccine (third dose) three months after their second dose.
- Women may wish to discuss the benefits and risks of having the vaccine with their healthcare professional and reach a joint decision based on individual circumstances.
- You should not stop breastfeeding in order to be vaccinated against COVID-19.
- Women trying to become pregnant do not need to avoid pregnancy after vaccination and there is no evidence to suggest that COVID-19 vaccines will affect fertility.
- If you are thinking of getting pregnant, the vaccine is the best way to protect yourself and your baby against the known risks of COVID-19 in pregnancy.

- You do not need to avoid pregnancy after receiving the COVID-19 vaccine  
Information on COVID -19 vaccination and pregnancy can be found [here](#).

### **Distance Aware Scheme**

The Distance Aware scheme is designed to help those worried about mixing with others as we adapt to living with COVID-19. To find out how to get a Distance Aware badge or lanyard to show others you need more space to the Scottish Government Website [here](#)

### **Long COVID Support**

Chest Heart and Stroke Scotland's provides a Long COVID Support Service - trained health professionals on the Advice Line ready to help.

Chest Heart and Stroke Scotland, have been funded by the Scottish Government to provide a service that can support people with the most common symptoms of Long Covid such as breathlessness and fatigue.

### **How CHSS can help your staff?**

**Staff can contact our Long Covid Support Service via email at [advice@chss.org.uk](mailto:advice@chss.org.uk) or call 0808 801 0899. The service gives them access to:**

- Advice Line Nurses and other health professionals who are trained in managing some of the most common Long Covid symptoms such as breathlessness and fatigue.
- Someone for them to speak to and to help them live day to day with Long Covid.
- Someone to support their wellbeing while they are off work, waiting for tests or NHS treatment.
- Someone to signpost to the latest Long Covid advice and health information.

The Advice Line provides support to help people manage their condition at home. It **does not provide medical diagnosis or treatment** and will always recommend that contact be made with a GP to confirm a diagnosis (or presumed diagnosis) of Long Covid.

### **Annual Leave**

The UK Government advice in 2020 allowed employees in keyworker roles to carry forward unused annual leave into future leave years, as we are now 2022, the final annual leave year for this temporary agreement, any carried forward leave from 2020 must be agreed, authorised and utilised by 31 December 2022.

### **Travel and Subsistence (T&S) Claims**

The Strategic Leadership Team have agreed to extend the temporary cessation of the requirement to deduct excess commuting mileage from mileage claims to **31<sup>st</sup> October 2022**. This extension, which is effective as of 1<sup>st</sup> July 2022, is to allow for alternative options in relation to business travel to be considered.

Please note the following key points, which remain unchanged:

- The cessation applies to employees who are currently working from home and required to undertake a business journey to a location other than their normal work base.
- For mileage claims affected by the cessation, employees must enter 0 into column B.
- Employees should continue to ensure that the appropriate receipts are attached to all mileage claims.

Please also note the following additional requirement has been introduced:

- For employees living outside the Aberdeenshire Council boundaries, only mileage undertaken within Aberdeenshire or Aberdeen City can be claimed.

**Please note that where normal commuting mileage is *not* being deducted, employees must enter a '0' in the 'Normal daily commute mileage (B)' column, as illustrated below. This applies to claims being submitted via ESS or by paper form.**

Date	Total miles claimed (A) - (B)	All daily mileage (A)	Normal daily commute mileage (B)
04/09/2020	35	35	0

Guidance on using the online claim form can be found [here](#).

If you require any further information or guidance, please contact [travel@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:travel@aberdeenshire.gov.uk) in the first instance.

## **WorkSTYLE**

The recent changes to national restrictions allow us to now move forward with our plans for our future ways of working, with a particular emphasis for now on those who have perhaps been traditionally based in an office and have been working largely or exclusively from home during the pandemic.

Our experiences of the pandemic have given us a great platform to seek to find the balance between what suits our employees and the needs of the organisation – both in terms of where and when work is done. Further details information can be found on [Arcadia](#)

For those employees who are currently working from home, there is [guidance on the staff microsite](#) to help you carry out a DSE assessment for your working circumstances. Find it at the foot of the 'Other useful documents' section.

Staff maybe able to claim tax relief from HMRC for working from home on a regular basis, you can claim this if you choose to work from home. Further information and guidance on how to claim can be found on the government website [here](#).