

COVID-19 Employee Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

The following FAQs have been developed jointly between COSLA and the SJC Trade Unions (UNISON, Unite and the GMB) to help Local Government employees understand the national COVID-19 advice. This advice does not seek to replace that of your employer and you should refer to your own Councils guidance on how they are responding to Covid-19 locally. They will have clearly set out what measures they are putting in place in order to:

- I. keep employees and service users safe;
- II. follow UK and Scottish Government Advice in relation to limiting the spread of Covid-19; and
- III. keep delivering critical services to our communities.

The FAQs below deal only with matters that have been agreed nationally or where national guidance has been set out, including that from the NHS - it will signpost you to your own local authority where the issue is more appropriately addressed at local level. You will find the relevant links to all appropriate guidance and this will be updated as circumstances develop. Should you have any queries, concerns or issues you should contact your own Council's personnel helpline or Trade Union branch for advice.

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Local Government Employee FAQs

General

1. Am I a key worker?

Please see the advice from Scottish Government:

<https://news.gov.scot/news/supporting-coronavirus-key-workers>

If in any doubt if you are a key worker, please refer to your manager.

2. My colleague works for a different local authority and is being given different advice – why is this?

While this is a national emergency led by Public Health Scotland, every local authority will be following their local business continuity plans and guidance and implementing arrangements in the context of their local authority requirements, which may differ to other Local Authorities

Terms and Conditions

3. I have contracted the virus – will I be paid?

Yes, you will be paid for any period of COVID-19 related absence as advised in [SJC-61](#).

4. I have been advised to self-isolate – will I be paid?

Yes, you will be paid for any period of COVID-19 related absence as advised in [SJC-61](#).

5. I have less than 6 months' service and have a cough/fever, will I get paid?

Yes, you will be paid for any period of COVID-19 related absence as advised in [SJC-61](#).

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6. I have a casual contract, however, have worked the same regular pattern for several months. Will I be paid if my building closes and I cannot attend work?

Please discuss this with your manager. If you have worked the same pattern for a period of time and were expected to continue doing so for the foreseeable future, you should be paid for the duration of your current engagement. You should try and work from home or do alternative tasks during the engagement period where possible.

7. I am a casual worker and am symptomatic, will I get paid?

You will be paid for the duration of your current agreed working hours.

8. I work on the casual/supply list, will I get paid if my building closes?

Should a building be closed, you will be paid for the duration of your current agreed working hours. Where possible you will be expected to work from home.

9. I have been told to self-isolate as I am displaying symptoms and don't feel fit enough to work from home, but my manager has stated I will not get paid. If I am entitled to pay will it be my normal salary or statutory sick pay?

Yes, you will currently be paid for any period of COVID-19 related absence. This will be paid at your normal rate of pay.

10. My role cannot be undertaken at home and I have volunteered to help in other areas. The role that I have been asked to do during this time is at a lower grade/salary than my substantive post – what will I be paid?

Thank you for helping out. You will be paid at your normal grade/salary.

11. I was off sick, with a different illness, prior to lockdown – what happens to my sick pay now?

Normal sick pay procedures apply. Where employees are able to return to work, they should inform their employer and follow the NHS Inform advice.

12. Will I get rewarded for working additional hours to assist at this time?

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Thank you for helping, you will either be paid or can claim time back for additional hours worked as per prior agreement with your manager. discuss with your manager payment for the additional hours you have worked or agree with your manager a suitable time to take the time back.

13. I have been acting up and in receipt of additional responsibility payments – will these continue during this time?

Yes, acting up arrangements and associated payment would continue for the period agreed and you will continue to provide the higher duties, whether this is from home or working in an essential service area.

Attending Work

14. Am I an essential worker for the purpose of attending my place of work?

If your local authority has deemed, you to be an essential worker, you should attend work and local safeguards will be put in place. If you are uncertain, discuss with your manager or local HR team.

