

# POLICY ON DEALING WITH CORONAVIRUS IN THE WORKPLACE

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## A) INTRODUCTION

The Company is committed to ensuring the health and safety of all employees. To this end, this policy sets out steps that the Company is taking in order to tackle the coronavirus outbreak, alongside expectations that are placed upon employees.

## B) INFECTION CONTROL MEASURES

We strongly encourage all employees to follow these 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) IF YOU DEVELOP SYMPTOMS

If you begin to display symptoms of the virus, you must follow government guidance to find out what to do next, which may involve internet and phone services. You should not go to your doctor's surgery. You must also notify your manager at the earliest opportunity.

## D) EMPLOYEE TRAVEL PLANS

The Company accepts that some of its employees will have plans to travel in the near future, including pre-booked and paid for holidays. Certain countries have been identified as having been severely affected by the virus and we would therefore ask that employees consider, for their health reasons, whether travelling to these areas is the best thing to do. If a decision is made to travel, we ask that employees let their manager know of the countries to be visited so that their return can be managed appropriately.

We also ask all employees to keep themselves up to date with government guidance on the countries which require self-isolation upon return, and bear in mind that this guidance can change on a daily basis.

If you would like to cancel any pre-booked annual leave, you should discuss this with your manager.

## E) (OPTIONAL) BUSINESS TRAVEL

The Company recognises that employees may be reluctant to travel on business to places of the world where there have been cases of infection. To this end, the Company will consider every business trip that is planned for the near future 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.

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.

## F) PERIODS OF SELF-ISOLATION

The government is currently advising people to self-isolate if they have recently returned from certain countries even if they have no symptoms, which means staying at home and not having contact with other people. In the event that this applies to you, you must not attend work during the isolation period. If you did not already inform us of travel to such countries beforehand, you must inform us before your intended return to work. Your manager will keep in contact with you during this period. Where feasible,

we may consider whether you can work from home during this period, or whether we can agree a period of paid annual leave with you. Where no other agreement is made, this will be treated in accordance with our normal sickness absence and pay policies and you will receive statutory sick pay subject to normal qualifying criteria.

Some countries require self-isolation on return only where you display symptoms of the virus. If you do have symptoms on your return including a cough, fever or difficulty breathing, you should not attend work, follow government guidance on what to do next, which may include using internet or telephone services, and also follow our normal sickness reporting procedures. In this situation, you will be treated as being on sickness absence.

If you return from a country which does not require automatic self-isolation, and you are displaying no symptoms, you should be prepared to attend work as normal. However, if there is a reason why you think you may have been exposed to the virus, you should let your manager know before you return to work.

The Government has also advised that anyone with mild flu symptoms are to isolate for a period of 7 days after their symptoms started to show. The most common symptoms of coronavirus are recent onset of:

- New continuous cough and / or
- High temperature

Where no other agreement is made, this will be treated in accordance with our normal sickness absences and pay policies and you will receive statutory sick pay subject to normal qualifying criteria.

#### **G) SENDING EMPLOYEES HOME/REQUIRING EMPLOYEES NOT TO ATTEND WORK**

If we are concerned that you may have been exposed to the virus, even though you are not displaying symptoms, we may take the decision to send you home/require you not to attend work. This may occur if, for example, you inform us that you have been in close contact with someone else who has, or may have, the virus. This is treated as a period of suspension for medical reasons. It is not considered a disciplinary sanction; the period of suspension will be in recognition of the possibility that your continued presence in the workplace poses a risk of spreading the virus. You will receive full pay during this time off. Alternatively, we may agree a period of paid annual leave with you.

If, during this period of suspension, you develop symptoms, you should follow government guidance on what to do next, which may include using internet or telephone services, and also follow our normal sickness reporting procedures. You will then be treated as being on a period of sickness absence.

#### **H) EMPLOYEES WHO CONTRACT THE VIRUS**

If you contract the virus, you should take and follow medical advice on the length of your sickness absence. You are required to produce a medical certificate for illnesses lasting seven calendar days or more, however, we appreciate that you are not likely to be in a position to obtain a medical certificate in usual timescales, therefore you should provide it as soon as is reasonably practicable. During your absence, our normal sickness absences rules will apply and you will receive statutory sick pay (SSP) in accordance with legal requirements in force from time to time/pay in accordance with our contractual sick pay subject to meeting qualifying criteria.

#### **I) ATTENDANCE AT WORK**

Unless you have followed our usual reporting procedures in relation to sickness absence, are in self-isolation following government guidance or not attending work under our specific instruction, you are expected to attend work as normal.

#### **J) TEMPORARY BUSINESS CLOSURE**

As time progresses, it may become clear that the business is temporarily unable to continue its operations as normal. In this scenario, 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 place you on lay off, or short time working. During this period, your pay will be reduced accordingly and you may receive statutory guarantee pay in line with statutory provisions.

#### **K) 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 Company will consider, as part of its general approach to maintaining normal business operations, whether employees are to work from home. 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.

#### **L) HARASSMENT/BULLYING**

We operate a zero tolerance policy to all forms of harassment and bullying in the workplace. We will not tolerate any unacceptable behaviour to colleagues, suppliers, members of the public etc. Any complaints of this nature will be investigated in line with our usual policy and may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

#### **M) (OPTIONAL) 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 047097**.