

CORONAVIRUS – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (Updated 24 April 2020)

As the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) outbreak continues to spread, the Council is doing everything possible to keep employees and service users safe, follow UK and Scottish Government advice to limit the spread of the virus, and deliver essential services to the people of Dumfries and Galloway.

The following FAQs replace the FAQs dated 17 April 2020 and are designed to help local government employees understand the national COVID-19 advice and how this may impact on employment.

Advice and information will be updated frequently over an extended period and it is important that you keep yourself up to date.

These FAQs are to help managers and staff to make decisions in relation to their work.

Section 1 - General

1. Am I a Key Worker?

Please see the advice from the Scottish Government regarding key workers [here](#). If you're in any doubt of you're a key worker, discuss this with your line manager.

Section 2 – Terms and Conditions

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

Yes, you will be paid for any period of COVID-19 related absence.

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

Yes, you will be paid for any period of COVID-19 related absence.

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

Yes, you will be paid for any period of COVID-19 related absence.

5. I have a casual contract and accepted to work casual hours which are no longer required due to service disruption related to Covid-19. Will I continue to get paid for these hours?

Should you no longer be required to work, you will be paid for the duration of your current engagement/agreed working hours. Where possible, you should work from home or, if this is not possible, your line manager may allocate you

alternative tasks during the engagement period. Please note you may be redirected into a service area that is considered critical, and which requires additional support.

If you have any issues with your casual arrangement, please discuss this with your manager.

6. I am a casual worker and I am symptomatic. Will I get paid?

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

7. I am a casual worker and have not been offered work due to service disruption related to Covid-19. Am I entitled to a compensation payment?

If you accepted an offer of casual work between 1 January 2020 and 31 March 2020, and the Council knows you remain available for work, a compensation payment will be made to you. This payment will be based on a calculation of your average earnings over the previous qualifying 3-month period.

8. 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.

9. 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.

10. 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 line manager.

11. Will I get paid for working additional hours to assist at this time?

Thank you for helping, you will either be paid or can claim time back for additional hours worked as agreed with your manager. Discuss this with your line manager before carrying out additional hours so that you are clear on the position.

12. 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.

13. What terms and conditions will apply while I am 'redirected' to carry out a different role to support the Councils response to Covid-19?

During the period that an employee is carrying out 'redirected' duties, they will be advised of a line manager that they should report to.

Employees will continue to be paid their current rate of pay for the contracted hours of their substantive job. Any additional hours beyond normal contracted hours will be paid in line with standard terms and conditions which are outlined [here](#).

Section 3 - Attending Work

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

If your line manager has deemed you to be an essential worker, you should attend work and local safeguards will be put in place. Managers can obtain advice on this by contacting OD&HR on 01387 260300 (ext. 64300) or email HRCovid19Advice@dumgal.gov.uk

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 or location for a temporary period of time. If this happens your line manager will confirm travel arrangements and how this will apply in your circumstances

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

You should stay at home and self-isolate for 7 days. 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 and self-isolate for 14 days. Follow the advice from [NHS Inform](#).

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

We deliver a number of frontline services. These need to continue to ensure vulnerable people are supported during this very difficult time. You should continue to follow [NHS Inform](#) guidance. We need employees in these services to continue to work and provide support. We appreciate this will be a very difficult time for employees working in these areas and appreciate the commitment of staff. Work will be done to protect staff and identify additional support.

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

Your line manager will confirm whether you can work from home. You may be asked to return to work to assist with providing essential services. It is

important that you ensure your manager can contact you during the period of working from home and that you remain productive at 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 or I am recovering from treatment?

If you have an underlying health condition or weakened immune system, under current [NHS Inform](#) guidance, you should not be at work. Where you can, you will be asked to undertake work from home. If you are unable to do your normal work from home, you may be asked to do other work that supports frontline essential services. Please be ready for this and keep up to date with the latest guidance from [NHS Inform](#). An example of an underlying condition [asthma] is listed below.

I have asthma - can I attend work?

