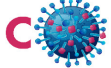


COVID-19



CORONAVIRUS

Frequently Asked Questions

Last updated 17 March 2020

As the Covid-19 (Coronavirus) outbreak continues to spread, we are doing everything possible to prepare so that we can deliver essential services to the people of Dumfries and Galloway and support the actions necessary to keep communities safe during this outbreak.

We are liaising with colleagues in NHS Dumfries and Galloway to make sure that we respond appropriately and consistently.

It is likely advice and information will be updated frequently over an extended period. It is important that you keep yourself apprised of these.

Below are some Frequently Asked Questions to help managers and members of our staff to make decisions in relation to their work (as at 17 March 2020 12.00 noon).

Your own working arrangements

What is the Council's view on homeworking until the virus is no longer a threat?

Our immediate concern is to ensure that staff most at risk can be supported to stay at home. The presumption is that staff in at risk groups will not attend places of work and, as far as possible, will be supported to work remotely. This is likely to be for an extended period and we will be advising managers about keeping in touch with their staff through this.

Managers should enable homeworking as far as practical for all staff and especially if there are concerns about a potential risk to business continuity e.g. small specialist teams working in one area or location.

Workplace risk assessments should be carried out by managers in conjunction with the Lead Tenant if there are concerns within a workplace or location and guidance on what to do is available on the Council's Health and Safety page [here](#)

Employees who have been instructed to self-isolate by their GP or NHS due to the possibility they may have contracted Covid-19 (coronavirus), but who are not currently displaying symptoms, should advise their manager and arrange to work from home if this is practical. Employees who have symptoms of coronavirus and feel unwell will be treated as if they are absent due to sickness. In either case you should notify your line manager as normal for any absence.

My job means I have contact with the public on a daily basis – what precautions should I take?

There are general principles you can follow to help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses, including:

- wash your hands often - with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands
- avoid close contact with people who are sick
- if you feel unwell, stay at home, do not attend work
- cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in a bin. See [Catch it, Bin it, Kill it](#)
- clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces in the home and work environment

Any specific workplace precautions should be included within risk assessments and should be discussed with your manager. Precautions may be subject to change, due to the ongoing situation and on advice from Public Health. Raise any suggestions or concerns with your manager.

What measures are the Council taking to ensure shared spaces at work are cleaned and kept as virus-free as possible. This includes agile working areas, meeting rooms, pool cars, libraries and other public facilities?

Two dedicated mobile cleaning teams are established to support the cleaning of key and strategic buildings throughout Dumfries and Galloway. These teams have been trained on deep cleaning and disinfection of buildings and vehicles using electrostatic cleaning equipment. The teams will be scheduled to undertake preventative and reactive cleaning as appropriate.

Hand Sanitisers are obviously in high demand and supplies are limited but Facilities colleagues have successfully managed to source limited stock which will be deployed on a Priority basis, primarily in Building Reception areas and key frontline staff that do not have general access to hand washing facilities.

Appropriate handwashing with soap and water remains the key practice in reducing the risks of transmission and signage to that effect should now be in place in our buildings across the region

Managers should assess if there are adequate hand washing facilities at places of work and increase the availability, visibility and use of these including the use of hand gels in offices and other workplaces. Facilities management should be contacted with regards to supplies.

Employees working in a shared office environment or agile working area should wipe-down workspace areas prior to and after use. Managers should ensure that adequate resources are in place to allow this to happen.

Attending Meetings

Should I travel and attend meetings with others, inside or outside the region?

We are advising against all non-essential face to face meetings. Where possible, staff should use teleconferencing, Skype or video conferencing instead. MS Teams can also be used for collaborative working.

Skype meetings - <https://share.sp.dg.dgcouncil.net/office365-windows10-tipsandtricks/Pages/default.aspx>

MS Teams - <https://support.office.com/en-us/article/training-1d5c12d3-37cb-44a0-ab21-5539ce9ccd5a?ns=MSFTTEAMS&version=16&ui=en-US&rs=en-US&ad=US>

Should I continue to meet with colleagues and stakeholders from out-with the region?

Employees should stop non-essential meetings. Only essential meetings and travel is advised by Government and many external partners and groups are standing down meetings and events in response to that advice. Where there is a necessity to liaise with colleagues and stakeholders outside the region which are essential to your role, use teleconferencing or video conferencing facilities.

Coronavirus and you

I have been informed that I should self-isolate – what should I do?

Employees should follow medical advice and self-isolate. Advice can be found here - [NHS Inform](#) .

Employees who are unable to work from home will be granted paid leave for the duration of the self-isolation or until they develop symptoms, at which stage sick leave applies.

Employees who are not displaying symptoms should arrange with their manager to work from home if this is practical.

If an employee who is self-isolating becomes unwell, normal sick leave provisions will apply until the employee is able to return to work, taking account of medical advice. Managers should exclude sickness absence linked to coronavirus from maximising attendance procedures. However, normal arrangements for keeping in touch should be followed. Managers should update iTrent using the option 'COVID-19' to record sickness absence linked to Coronavirus.