15. Can I be asked to work at a different location and if so, will I be appropriately compensated?

Yes, if you work in an essential service you may be asked to be flexible and work at a different building for a temporary period of time. Each local authority will have its own Additional Travel arrangements and you should speak to your line manager or local HR department about how this would apply in your circumstances.

16. I have a cough or fever, should I come to work?

You should stay at home. Follow the advice from [NHS Inform](#).

17. What if someone I live with has been told to self-isolate because they are symptomatic?

You should stay at home. Follow the advice from [NHS Inform](#).

18. I work in a frontline service, what should I do?

As councils, we deliver a number of frontline critical services. These need to continue to ensure vulnerable people are supported during this very difficult time. You should continue to follow the [NHS Inform](#) guidance. Where

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possible, and in line with [NHS Inform](#) guidance, we need employees in these services to continue to work and provide support. We appreciate that this will be a very difficult time for employees working in these areas and appreciate the commitment of our staff. Work will be done to identify additional support.

19. I am able to work from home, what should I do?

You should speak to your manager in the first instance, and where appropriate, arrangements will be made for you to work from home. You may be asked to return to work to assist with the provision of essential services. It is important that you ensure your manager can contact you during the period of working from home. You should also keep in regular touch with colleagues to make sure you don't become isolated.

20. What if I have an underlying condition/am recovering from treatment?

If you have an underlying health condition or weakened immune system, as per current [NHS Inform](#) guidance, you should discuss with your manager how you can achieve [social distancing](#). This might include being asked to undertake work from home or work iden. If you are unable to do your normal work from home, consider using the time for ongoing learning and development, there are lots of on-line resources available and special leave should be granted. It is important that you update your manager. Please keep up to date with the latest guidance on [NHS Inform](#).

21. I am pregnant, what should I do?

You should follow the [social distancing advice](#) and discuss with your manager how that could be achieved or whether you can work from home.

Further advice is available from [NHS Inform](#).

22. My partner is pregnant, what should I do?

Follow the advice from [NHS Inform](#).

23. I am currently well but people I live with have underlying health conditions which place them in a vulnerable group, what should I do?

Follow the advice from [NHS Inform](#) specifically on social distancing to protect yourself and members of your household.

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24. I am currently working additional hours for which I submit a timesheet. I can continue to undertake the necessary work at home if my building is closed. Do I still submit my timesheets when/if my building closes?

If your additional hours continue to be approved by your manager, then you can continue working them and submitting timesheets. You should ask your manager about the process for doing this if you are required to work from home.

25. Will absence resulting from COVID-19 count towards absence triggers?

No, COVID-19 absence will not be used for absence triggers; it will be recorded separately.

26. I do not have a diagnosed underlying health condition, however, I am undergoing tests for a condition that would fall under the classifications, what should I do?

Follow the advice from [NHS Inform](#) and discuss with your manager. You may be asked to undertake work from home where possible.

27. Where do I stand with retracting my notice and continuing to work with the Council?

This is a decision for your Service and you should speak to your manager directly. There is no legal obligation on the Council to accept the retraction of your resignation. Services may consider such requests more favourably if you work in essential services that may be facing additional pressures at this time.

28. What happens if I cannot get a GP certificate? Can I self-certificate for longer?

We recognise that GPs may not be in a position to issue medical certificates straight away. If you are absent you should complete a self-certificate as normal for the first 7 days of absence, there is also a facility to obtain an on-line certificate, to ease the workload of GPs. You will find this on NHS Inform.

29. I have heard that our local Community and Leisure Trust's facilities are closing. Why are council public offices not closing?

National guidance is that people should avoid crowded areas, large gatherings and smaller gatherings such as pubs, clubs, cinemas and gyms. There has been a very significant reduction in the number of people visiting or

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using Trust facilities so it makes sense for these facilities to close. Front line offices deliver critical services and support and these need to be kept open to maintain essential services for our communities.

