

Dear <employee name>,

As a responsible employer, we're concerned about the current global health pandemic known as COVID-19 (commonly referred to as coronavirus). We're regularly reviewing the situation to protect our staff, volunteers and service users. We also want to share information with our staff and volunteers to try to mitigate risk and reduce the spread whilst continuing to support as many of our service users as possible.

### **Reducing Spread**

The main action that we can all take is to follow some basic hygiene steps to try to limit the spread of the virus:

Wash your hands often and thoroughly with soap and water. In particular, you should wash your hands after going to the toilet, before eating or handling food, and when you get to work/get home.

In addition, please ensure that you:

- cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your elbow/sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze;
- put any used tissues in the bin straightaway and wash your hands immediately after handling used tissues;
- try to avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth if you have not washed your hands recently; and
- try to avoid close contact with people who are unwell.

As an employer, we are regularly reviewing work practices, absence levels and the need for service delivery and are managing risk as the situation develops.

We have increased the level of anti-bacterial cleaning, particularly around frequently touched surfaces and objects like door handles, telephones, desks, counter tops etc. We are trying to source hand sanitisers and other products that will help staff to reduce the spread. We will continue to review official guidance and take into account the needs and concerns of employees and stakeholders before deciding what to do.

### **Becoming Unwell**

If you've developed a new continuous cough and/or a fever/high temperature in the last 7 days, you must not attend work and instead stay at home for 7 days from the start of your symptoms even if you think your symptoms are mild.

Phone your GP:

- If symptoms are severe or you have shortness of breath
- If you worsen during home isolation
- If you have not improved after 7 days

You should also phone your GP if you develop breathlessness or it worsens, especially if you:

- are 60 years old or over
- have underlying poor health
- have heart or lung problems
- have a weakened immune system, including cancer

- have diabetes.

If your GP is closed, phone NHS 24 (111). If you have a medical emergency, phone 999 and tell them you have COVID-19 symptoms. You do not have to get medical advice from NHS24 to self-isolate. There is a tool at [111.nhs.uk/service/covid-19](https://111.nhs.uk/service/covid-19) for you to carry out a check if you think you have symptoms. If possible, you should avoid going to your doctor, hospital or pharmacy to prevent infection from spreading.

You should notify your line manager in line with our absence management policy before you are due to start work, or as soon as possible if that is not practical.

### **Self-isolation**

You must self-isolate for seven days if you have the above symptoms. It is very important that you follow the Government's advice at [www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance) during self-isolation.

You may be self-isolating in some circumstances in which you have no symptoms, including if you have:

- been in contact with a confirmed coronavirus carrier; or
- recently travelled to a restricted area when such guidelines were in place;
- If you are ill and in self-isolation, your absence will be treated as sickness absence and you should follow our normal reporting procedures. However, evidence requirements are being relaxed during the coronavirus situation: we recognise that you may not have a Fit Note from your GP.

If you are not ill, your line manager will discuss with you what, if any, work you can do from home. If it is not possible for you to work from home, you should discuss your options with your line manager.

### **Travel**

There is a reducing emphasis on travel from other countries as the virus has now sufficiently spread in most countries. The focus is now on symptoms and reducing the spread through good hygiene practices and isolation when symptoms are noticed.

Work-related travel should be reasonably minimised, by using e-mail, telephone or video-conferencing where practicable.

There are no bans currently in place on work-related travel in the UK or attending partnership meetings, training sessions and events. Some employers may well start to restrict staff attending meetings or events, but we do not feel a need to implement such a restriction just yet. We will review this and issue new guidance or instructions as appropriate.

### **If you change your holiday plans**

We understand that you may change your mind about travelling, or be unable to travel to your planned destination, and may wish to cancel or change annual leave that you have already booked.

If you would like to cancel or change planned leave, please speak to your line manager. We may allow you to change or cancel booked holiday, although this will be a decision for your line manager.

**Remote working**

Given the current situation, we may require staff to work at home at short notice. Please ensure that, where possible, you take your laptop home with you after work each day and familiarise yourself with the methods for safely connecting to our computer systems from home.

If you use a desktop, you can access your e-mails remotely from most devices and computers via office365.com – instructions on how to do so can be found <here>.

You should contact <IT support company/person's name> if you have any queries about the remote-working system.

**Further communications from us**

This is a rapidly changing situation and we are monitoring it closely. Protecting our staff, volunteers and service users is of critical importance to us and we will review our guidance and instructions regularly. We will issue further e-mail updates. It is important that you only follow official guidance or instructions from the UK Government, Scottish Government, NHS or your employer to avoid potential problems with absence management, sick pay and so on.

In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries or concerns.

Yours sincerely