Employees who are told to self-isolate and are too unwell to work (including those working from home) will need to complete their self-certification. Beyond 7 days employees will not be required to provide a medical certificate due to restrictions associated with self-isolation

What if I have symptoms of Coronavirus i.e. a new continuous cough and/or high temperature?

If you have symptoms of Coronavirus, no matter how mild, and you live on your own, you should stay at home for 7 days from when the symptoms started. Employees with symptoms will be classed as on sick leave and managers should record the absence on iTrent using the COVID-19 on iTrent to record the absence.

If you live with others and have symptoms of Coronavirus you should stay at home for 14 days from when symptoms started. Employees with symptoms will be classed as on sick leave and managers should record the absence on iTrent using the COVID-19 on iTrent to record the absence.

I have a medical condition which may put me at critical risk if I get Coronavirus. How can I be protected?

People over 70, pregnant women and those who have high risk and underlying health conditions are being strongly advised to stay at home as much as possible and significantly reduce unnecessary social contact.

Our immediate concern is to ensure that staff most at risk can be supported to stay at home. The presumption is that staff in at risk groups will not attend places of work and as far as possible will be supported to work remotely. This is likely to be for an extended period and we will be advising managers about keeping in touch with their staff through this.

I have been told to self-isolate (with or without symptoms), how is this recorded?

Employees must advise their manager that they are required to self-isolate. If an employee has no symptoms, the manager will treat the period of self-isolation as 'other absence' and not sickness absence.

Employees who self-isolate and show symptoms of Coronavirus or have been diagnosed with Coronavirus they will be treated as being on sick leave.

The HR/Payroll system, iTrent will be used to record this information as follows:

- No symptoms - 'other absences' - within iTrent, managers should select the employee name; Absence; other absence list; New – Other absence details. Enter the start date and end date if known and select 'Self-Isolation' for the absence type and 'COVID-19' for the absence reason.

- With symptoms – Normal sickness absence recording procedure. Managers must update iTrent by selecting the employee and enter the start and end date if known and select 'sickness' as the absence type and 'COVID-19' as the absence reason.

What if I live with someone who has symptoms of Coronavirus, including a child?

If you live with someone displaying coronavirus symptoms you should stay at home for 14 days. You should homework if practical during this time.

If you are unable to work from home, you will be granted paid leave.

I am a parent/carer and those who I care for have Coronavirus. Am I entitled to time off to look after them?

The Council has a careers policy which covers normal arrangements for carers leave and associated processes.

In unexpected emergency situations, such as COVID-19, involving a dependent i.e. spouse, partner, child or parent or someone who lives with you as part of the family, the arrangements for self-isolation will apply.

If your circumstances change as a carer because you have to provide additional support at this time – especially where at risk people are involved and have to stay at home and reduce social contact - then please advise your line manager who should consult with HRAdvice@dumgal.gov.uk who can support you with flexible working arrangements.

Carers who do not already have an emergency plan in place may also want to talk with family and friends about who could take over their caring role if they become ill or need to self-isolate – particularly while Social Work Services are under additional pressure during the Coronavirus outbreak. It will also be important to make sure you have key information about the person you care for easily available - so that anyone taking over care has all the information they need.

Where carers and family and friends are unable to provide essential care for someone, they should contact their local Social Work Services.

Closing buildings

Do we expect Council offices and/or facilities accessed by the public to close due to Coronavirus?

We are continuing to monitor the situation and whether it will be necessary to close council offices. At the moment, our buildings remain open. This situation will change quickly, and we will keep you informed.

Guidance for Managers

Who do I contact if I have concerns regarding staffing, including my staff, my colleagues and others in my workplace?

Any member of staff with concerns should contact their line manager in the first instance. Advice for managers is available from OD&HR on 01387 273835 or ext 62835 and on Connect including [CHASM](#).

What should I do if a member of staff, is known to be travelling soon to or from an affected or potentially affected area?

Follow national guidance on affected areas

Are there contingencies in place to ensure I am paid on time should there be staffing issues in relation to payment, either internal or external to the Council?

Finance & Procurement have reviewed their business continuity arrangements in relation to Coronavirus. These give high priority to ensuring Council staff will continue to be paid by Pay & Employment Services via iTrent. Similarly, creditor activities are equally given high priority to ensure businesses, clients and other payment recipients continue to be paid via the Council's Integra Purchase Ledger

Where should I go to for trusted, up-to-date information?

- Connect
- Regular updates issued to all staff via Comms Unit
- NHS Scot inform website
- CHASM
- Council Public Website
<https://www.dumgal.gov.uk>

General NHS Advice for members of the public:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-guidance-to-assist-professionals-in-advising-the-general-public/guidance-to-assist-professionals-in-advising-the-general-public>