

# Coronavirus Policy

## Disclaimer

This is a sample policy that has been developed by Irwin Mitchell LLP. It has been prepared on the basis of what is required by law on **13 March 2020**, what is good practice and our understanding of issues common to employers. It may not be suitable for your circumstances and may not reflect new advice provided by the government or NHS after 13 March 2020. It should not be considered a substitute for the advice of a lawyer. You agree you use this document at your own risk in these respects.

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## 1 Overview

This policy is designed to provide you with important information about the Coronavirus outbreak and what we are doing to support our staff and our clients [OR AS APPROPRIATE]. Please continue to take time to read the information and ask questions if you have any concerns.

This policy is non contractual, it may be amended or added to at any time and it will be updated, as appropriate, to reflect changing advice. It applies to all staff, including those who work for us on a casual basis, but it doesn't apply to anyone we engage on a self employed basis.

## 2 Symptoms

The main symptoms of Coronavirus (Covid-19) (Coronavirus Symptoms) are:

- a cough
- a high temperature
- shortage of breath

But, these symptoms do not necessarily mean you have the illness.

The Coronavirus Symptoms are similar to other illnesses that are much more common, such as cold and flu.

Current guidance indicates that among those who become infected, some will exhibit no symptoms. Of those who do develop an illness, the majority will have a mild to moderate illness similar to seasonal flu. A minority will develop complications severe enough to require hospital care, most often pneumonia and in a small number of these the illness may be severe enough to lead to death.

## 3 Preventative steps and hygiene

We are taking all reasonable steps to protect your health and safety.

We require all staff to follow these simple steps to help stop the spread of germs like Coronavirus.

### Do:

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze
- Put used tissues in the bin straight away
- Thoroughly wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds – only use hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available
- Always wash your hands when you get home or into work
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces
- Try to avoid close contact with people who are unwell

### Don't:

- Touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean

## 4 At risk groups

[Current advice](#) is that the risk of severe illness increases amongst elderly people and those with underlying health risks, such as diabetes, heart disease and lung disease. So, far, there is no obvious sign that pregnant women are more likely to be seriously affected but we will continue to review this.

Please tell us if you think you are at risk:

4.1 Because you are in one of the high risk groups or you care for someone who is considered to be high risk; or

- 4.2 Because you have recently returned from one of the countries considered to be high risk (you can check this [here](#)); or
- 4.3 You have been in contact with someone who is being tested for, has tested positive for Coronavirus or has been advised to self isolate because they have coronavirus symptoms.

We will conduct an individual risk assessment for anyone we believe to be in a high risk group and will put in place appropriate safeguards.

## **5 What to do if you have Coronavirus symptoms**

### **5.1 At work**

If you become ill at work, please speak to your line manager as quickly as possible. [We have a room [insert location] that you can go to which has a telephone.] OR [You should go to an area that is at least two meters away from other people and, if possible, find a room or area where you can be isolated behind a closed door, such as a staff office. If you can, please open a window for ventilation.] Please try to avoid unnecessarily touching surfaces.

If you have internet access please use the [NHS 111 online service](#) and follow the advice you receive. If you don't have internet access please call NHS 111, or 999 in an emergency. If you are advised to go home and self isolate, please tell your line manager and then make your way home as safely as possible. If you travel on public transport, please follow any instructions given to you by the NHS staff.

If you need to go to the bathroom whilst waiting for medical assistance, please use [the disabled toilet OR AS APPROPRIATE].

- 5.2 If you become ill at home, please do not come into work. You'll need to telephone us in accordance with our usual absence policy.

If you have internet access please use the [NHS 111 online service](#) and follow the advice you receive. If you don't have internet access, please call NHS 111. You need to tell us if you are advised to self-isolate and if you are being tested for coronavirus.

## **6 What to do if you test positive for Coronavirus**

Please advise us immediately if you test positive for Coronavirus, even if your symptoms are mild. You will not be able to return to work until you are considered fit by Public Health England or any other competent authority. You don't need to obtain a fit note from your doctor, but please send to us anything you do receive which confirms your diagnosis and/or fitness to return to work.

If you feel well enough to work, please let us know. If your role lends itself to homeworking, we'll discuss how we can facilitate that[. in line with our Homeworking policy OR AS APPROPRIATE.]

We will not inform anyone else about your condition unless it's necessary to do so and we are legally able to. Our overriding obligation is to protect the health and safety of our staff, and we may therefore have to speak to your colleagues and other people with whom you've been in close contact in order to protect them. Any information we disclose will be limited to what is necessary for that protection.

Public Health England are responsible for 'contact tracing' (tracing anyone you have been in close contact with) and we will cooperate with them as appropriate.

## **7 What to do if you are advised by a medical professional to self-isolate**

If you have recently returned from travel overseas to affected areas, or have been in close contact with someone diagnosed with Coronavirus you are likely to be asked to self-isolate – even if you don't have any symptoms. The government has also asked people with a high temperature or a new, continuous cough to self-isolate.

This means you should:

- Stay at home
- Not go to work or public areas
- Not use public transport or taxis
- Ask friends, family members or delivery services to carry out errands for you
- Try to avoid visitors to your home, although it's okay for friends, family and delivery drivers to drop off food

You may need to do this for up to 14 days to help reduce the possible spread of infection. Please follow the advice you are given.

Please follow any additional advice given to you by health professionals. The NHS has detailed advice on self-isolation available [here](#).

