

Coronavirus - latest update - 25 March 2020

Please see below for answers to the most commonly asked questions following the Government's update.

What is the main advice from the Government currently?

We are not in a complete lock down from the Government at present. The advice is:

Stay at home

- Only go outside for food, health reasons or work (where this absolutely cannot be done from home)
- Stay 2 metres (6ft) away from other people
- Wash your hands as soon as you get home

If I can't work from home what should I do?

You should attend work as normal, unless advised otherwise by your line manager, medical professional, or you or a household member has COVID-19 symptoms.

What should I do if I'm a key holder and the site that I work at is closed?

Employees who are key holders working at non-educational establishments that are now closed, should continue to work unless told otherwise by their line manager. This only applies to employees who are not in currently directly impacted by the virus.

Some of our employees are nervous about using public transport, what is the Government guidance on this?

At present public transport remains open in most areas, and if necessary employees can still use public transport to get to work (although they should consider walking where possible). Employees should practice social distancing whilst using social transport such as standing or sitting away from other individuals, as well as ensuring good hand washing hygiene is carried out when they enter their place of work.

Some of our employees are nervous about being out in public going to work as they are worried they may get stopped by the Police. What advice can we give them?

You are still permitted to make essential travel to and from work. Employees should carry their ID badges at all time to demonstrate to the Police that they are carrying out vital cleaning services for local government and educational establishments. If an employee requires a letter from the Company to confirm this, they can request this on a case by case basis and our HR Department will send one to their home address.

The Government have released specific guidance for the extremely vulnerable. But what do we mean by extremely vulnerable?

People falling into this extremely vulnerable group include:

1. Solid organ transplant recipients.
2. People with specific cancers:
 - people with cancer who are undergoing active chemotherapy or radical radiotherapy for lung cancer
 - people with cancers of the blood or bone marrow such as leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma who are at any stage of treatment
 - people having immunotherapy or other continuing antibody treatments for cancer
 - people having other targeted cancer treatments which can affect the immune system, such as protein kinase inhibitors or PARP inhibitors
 - people who have had bone marrow or stem cell transplants in the last 6 months, or who are still taking immunosuppression drugs
3. People with severe respiratory conditions including all cystic fibrosis, severe asthma and severe COPD.
4. People with rare diseases and inborn errors of metabolism that significantly increase the risk of infections (such as SCID, homozygous sickle cell).
5. People on immunosuppression therapies sufficient to significantly increase risk of infection.
6. Women who are pregnant with significant heart disease, congenital or acquired.

How will I know if I am categorised as extremely vulnerable to catching the virus under Government guidance?

The NHS in England is directly contacting people with conditions classified as extremely vulnerable to provide further advice by 29 March 2020. This is usually by letter or in the first instance it can be a text.

If you think you fall into one of the categories of extremely vulnerable people listed above and you have not received a letter by Sunday 29 March 2020 or been contacted by your GP, you should discuss your concerns with your GP or hospital clinician by telephone or using an online service.

If you have received a letter by the NHS to categorise you as highly vulnerable, what do you need to do?

You are strongly advised to stay at home at all times for a period of at least 12 weeks from the day you receive your letter. Please note that this period of time could change. Within your home you should minimise all non-essential contact with other members of your household. This is called shielding. All people coming to your home should wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds on arrival to your house and often while they are there.

If an employee decides to self-isolate for 12 weeks, but does not fall into the above category and has not received a letter by the NHS, this will be classified as unpaid absence, if there is no agreement in place with the line manager that they may do so.

What about if I live with someone who's classified as highly vulnerable?

If you live with someone who is highly vulnerable, you are not required to adopt these protective shielding measures for yourself and are not required to stay at home for 12 weeks. You should however do what you can to support the vulnerable individual by stringently following guidance on social distancing, reducing your contact outside the home.

If an employee decides to self-isolate for 12 weeks, because they live with a vulnerable individual, this will be classified as unpaid absence, if there is no agreement in place with the line manager that they may do so.

Should the over 70's be self-isolating?

