The City of Edinburgh Council

Coronavirus - colleague absence guidance

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Permanent employees

Annual leave

1. **Should I be taking leave over this period?** Your wellbeing is important. Everyone needs to look after themselves and take annual leave where this is possible. Annual leave requests should be submitted to your line manager for consideration in line with service needs and current circumstances.

2. **Do I have to take annual leave, even though some restrictions are still in place?** We understand that some people may not want to take annual leave while some measures are still in place but, in line with government guidance, where it's possible to take annual leave you should continue to do so. If you're in a non-critical role and unable to work from home your line manager may give you notice to take annual leave if you don't ask for it – this would be a minimum of two weeks’ notice per one week’s leave.

3. **I had annual leave booked and am now unable to go on my holiday. Can I cancel my annual leave?** Annual leave is at the discretion of services and is agreed based on the needs of the service. Annual leave can only normally be cancelled if you're required to work in a critical frontline role, or from home in a critical role. Your line manager will take your circumstances in to consideration and, so long as you are looking to take your leave at another time in the annual leave year, this should be accommodated where possible.

4. **What if I'm symptomatic with Coronavirus or need to self-isolate during booked annual leave?** If you have annual leave booked during a period of Coronavirus sickness or self-isolation, your annual leave can be added back to your holiday entitlement.

If you’re a Teacher, there is separate guidance relating to compensatory leave for self-isolation.

5. **Will I be able to carry forward annual leave since I may not be able to take it all before the end of September 2021?** All colleagues are expected to take their annual leave by the end of the 2020/2021 holiday year as usual.

If you carried over leave (up to 10 days) from 2019/2020 holiday year due to operational reasons this needs to be taken within 2 holiday years (so by the end of the 2022/23 holiday year).

6. **I was previously shielding – did I need to take annual leave during this period?** Yes, as long as you remained well during any period of shielding, you were expected to take annual leave as normal.

7. **If I go abroad on annual leave and need to quarantine when I return will I get paid for this period?** If you choose to travel abroad during annual leave and know that you need to quarantine on your return you must discuss this with your line manager before you book any travel.
The quarantine period wouldn’t be paid leave so, if you do need to quarantine and are unable to work from home, you would need to take this time as either additional annual leave or unpaid leave. This additional time would be subject to the approval of your line manager, who will need to consider service requirements as normal.

8. **If I book a holiday to a country that isn’t covered by quarantine rules, but the advice changes and I need to quarantine on my return, will I get paid for this?** No. Although restrictions on foreign travel have been relaxed, there remains a risk that outbreaks of coronavirus will occur, and that quarantine controls may change. You need to consider this when deciding to book annual leave abroad and discuss with your line manager, in advance, whether you would be able to take additional holidays or unpaid leave should this happen.

**Office closure**

1. **If your place of work has closed.** You'll be paid your normal salary. We may, however, require you to work from home or a different location.

**Working from home**

1. **I’ve been working from home during the pandemic. Now that Scotland has moved beyond Level 0 from 9 August, am I expected to return to work?** Although many of the legal restrictions have been lifted from 9 August, infection rates are still high and so we must continue to take a sensible and precautionary approach, in line with Scottish Government advice.

   We are currently working through our approach towards resumption of those services we had to suspend or reduce as a result of the pandemic, and the safe return to offices for those colleagues. For now, and until your service notify you otherwise, you should continue to work from home.

   If you’re finding working from home challenging, either from a wellbeing perspective or because you don’t have adequate space at home to work, speak to your line manager who will explore the options with you.

2. **Can I claim any allowances for working from home?** If you’re working at home temporarily because of coronavirus, you may be eligible to claim tax relief directly from HMRC. Claims can be made online - details are available on the UK government website here.

3. **Is there any support or advice available about working from home?** It’s important to think about your wellbeing while working from home. There’s guidance on the website, including our Colleague Guide. If you need any of your existing office equipment to help you work from home (such as a keyboard, mouse or chair), speak to your line manager who can complete a request form if appropriate.
Coronavirus-related absence

1. **I’m symptomatic and need to self-isolate. Do I get paid?** Yes, you would be paid at your normal rate of pay, although you’d be expected to work from home if this is possible and you’re well enough. Your manager may ask you for evidence – if so, you can get a [self-isolation note online](https://nhs111.nhs.uk/self-isolation-note) through NHS111. You should also follow [Scottish Government advice](https://www.gov.scot/health和社会福祉/Coronavirus-scotland) about self-isolation and testing.

You also need to arrange for a test, in line with national guidance – if this test is negative you should speak to your line manager so that they can support an earlier return to work. You can find more information about testing [here](https://www.gov.scot/health和社会福祉/Coronavirus-scotland).