30. Should I work from home?

Working from home is being promoted by the government to help support and limit social contact. Whilst working from home is an option, and one that we should be promoting for some services, we need to consider this alongside delivering frontline critical services. Employees therefore need to speak to their manager about options, which will include reference to nature of service, work needing done at any particular time and equipment available to determine the best approach. As the situation evolves, it may be that you will be required to support service delivery in a different way therefore ongoing contact with your manager is critical.

31. If I am working from home, do I need to record this?

Yes, you should record this on your usual reporting systems.

32. Given pupils are not attending school, I have no childcare, what can I do?

We appreciate that this is a difficult situation and your children need cared for, however we are also needing to try and maintain our essential services and support our community where we can. We would ask that you explore if caring responsibilities could be shared with someone in your household. We recognise that asking Grandparents would be unsuitable at this time. Any support you could provide to essential services would be appreciated and will help us support the most vulnerable in our community. Where you are unable to make alternative arrangements, you should try and continue to work from home where you can or use the opportunity for on-line learning.

If you are a key worker and do not have anyone else to look after your children childcare can be provided through your local authority – please speak to your manager or local school contact about accessing this.

33. Someone in my household has an underlying condition, should I stay home with them?

Follow the advice from [NHS Inform](#).

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34. If I have self-isolated and returned to work, should I self-isolate again if another member of my family presented symptoms?

Follow the advice from [NHS Inform](#).

35. As services work on contingency plans, can I be asked to work a different shift pattern to allow staff to be used where they are most needed?

Yes, in the current situation we will be asking staff to be as flexible as possible. Managers will try and take into account your personal circumstances when making such requests.

36. My building is closed, what's expected of me?

If you can work from home, then you should do this or please consider volunteering to assist other areas where you can. If none of this applies then currently paid special leave may apply. You may be asked to work at a different location. Please refer to the [SJC-61 letter](#).

Safety – Yours and Others (PPE / Social Distancing)

37. How do we decide who wears PPE and who doesn't?

The decision about whether PPE should be worn is based solely on the scientific evidence of the potential risk of contracting the virus for the particular task you are undertaking as directed by the [National Guidance on COVID-19](#)

This virus is not airborne it is spread by droplets which are transferred directly, through coughing or sneezing, or by ingestion through the mouth, nose or eyes. That is why the clinical guidance focuses on the importance of handwashing, not touching your face, cleaning of surfaces and distance between individuals as preventative measures. It is therefore highly unlikely that you would contract the virus from an asymptomatic person (no symptoms) who is carrying the virus and why the guidance therefore focuses on the use of PPE for symptomatic people (showing symptoms).

There are some instances in which you will have to make a self assessment of risk and you will be provided with sufficient PPE to make that judgement.

38. I am a social care worker visiting the homes of vulnerable service users. I have noticed that District Nurses are wearing PPE but I have not been provided with any. What should I do?

PPE is based on the potential risk associated with the task you are undertaking, in line with the [National Guidance on COVID-19](#), not on the job title you have or who your employer is.

Therefore where you are entering the home of someone who is symptomatic (showing symptoms) and/or are doing a task that means you may have close physical contact with an individual you should wear gloves, an apron and a mask as directed by the [National Guidance on COVID-19](#). Where there are no symptoms you may not need to wear the full level of PPE but you should at all times be led by the [National Guidance on COVID-19](#) and follow [social distancing](#) and hand washing guidelines as appropriate.

39. I have been told that I should have access to PPE but I don't – how can I access it?

Please speak to your line manager in the first instance who will be able to arrange an appropriate supply. If they cannot help please raise your concerns with your local HR department or local Trade Union branch.

40. I am a street which includes emptying bins and dog bins. I have seen an increased level of used tissues. I don't have the same PPE as other waste and bin operatives. Should I have this protection?

You should have access to gloves and hand sanitiser. Please speak to your line manager in the first instance who will be able to arrange an appropriate supply. If they cannot help please raise your concerns with your local HR department or local Trade Union branch.