- When to self-isolate – if someone with asthma has possible Coronavirus symptoms they should self-isolate for 7 days or, if they are living with someone else who has potential Coronavirus symptoms, they should self-isolate for 14 days. This advice also applies to the general population. The particular symptoms to look out for are a high temperature and/or a new and persistent cough.
- Attending work – employees with or without asthma should work from home where possible. However, if you are a key worker or work in a critical service area and it is not possible for you to work from home your line manager may allocate you alternative tasks or you may be redirected into a service area that is considered critical, and which requires additional support.

People with asthma should follow a particularly stringent approach to social distancing, enhanced hygiene including washing hands more often. Again, this advice applies to the general population.

- When to shield due to being classified as extremely high risk of severe illness – the Government has produced a list of underlying medical conditions where the risk of complications from Coronavirus infection is so high that these people should shield themselves at home. Only people with severe asthma should shield themselves at home. This is defined as people with asthma who are frequently prescribed high dose steroids. Affected people are being contacted and further information is available at <https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-covid-19-shielding>

People with asthma who are unsure about the severity of their condition are advised to telephone their specialist nurse, GP, or consultant as appropriate.

21. I am pregnant, what should I do?

You should stay at home and follow advice from [NHS Inform](#).

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

As long as you do not have any symptoms or those you live with do not have any symptoms then you should continue to work. You should follow all the rules on social distancing in the workplace and at home to protect yourself and those you live with. If anyone in your household has symptoms, then you should self-isolate in accordance with NHS guidance.

23. I am currently working additional hours for which I submit a timesheet. I can continue to undertake the necessary work at home. Do I still submit my timesheets?

You should ask your manager whether the additional hours are still required. If they are required, then the additional hours will continue to be approved by your manager and you should continue working them and submitting timesheets.

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

No, COVID-19 absence will not be used for absence triggers. The absence will still be recorded on iTrent and employees and managers should continue to follow the normal sickness absence recording procedures.

25. What happens if I cannot get a GP certificate after 7 days? Can I self-certificate for longer?

For sickness absence attributed to COVID-19, there is no requirement to submit a GP certificate after 7 days as we recognise GPs may not be in a position to issue medical certificates. There is the facility to obtain an online certificate (isolation note) to ease the workload of GP.s. You will find this on NHS Inform.

26. 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 promote 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 consideration of your role, the nature of the service, the work that needs to be done, and the equipment available. To maintain critical services not everyone can work from home and it depends on the job you do and the priority given to the type of service you provide. If you

do not have a job that is considered critical, you may be asked to do a different job to help the Council maintain critical services.

27. If I am working from home, do I need to record what I do?

Working from home is the same as working from a Council location and you should continue to record the time you work. You must complete work objectives and remain productive, ensuring that you regularly update your line manager with the work you have progressed.

28. I am now working from home, which is something I don't normally do. I am concerned for the safety of myself and/or my children as we experience domestic abuse. Where can I seek support and guidance?

We understand that if you live with an abuser you may feel increased anxiety around the prospect of self-isolation, social distancing, quarantine, and working from home. Additionally, for the many victims/survivors who do not live with their abusers, they may feel an increased level of fear at the prospect of their abuser knowing that they are at home, with the possibility for further surveillance and the opportunities for intimidation and abusive acts that this creates. Specific guidance and support is available to you within the Council's [Domestic Abuse Policy and Procedure](#) and Council's Working/Staying at Home Covid-19 Health and Wellbeing guidance. The Scottish Domestic Abuse Helpline can be contacted 24 hours, 365 days of the year, t: 0800 027 1234 or e: helpline@sdafmh.org.uk

29. 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 also need to try and maintain 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 when you can or be available to carry out other essential work if required. If you are a key worker and do not have anyone else to look after your children, childcare is provided by the Council.

30. As services work on contingency plans, can I be asked to work a different work 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 your personal circumstances when into account.

31. I am unable to work from home, what is expected of me?

Staff should work from home when it is possible to do so. However, if you are unable to do this, please consider volunteering to assist other areas where you can. If none of this applies, then paid special leave may apply. You may be asked to work at a different location. Contact OD&HR if you wish to volunteer.