Self-isolation should normally last for a maximum of 10 days, and you’re expected to be available to work at the end of the self-isolation period, unless your symptoms worsen. You should keep your line manager updated, and they will contact you at day 10 to check your progress.

2. **My symptoms develop and I become ill.** You need to call 111 and you’ll be paid for time off until you recover.

3. **I’ve been contacted by Test and Protect contact tracers advising me that I need to self-isolate as a close contact. Do I get paid?** Yes, you would be paid at your normal rate of pay for the period of self-isolation, although you’d be expected to work from home if this is possible. Your line manager may need to see evidence of the need to self-isolate. Test and Protect contact tracers can send a text message for this purpose, so make sure that you ask them for this when you’re contacted.

Follow [Scottish Government advice](https://www.gov.scot/health和社会福祉/Coronavirus-scotland) about self-isolation and testing, and any specific advice provided to you by the contact tracers.

If you’re a fully vaccinated adult (meaning you’ve had both vaccine doses and it’s been more than 14 days since your second dose) and have a negative PCR test you’ll be able to end your self-isolation early and return to work, as long as you remain symptom-free. You should keep your manager updated. We know we can’t insist that colleagues get vaccinated, so this is a personal choice, but vaccines are the best way to protect yourself and others from the virus.

4. **I live with someone who has symptoms, what do I do?** Follow NHS Inform guidance on [self-isolation and testing for households](https://www.gov.scot/health和社会福祉/Coronavirus-scotland), which is similar to that for close contacts identified by Test and Protect. If you’re a fully vaccinated adult and have a negative PCR test you’ll be able to end your self-isolation early and return to work.

5. **I live with someone who is in the highest-risk group, what do I do?** The current guidance from the Scottish government is that those at highest risk no longer need to physically distance from those that they live with, so this shouldn’t affect your ability to continue to attend work.

6. **I don’t have symptoms but am worried about coming to work. Can I have special leave?** No. If you don’t have symptoms and don’t need to self-isolate, we expect you to continue to work, unless there’s specific evidence that says you can’t. If you have specific concerns check the NHS Inform website and speak to your line manager.
Highest-risk groups

1. **I have a health condition and was previously shielding (now referred to as ‘highest risk’). Is it safe for me to be at work?** The Scottish Government has confirmed that, as we move beyond the Protection Levels system from 9 August, those at highest risk no longer need to shield and should follow the same guidance as the general population. Those at highest risk should have received a letter from the Chief Medical Officer explaining the updated guidance.

   For you, there should be no change to existing process, meaning that you should continue to work from home wherever possible. If you can’t work from home, you can attend work as long as it’s safe for you to do so.

   If you can’t work from home, your manager will carry out a risk assessment with you, to ensure that any measures required to support you at work are put in place. Depending on the circumstances, it may also be necessary to seek advice from your GP or Occupational Health.

   Read more about additional steps you can take to [keep yourself safe at work](#).

2. **I’ve had a risk assessment and understand the safety measures that are in place, but I still feel anxious about being at work. What do I do?** We do realise that returning to the workplace for those at highest risk can be a big step, so it’s important that you discuss any concerns you have with your line manager so that they can support you fully.

   Where a risk assessment has been completed and the appropriate measures have been put in place you would be expected to return to work unless there’s specific medical evidence to say that you can’t. Any certified absence relating to anxiety would be handled in line with the normal sickness absence policy, pay entitlements, and support mechanisms.

3. **I’ve had a risk assessment, which has been considered along with medical advice, and it’s not yet safe for me to attend work. Will I get paid?** Yes, you would be paid at your normal rate of pay, although you’d be expected to work from home if this is possible. You should keep in touch with your line manager and be available to work from home if required, and remember that you need to make sure you’re taking your annual leave.

4. **Although I wasn’t in the shielding category, I have an underlying health condition and believe that it isn’t safe for me to attend work.** You should speak with your GP in the first instance and re-visit your risk assessment with your line manager. If the relevant measures are put in place and it’s safe for you to do so, then we would expect you to be able to attend work or work from home where possible.

5. **I am not at high risk and was not shielding but I’m still anxious about coming to work, what should I do?** It’s important that you discuss any concerns you have with your line manager so that they can support you fully at work.

   Where your workplace is open, a risk assessment has been completed, and the appropriate measures have been put in place you would be expected to attend work
unless there’s specific medical evidence to say that you can’t. Any certified absence relating to anxiety would be handled in line with the normal sickness absence policy, pay entitlements, and support mechanisms.

Post-vaccine illness

1. **I’ve experienced some side effects after receiving the vaccine and am unfit to work. What should I do?** Some people do experience side effects soon after receiving the coronavirus vaccine. These are usually mild and go away within a few days. You can read more about possible vaccine side effects on NHS Inform.