41. What if maintaining social distancing is not possible in my role?

Your employer should be putting in place measures for [social distancing](#) if you are concerned it should be taking place but is not speak with your manager. You should wear PPE only as appropriate to the task you are doing in accordance with the [National Guidance on COVID-19](#) .

42. What is the difference between social distancing and shielding?

[Social distancing](#) measures are for everyone and the most important rule to follow first and foremost is to maintain wherever possible social distance.

Shielding is a measure to protect people, including children, who are extremely vulnerable to severe illness from COVID-19 because of certain underlying health conditions. Its aim is to minimise interaction between these individuals and others as per the [National Guidance on COVID-19](#) .

We should encourage and support each other to maintain these basic hygiene rules at all times.

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43. I am being asked to go into homes to provide care and the service user has family visiting who are not observing social distancing. What should I do?

You should continue to observe **social distancing** and hand washing as per the **National Guidance on COVID-19**. If you have a concern you should wear PPE appropriate to the task as per as directed by the **National Guidance on COVID-19**.

You can and should ask family members to leave the room whilst you are undertaking your task in order to observe **social distancing**. If they refuse to do so please contact your line manager.

If your manager cannot assist please raise your concerns with your local HR department or local Trade Union branch.

44. My employer has said they will adhere to social distancing but only when possible. Is this acceptable?

The **National Guidance on COVID-19** is to follow **social distancing** whenever possible. Where anyone is symptomatic (showing symptoms) they should not be present at work. Where you are delivering a service to an individual with symptoms you should wear PPE that is appropriate to the task and follow hand washing guidance.

If your employer is not adhering to **social distancing** but you believe these could be observed, you should raise with this with your line manager in the first instance. If they cannot help, please raise your concerns with your local HR department or local Trade Union branch.

Colleagues should encourage and support each other to maintain basic hygiene rules at all times.

45. I am a carer and work in a team but because I don't have a driving licence/car I have been told to travel to my place of work with my colleague, in their car, so that I can carry out my duties. This will not observe social distancing. What can I do?

Your employer should be putting in place measures to observe **social distancing**. Where you have concerns that **social distancing** measures could be put in place but are not, you should speak in the first instance to your line manager. If they cannot help, please raise your concerns with your local HR department or local Trade Union branch.

You should wear PPE only as appropriate to the task you are doing in line with the **National Guidance on COVID-19**.

Colleagues should encourage and support each other to maintain basic hygiene rules at all times.

46. I am a refuse collector and there are a number of us in the refuse truck. This is not observing social distancing. What can I do?

Your employer should be doing everything possible to observe **social distancing**. Where you have concerns that **social distancing** measures could be put in place but are not you should speak in the first instance to your line manager. If they cannot help, please raise your concerns with your local HR department or local Trade Union branch.

You should wear PPE only as appropriate to the task you are doing in line with the **National Guidance on COVID-19**.

Colleagues should encourage and support each other to maintain these basic hygiene rules at all times.

47. If someone in the building has a suspected case, should there be any extra measures for cleaning put in place?

All councils will follow national guidance that is produced by Health Protection Scotland for decontamination of the workplace if a suspected case is in a Council building.

48. Are we taking any precautions in terms of employees attending and leaving work e.g. taking their temperature?

We are following Health Protection Scotland guidance regarding workplaces. At the current time monitoring employees' temperatures is not part of this guidance. Please refer to **NHS Inform**.

49. I work on the front line and I am concerned about being able to stay healthy at work (e.g. getting access to fresh fruit and vegetables and the ability to get enough rest) – is anyone talking to other sectors to make sure they are able to provide us with

Your health and wellbeing is our top priority – we are in regular dialogue with Scottish Government about ensuring you get the support you need.