If you feel well enough to work, please let us know. If your role lends itself to homeworking, we'll discuss how we can facilitate that[. in line with our Homeworking policy OR AS APPROPRIATE.] If you don't feel well enough to work, or you can't work from home, please keep in touch with us.

The government has up to date information for individuals who have travelled overseas and returned to the UK. If you have been abroad recently, please consult this and inform us if you are required to self-isolate.

## **8 Sick pay policy**

### 8.1 Statutory sick pay

If you are diagnosed with Coronavirus or have Coronavirus Symptoms and you are too unwell to work from home, we will pay you statutory sick pay from the first day of absence – provided you meet the qualifying conditions. You will need to comply with the usual rules around notification set out in our [sickness policy OR AS APPROPRIATE] but you don't need to obtain a fit note unless your illness lasts for longer than 14 days.

We will also pay you statutory sick pay if you are responsible for looking after someone in your household who has been told to self-isolate, if you are not able to continue to work. You will need to meet the qualifying conditions and inform us immediately.

### 8.2 [Contractual sick pay]

Our normal contractual sick pay policy applies to anyone who is unwell with Coronavirus or has Coronavirus Symptoms and unable to work. You will need to comply with the usual rules around notification set out in our [sickness policy OR AS APPROPRIATE] [but you don't need to obtain a fit note unless your illness lasts for longer than 14 days.]

We may withhold sick pay to anyone who has travelled somewhere contrary to government advice on their first day of travel.

We may also withhold sick pay if we have reasonable grounds to believe that you are fit for work and can work remotely.

### 8.3 [Discretionary sick pay]

If you have Coronavirus or Coronavirus Symptoms and are too unwell to work we may pay you up to [100% of your basic salary] for the first [14] days absence and [50% of your basic salary] for a further [x] days [OR AS APPROPRIATE]. You will need to comply with the usual rules around notification set out in our [sickness policy OR AS APPROPRIATE] [but you don't need to obtain a fit note unless your illness lasts for longer than 14 days].

We may withhold discretionary sick pay to anyone who has travelled somewhere contrary to government advice on their first day of travel.

We may also withhold sick pay if we have reasonable grounds to believe that you are fit for work and can work remotely.

## **9 Self isolation**

If you are advised to self-isolate and don't have any symptoms, we will pay you statutory sick pay as set out in clause 8.1 above if you are not able to work from home. We may need to contact you to ask about work related issues, so please tell your manager the best number to contact you on.

[We may also, at our absolute discretion pay up to 100% of your basic salary for up to [14] days provided you comply with our reporting requirements.]

## **10 Business travel, meetings and events**

We will keep matters under review and will follow NHS and government advice. Currently, we recommend that you:

10.1 Only travel if it is essential to do so outside of attending your normal workplace

Please hold telephone or video conferences unless a face to face meeting is essential.

If you are due to attend external events, please check with the event organisations and speak to us if you are unhappy about attending.

10.2 Take precautions for essential face to face meetings

Please follow [NHS advice](#). It's also sensible to avoid shaking hands.

Please speak to your manager if you are worried about travelling.

## **11 Holidays**

Many of you will already have pre-booked holidays abroad. Government advice is changing but if you intend to travel to a country or region not recommended by the government on the day you travel, you must tell us and may have to self-isolate when you return. You will only be paid if you can continue to work from home during this period, or you are eligible to receive statutory sick pay.

We recommend that you think carefully before booking holidays abroad and obtain appropriate insurance which covers cancellations.

If you wish to cancel any pre-booked holidays, please speak to your manager [OR SET OUT PROCESS]. If we can't accommodate your request, we'll explain why.

## 12 Responding to emergencies

Many of you will have caring responsibilities for family members or other people who rely on you. If you need to respond to an emergency (such as a school closure) please tell us as quickly as possible.

[Our normal policy on taking time off to deal with an emergency applies] OR [We always consider the circumstances of each case to allow for some flexibility, but the time you take off must be both reasonable and necessary for you to deal with something immediately and/or respond to an emergency. Normally this means hours, or a maximum of one or two days, and this type of leave is not designed to provide care over the longer term.] Please talk to us if you don't think this will be adequate as we may be able to relax our normal procedures for taking paid holiday, requesting parental leave or, exceptionally taking unpaid leave. We regret that if you take time off you won't be paid unless we agree that you can work from home.

## 13 Workplace closure

If we have to close the [business/organisation], or there's not sufficient work available (perhaps because less people are using our services OR AS APPROPRIATE) we will advise you as quickly as we can. If your contract gives us the right to lay you off, then we may exercise it. Alternatively, we may ask you to take unpaid leave, agree that we can lay you off or ask you to work fewer hours (which will result in a reduction in your salary).

We may continue to pay you whilst we monitor the situation. We'll keep you informed by updating our [intranet AND SET OUT OTHER METHODS OF COMMUNICATION].

However, if our [business/organisation] (or parts of it) have to shut down for a significant amount of time, as an alternative to making redundancies, we may discuss with you other options such as taking unpaid leave or asking you to take paid holiday.

## 14 Where to find up to date information

UK Government: [travel information](#) including information about 'high risk' countries/regions and information for people travelling overseas.

NHS: [information about Coronavirus](#)

World Health Authority: [latest advice](#)

UK Government: [Number of coronavirus \(COVID-19\) cases and risk in the UK](#)

UK Government: [Guidance for businesses](#)