   If you do experience side effects and are unable to work as a result, you should contact your line manager. Make sure you keep in touch with your manager and if you’re concerned about your symptoms, or they persist beyond a few days, contact your GP or NHS24 on 111.

2. **Would this be recorded as sickness absence?** No, during the current national vaccination programme, short-term absence due to post-vaccine illness will be recorded as paid leave.

Pregnant colleagues

1. **I’m pregnant (less than 28 weeks) and am concerned about attending work. What do I do?** If your workplace is open and you’re needed to be at work, your line manager will discuss this with you. As part of this discussion, they will carry out a new and expectant mothers risk assessment with you to ensure that any measures required to support you at work are put in place. Depending on the circumstances and results of the risk assessment, it may be necessary to seek advice from your GP/Midwife and Occupational Health.

   There is more information and advice surrounding pregnancy and Coronavirus on the NHS Inform website.

2. **I’m more than 28 weeks’ pregnant and/or have underlying health conditions. Should I attend work now that Scotland has moved beyond Level 0?** Although Scotland has moved beyond Level 0, if you’re in your third trimester or have an underlying health condition that places you at clinical risk, you’re not expected to attend work but will be expected to work from home where possible. If you can’t work from home, you’ll receive paid leave at your normal pay.

   If you wish to attend work, you’ll only be able to do so if your GP/midwife confirms it is safe, considering your individual circumstances and any measures in place.

Non-Coronavirus related absence

1. **I’m sick for a reason that isn’t related to Coronavirus, but my workplace is also closed, and I can’t work from home. Is my absence now paid special leave?** No. If you’re off sick for a non-Coronavirus related reason, the normal sickness absence policy and pay entitlements will apply.
2. I was already on long-term sickness, but also received a shielding letter as I am in the highest-risk group. Should my absence have been paid special leave? No, if you were already absent with an existing condition and were still unfit to return during any period of shielding, normal sickness absence processes apply. If you are now fit to return you would be expected to be available for work as normal, subject to any risk assessment and appropriate measures being put in place.

Caring responsibilities

1. Are there any childcare provisions available so that I can continue to work? All early learning and childcare settings have now reopened. You can find out more on the Scottish Government and Council websites, as well on the Parent Club website.

2. What if I don’t want to use the Childcare provision? If there’s childcare provision available to you, you’re expected to use it and be available for work.

3. I have caring responsibilities for someone who needs to self-isolate. Do I get paid leave? If you need to provide care to someone who is self-isolating, you’d be expected to work from home as far as possible. If this isn’t possible, and no other arrangements for care can be made, you would receive paid leave. You should provide evidence of this to your line manager.

Resignation

1. I recently resigned, would I be able to withdraw my resignation? This is at your manager’s discretion. They’ll consider factors such as the nature of the role, whether you work in an essential service, and whether there is meaningful work for you to do.

Delays in hearings

1. I was going through a disciplinary / grievance / sickness absence process. Will this still continue? In light of the circumstances, face-to-face meetings and hearings had to be postponed for a period in 2020. We have now made arrangements for these to take place where possible and appropriate. This may be through the use of technology, or in person observing appropriate social distancing measures. This will be considered on a case by case basis. If a delay due to coronavirus has resulted in a reduction in pay, please contact askHR so we can review this for you.

Flexitime system

1. Why has flexi time been suspended? We suspended the Scheme of Flexible Working Hours in March 2020 due to the unprecedented events impacting our services and working arrangements, where many colleagues are working from home, in other locations and/or working flexibly already. Secondly, but separately, the method of recording hours (the Crown Flexi system) is no longer in operation, as it needs a high level of investment to make this end of life system secure.

We began consultation with the trade unions in June 2020 on the cessation of this scheme. That consultation has now been concluded, and we’ll update colleagues on the outcome of that soon.
2. **Can I continue to accrue hours as before?** No. If you use the flexi system, we’re asking you to work your contracted hours unless you’re asked to do otherwise or are unable to due to current working arrangements.

3. **What if I'm asked to or need to work additional hours?** If you agree with your manager to work additional hours these should be taken as time off in lieu, or paid overtime if approved by the Head of Service.

**Teachers Compensatory Leave (self-isolation)**

1. **I'm a Teacher and needed to self-isolate during a period of holiday. Do I get this time back?** The SNCT handbook covers compensatory leave, a provision available in situations where a Teacher has certified sickness absence during a period of annual leave. For the period of this summer break, the SNCT has agreed to extend this to include self-isolation (due to Covid-19 contact) as a scenario covered by compensatory leave.