32. I am not a Key Worker. Can I be redirected into a critical service area?

The Council and Joint Trade Unions are working together to ensure that our frontline services continue to be delivered by our skilled and committed workforce. Due to the impact of Coronavirus we urgently need staff to continue work in essential and critical frontline services to maintain the support available for our communities.

The Council and Joint Trade Unions jointly promote the need for this vital redirection of skilled talent on a temporary basis to carry out a range of different roles within the Council to help our communities in this difficult time. The roles are particularly required in Social Care, Social Work Services, Education, and Communities, and the roles and duties are varied. Our workforce already has the skills needed to do these tasks, however, where there is a skills gaps then appropriate training and support will be provided and previous experience is not required.

The Council and Joint Trade Unions thank you and ask for your continued support in this to ensure that critical services are maintained at this difficult time.

Section 4 - Leave Arrangements

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

Annual leave is designed to provide employees with an appropriate period of rest at various points throughout the year. Where annual leave is pre-booked then managers will encourage this to be taken even if your holiday is cancelled.

34. 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.

There may be circumstances where 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. In those circumstances your manager may cancel your existing leave and/or may not approve further leave requests. If managers require clarity on any of this then advice is available from Covid-19 HR team on 01387 260 300 or at HRCovid19Advice@dumgal.gov.uk

35. I have purchased additional annual leave. Can I now cancel this?

You can cancel your additional annual leave purchase arrangement. You will receive a refund of contributions made since the start of your most recent agreement. Please contact Pay and Employment Services on Transactions@dumgal.gov.uk if you wish to cancel.

36. Will I be able to carry over annual leave?

The Government announced that employees delivering critical services in response to Covid-19, may carry over statutory annual leave (up to 4 weeks), if required.

Managers should try where operationally feasible to allow leave for employees delivering critical services. Where this is not possible, arrangements should be considered for the employee to carry over unused leave (up to 4 weeks) into the next leave year.

The above provision is limited to employees working in critical services in response to Covid-19.

All other employees are required to take annual leave within the current leave year. This is important for health and wellbeing, and employees should avoid accruing too much leave for the second half of the leave year. Normal arrangements apply whereby there is no entitlement to carry over leave.

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

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 will be made to pay in accordance with normal terms and conditions such as enhanced pay or Time Off in Lieu.

38. What time off am I entitled to if I have a bereavement or I am attending a funeral?

Should you suffer a bereavement of a dependant, the leave arrangements outlined in the Council's [Bereavement Guidance](#) and [Employee Handbook](#) are available to support you. A dependant could be a spouse, partner, civil partner, child, parent, sibling, grandchild, grandparent or someone who depends on the employee for care.

Parental bereavement leave of up to 2 weeks is available for the death of a child and up to 3 days bereavement/ compassionate leave may be granted for other dependants.

Note that other arrangements are in place for teaching staff.

At present there are very specific arrangements in place for those attending funerals which must be followed to avoid breaching the social distancing rules and funerals can only be attended by immediate family members.

Section 5 - Guidance for Managers

39. 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. However, advice is available from Covid-19 HR team, t: 01387 260 300 or at HRCovid19Advice@dumgal.gov.uk and on Connect, including Health and Safety advice on [CHASM](#)

40. 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.

41. 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 through the Council's Integra Purchase Ledger

42. What do I do if an employee tells me they are experiencing domestic abuse?

You need to familiarise yourself with the [Council's Domestic Abuse Policy and Procedure](#) which outlines the guidance and support you can provide your member of staff. If an employee tells you that they are at risk then you can agree an 'escalation' phrase with them that they may use to advise you that they need help. You must agree with your employee in advance what action using the 'escalation' phrase will trigger.

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

- ✓ Connect
- ✓ Weekly updates issued to all staff through the Communications Unit
- ✓ NHS Scot inform website - <https://www.nhsinform.scot/coronavirus>
- ✓ CHASM - [CHASM](#)
- ✓ Council Public Website – <https://www.dumgal.gov.uk>
- ✓ Covid-19 HR Advice – t: 01387 260 300
HRCovid19Advice@dumgal.gov.uk
- ✓ Government Advice for members of the public
<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>