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Leave Arrangements

50. Can I cancel pre-booked annual leave as my holiday is cancelled?

This is under constant review, please speak to your manager. It may be that you deliver a role considered critical by the Council, or you could volunteer in an area that is considered critical, and which requires additional support.

51. I am unable to return to work as expected as my return flights have been cancelled, what happens?

It is our understanding that airlines are operating 'rescue' flights to get passengers back home, however we appreciate that this may be later than your original return date. In these circumstances you will be granted special leave until you arrive back in the UK. Please liaise with your manager as soon as you know of any delay. If you have an appropriate device you may still be able to work from your current location.

52. Should I be taking annual leave over this period?

Yes, it is still appropriate to take your annual leave, subject to the normal service requirements, as your wellbeing is important. Everyone must look after themselves over this difficult period.

53. My local authority allows us to purchase additional annual leave which I did before movement was restricted. Can I now cancel this?

This will depend on the arrangements in place with your local authority – please speak to your line manager or local HR team.

54. Is the annual leave year being extended or changed?

Local Authorities may give consideration to annual leave arrangements locally, which may include the leave year being extended or changed.

55. What will the position be with public holidays such as Easter during this time of 'lockdown'?

Treatment of public holidays varies across councils. If you are not required to work on a public holiday, this should remain as a non-working day. If you are required to work the public holiday, arrangements should be agreed with you line manager over whether you receive payment or a day in lieu at another time.

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Meetings

56. What should I do about meetings I have planned with others?

Where there is benefit in the meeting going ahead, this should be done by teleconference where possible to avoid non-essential travel. If a meeting is

non-essential, then the meeting should be cancelled. You may wish to discuss the importance of a meeting going ahead with your manager and if you are required to meet in person, social distancing must be observed.

57. I am due to attend a meeting with other partners outwith the Council, what should I do?

Many organisations are cancelling meetings or undertaking these by teleconference. If the meeting is going ahead, try to make arrangements to join the meeting by teleconference, avoid non-essential travel and ensure social distancing is observed.

58. What will happen to current HR processes such as meetings for disciplinary, grievance, etc?

Initially the meetings may be postponed, as operational plans are re-shaped. However, thought will be given as to how such matters could continue in future, through conference call.

Training

59. I am due to attend a council arranged training course should I attend?

All non-essential training will be cancelled, and you will be notified if this is the case. If the training is considered critical to essential services this will continue. You should still attend if required but ensure social distancing is adhered to. Consideration will be given to the best way of delivering this training.

60. I am due to attend a training course outwith the Council, which the Council has paid for should I attend?

It is likely that many external courses will also be cancelled. If it is still going ahead, you should discuss this with your manager.

61. Can I continue to access on-line courses during this period?

All on-line courses should continue to be available. Employees should use this opportunity to complete relevant courses if you have time to do so.

If external webinars are available and relevant to your role, you should also access these.

62. Will I receive the appropriate training if I volunteer?

Appropriate training will be provided for anyone volunteering to assist in the delivery of essential services.

63. I am willing to volunteer to assist with essential services how do I do this?

Each council will have its own process in place to match staff to roles/task that need to be undertaken – please speak to your line manager.

64. If I am in a non-critical role and unable to work from home is there an expectation I have to volunteer?

It is essential that we remain flexible and work cooperatively across the council and support the critical services on which our communities rely.

Your own council will issue guidance on supporting our critical services so please speak to your line manager in the first instance.

Recruitment

65. Are recruitment arrangements still going ahead during this period?

This will be locally determined. Normal recruitment may be suspended over this period. Where there is a local need to fill critical posts for essential services, local arrangements will be put in place.

66. What will happen if someone is due to start with us on a perm/temp basis within the next few weeks with regards to pay?

This will be locally determined. Candidates should speak to their recruiting manager.

*Throughout this document there is a live link to the [NHS Inform website](#), [National Guidance on COVID-19](#) and [social distancing](#) advice that you can click on at any time.

**Click on a question at the start of the document to be taken to the answer.