2. **How much annual leave am I able to claim back?** For every 5 days of annual leave within a self-isolation period, you will accrue 2 days of compensatory leave. You can continue to accrue compensatory leave up to a maximum of 8 days in any one leave year.

3. **Will I need to provide any evidence of my requirement to self-isolate?** Your manager may ask you to produce evidence of your requirement to self-isolate. If you receive a phone call from Test and Protect contact tracers, you should ask them to send you a text or email to confirm your requirement to self-isolate.

4. **When will I be able to take accrued compensatory leave?** Compensatory leave can be taken upon your return to work, the timing of which will be agreed with your manager and will be subject to the needs of the service.

**Agency workers**

As you're not paid by the Council, you should contact your agency in the first instance.

**Scenarios**

1. **Self-isolation.** You need to contact your employer (agency) directly and notify your manager that you're unable to attend work.

2. **Sick/infected.** You need to contact your employer (agency) directly and notify your manager that you’re unable to attend work.

3. **Care for a dependant as a result of them having Coronavirus.** You need to contact your employer (agency) directly and notify your manager that you're unable to attend work.

4. **School or office closure as a result of Coronavirus.** The Council will notify your employer (agency) as soon as we’re able to, to notify them of any closures. Where
possible we will redeploy you to offices or services which are still running/open. As an agency worker, you may still be able to be engaged by us if you are able to work from home or can be suitably redeployed.

5. **You want to come to work, but are in the highest risk category.** You should contact your employer (agency) directly.

6. **You don't want to come to work.** You need to contact your employer (agency) directly and notify your manager that you’re unable to attend work.

**Casual and Tertiary workers**

**Hours and pay**

1. **The location/service I work at is closed because of coronavirus and I've not been offered any hours and/or have had engaged hours cancelled. Will I receive any pay?** No. The temporary average/estimated hours arrangement ended following any payment made on 27 August 2020 for July hours. This means that you will be paid for any hours worked, in line with your casual/tertiary worker agreement.

2. **Can I be furloughed?** The UK Government expected that the job retention scheme would not be used by public sector organisations in circumstances where public sector employees continue to provide essential public services or continue to receive public funding for staff costs.

   In a small number of cases, for example where primary funding does not come from the government and where colleagues can’t be redeployed to assist with the coronavirus response, we determined that the furlough scheme may be appropriate. For these colleagues, furlough arrangements ended on 31 August 2020 with the end of the average/estimated pay arrangements. There is currently no intention to place any casual/tertiary workers back on furlough.

**Coronavirus-related absence**

1. **I've been offered and/or accepted hours but am symptomatic and need to self-isolate. Do I get paid?** You would be paid for any hours you were engaged to work for the period of self-isolation, although you'd be expected to work from home if this is possible and you’re well enough. Your manager may ask you for evidence – if so, you can get a [self-isolation note online](#) through NHS111.

   If you’re symptomatic you should arrange for a test, in line with national guidance – if this test is negative you should speak to your line manager so that they can support an earlier return to work. You should provide evidence of this to your line manager.

   If you don’t have any engaged hours, you wouldn't be entitled to paid leave or sick pay, although you may be eligible for statutory sick pay.

2. **My symptoms develop and I become ill.** You need to call 111 and you’ll be paid for any hours you were engaged to work during your absence. If you don’t have any engaged hours you wouldn’t be entitled to paid leave, although you may be eligible for statutory sick pay.
3. I've been offered and/or accepted hours, but I live with someone who has symptoms, what do I do? Follow NHS Inform guidance on self-isolation, 10 days. You would be paid for any hours you were engaged to work for the period of self-isolation, although you'd be expected to work from home if this is possible and you're well enough. You or the people you cohabit with may also be referred for a test in line with national guidance.

4. I have an underlying health issue that places me at highest risk. I've had a risk assessment and understand the safety measures that are in place, but I still feel anxious about making myself available to work. What do I do? It's important that you discuss any concerns you have with your line manager so that they can support you fully. Where the appropriate measures have been put in place you are should provide your availability for work as normal, unless there's specific evidence to say that you can't. You will only be paid for any hours you work, in line with your casual/tertiary worker agreement.

5. I've had a risk assessment, which has been considered along with medical advice, and it's not yet safe for me to attend work. Will I get paid? No, if you're unable to make yourself available to work wouldn't be paid, although you may be able to work from home if this is possible and you're well enough.

6. I don't have symptoms but am worried about coming to work. Do I get paid? If you don't have symptoms and don't need to self-isolate, you would only be paid for any hours you work.

Non coronavirus-related absence

1. I can't make myself available for work because I'm sick with non coronavirus-related illness. Do I get paid? No, you wouldn't be entitled to paid leave or sick pay, although you may be eligible for statutory sick pay.