

LIVING WITH COVID-19 IN THE WORKPLACE

October 2022

A) INTRODUCTION

The Council is committed to ensuring the health and safety of all staff, councillors and customers. This policy sets out the measures the Council is taking to comply with the Government's guidance document 'Living with Covid-19' and to continue to keep everyone safe, as well as setting out the steps our employees should take to reduce transmission of Covid-19.

B) INFECTION CONTROL MEASURES

All employees should follow the guidelines from the World Health Organisation on infection control, both whilst at work and in their daily lives. This includes:

- frequently cleaning their hands by using alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water
- when coughing and sneezing, covering mouth and nose with flexed elbow or tissue, throwing this tissue away immediately and washing their hands
- avoiding close contact with anyone who has a fever and cough.

C) MEASURES WE HAVE TAKEN TO PROTECT OUR WORKFORCE

We have introduced a variety of measures to keep you safe and prevent transmission of Covid-19 in our workplace. These are:

- The provision of sanitisers throughout the Council's premises
- The provision of lateral flow tests for staff who feel unwell

These measures will remain in place and will be kept under continual review. It is imperative that, when in the workplace, you adhere to these rules in order to protect yourself and your colleagues against transmission of Covid-19.

D) EMPLOYEES WHO DEVELOP SYMPTOMS

The safety of our workforce and councillors is of paramount importance to us and we have a legal duty to keep you safe at work. You too play a part in ensuring a safe workplace and therefore, in addition to complying with those measures set out above, another step to take is not attending work when you begin to display symptoms of Covid-19 or you test positive.

E) WHAT YOU SHOULD DO IF YOU TEST POSITIVE OR DEVELOP SYMPTOMS

You should follow our usual sickness reporting procedures when you test positive for Covid-19 or develop symptoms. This means that you should contact your line manager by telephone at least one hour before your usual start time.

If you have symptoms, once you have informed your line manager of this, you should take a test and inform your line manager of the result. If it is negative, you are to attend work as normal.

If you have tested positive, you should make your line manager aware of the predicted length of your absence. If you have tested positive, you are required to stay at home for five full days from the day of the first positive test. It is advised that two consecutive negative LFD test results, taken at least 24 hours apart, and the absence of a temperature, are needed before returning to work. The first LFD test should only be taken five days after the day symptoms started (or the day the test was taken if you did not have symptoms).

Your line manager will consider whether it is possible for you to work from home once you have informed them that you have tested positive or have developed symptoms. You are not expected to work from home if you are unwell.

You may be entitled to receive full pay if you are eligible. Your line manager will discuss payment arrangements with you at the time.

F) IF YOU ARE A CLOSE CONTACT WITH A POSITIVE CASE

If you live with, or have stayed overnight in the household of, someone who has Covid-19, you should inform your line manager as soon as is reasonably practicable. Your line manager will consider whether it is possible for you to work from home and if so, you are to work from home until the point that 10 days have passed after the day the person you live or stayed with symptoms started (or the day their test was taken if they did not have symptoms).

If you are unable to work from home, you should continue to come to work. Your line manager will discuss with you any additional precautions to be put in place.

If, during this period, you develop symptoms of Covid-19, you should inform your line manager at the earliest opportunity and follow the steps set out above.

G) EMPLOYEE TRAVEL PLANS

It is impossible to forecast the continuing effect of Covid-19 in the future, in both the UK and other countries. The Council accepts that employees will have plans to travel, including travel abroad during annual leave. We ask that employees consider, for their health reasons, the risk of Covid-19 transmission at that time in the country they are

travelling to and any travel restrictions that may be in place which affect their return. If travel restrictions will affect your return to work, we ask that you let your line manager know of the countries to be visited as soon as possible so that your return can be managed appropriately.

H) BUSINESS TRAVEL

Due to the inability to forecast the continuing effect of Covid-19 in both the UK and the rest of the world, we will keep business travel under continual review. The Council recognises that employees may be reluctant to travel on business. To this end, the Council will consider every business trip that is planned and identify if alternatives to making the trip can be considered, where possible. This may include postponing the trip or holding meetings via other means such as Skype or Microsoft Teams.

If travel is deemed necessary, we will conduct a full risk assessment into the risks associated with the trip with involvement from employees who are being asked to travel.

I) TEMPORARY BUSINESS CLOSURE

By putting measures in place to keep our employees safe while living with Covid, we are hopeful that temporary closure of the council will not be necessary. However, if the situation changes and it becomes clear that we are temporarily unable to continue operations as normal, we may be forced to close all, or part, of the business temporarily until such a time as we are able to resume operations. Whilst we will do everything we can to ensure that this does not happen, we may be left with no option but to implement our separate contractual provisions with regard to temporary reduction in work or make adjustments to working arrangements in order to provide us access to any Government wage subsidy scheme in place from time to time. Any adjustments needed will be discussed with you.

J) WORKING FROM ANOTHER LOCATION

It may be necessary for us to require you to work from an alternative work location if, for example, instructions from a third party mean that entry into our current workplace is not permitted. Your flexibility in this regard will be expected, however, all instructions of this nature will be reasonable.

The Council will consider, as part of its general approach to maintaining normal business operations, whether employees are to work from home and will take into consideration Government guidance on this issue. Obviously, this will not be possible in every case due to the nature of individual roles. However, we will assess the viability of this option, taking into consideration any equipment needed, at the relevant time and, as a result, you may be required to work from home for a temporary period. Employees should not assume that they will be permitted to work from home and advance authorisation will be needed in every case.

K) EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

We would like to remind employees that, if they have any worries or concerns about any aspect of the current situation, they have access to a confidential 24-hour telephone counselling service on 0800 047 4097.

L) COVID-19 VACCINATION

We strongly encourage you to have all doses of the vaccine that become available to you.