There is no requirement by the government that over 70's should be self-isolating, however the Government guidance for these individual is that they should be particularly stringent following social distancing measures. A reminder of which:

1. Avoid contact with someone who is displaying symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19). These symptoms include high temperature and/or new and continuous cough
2. Avoid non-essential use of public transport when possible
3. Work from home, where possible. Your employer should support you to do this.
4. Avoid large and small gatherings in public spaces, noting that pubs, restaurants, leisure centres and similar venues are currently shut as infections spread easily in closed spaces where people gather together.
5. Avoid gatherings with friends and family. Keep in touch using remote technology such as phone, internet, and social media
6. Use telephone or online services to contact your GP or other essential services

For our frontline staff, due to the nature of our business, we are unable to accommodate working from home, and therefore they should continue to attend work as normal unless

advised by a medical professional or their line manager, as long as they follow social distancing rules and hygiene rules at work.

How can our frontline staff put social distancing measures in place whilst at work?

Team cleaning should be avoided and employees should remain at least 2 metres apart.

Employees should wash their hands immediately upon entering a site and put their gloves on before signing into work, where possible.

Employees should stand 2 metres apart from each other whilst signing in and out of work.

When should I decide to stay at home and self-isolate?

- If you have symptoms (high temperature and/or new persistent cough) of coronavirus infection (COVID-19), however mild, stay at home and do not leave your house for 7 days from when your symptoms started.
- If you live with others and you are the first in the household to have symptoms of coronavirus, then you must stay at home for 7 days, but all other household members who remain well must stay at home and not leave the house for 14 days. The 14-day period starts from the day when the first person in the house became ill. If any other household members become unwell during the 14-day household-isolation period, they should follow the same advice - that is, after 7 days of their symptoms starting, if they feel better and no longer have a high temperature, they can also return to their normal routine.
- If you have received a letter from the NHS confirming you should self-isolate due to being high risk.

Do I need to provide proof of sickness to my line manager?

The Government have introduced an 'isolation note' on the NHS website, however at present it is being decided how the business can ensure this process is robust and clear for its employees and managers. For now, continue to report your absence and reasons for your absence to your line manager in line with the correct procedure.

In due course it will become common practice for doctors to issue virtual fit notes in relation to COVID/19, which you will then be able to provide as proof of sickness.

We will provide further guidance to our managers and staff on this shortly.

What do I do if I am not eligible for statutory sick pay (SSP)?

If an employee is off sick due to COVID/19 and is not eligible to claim for SSP, they may be able to apply for Universal Credit or Employment and Support Allowance (ESA).

What do I do if I have recently returned home from another country?

There is no requirement to automatically self-isolate upon return from a specific country. The restrictions for travellers returning from specified countries has been withdrawn. Please refer to the stay at home guidance above upon your return from another country.

What do I do if I am unable to return from my holiday due to flight cancellations?

Employees who are currently in another country and unable to travel back due to flight restrictions will need to report this to their line manager as soon as practically possible. Employee's may be asked to provide proof of their flight cancellations. In these instances, employees will be marked as absent and will not be paid. Employees are required to keep in contact with their managers whilst they are absent and keep them up to date on the return to work date.

Can you remind me about how I will be paid?

- If you are at work as normal, you will receive your normal contracted pay.
- If you are self-isolating in line with the above guidance from the Government or a medical profession you will receive pay in line with your sickness entitlement, normally this is Statutory Sick Pay (SSP).
- If you are absent due to sickness reasons not related to COVID-19, you will receive pay in line with your normal sickness entitlement.
- If you are absent for child care reasons, this is classified as parental leave and is unpaid.
- If you are absent as you don't want to attend work but it is not in line with the above guidance, this will be unpaid.

What is the Government Job Retention Scheme?

The Government Coronavirus Retention Scheme is a scheme that allows employees to receive up to 80% of their monthly salary up to a limit of £2,500 wage cost whilst being placed on a temporary leave of absence – otherwise called "Furlough". This scheme is available up until 31st May for those employees whose job is no longer available during this crisis. Whilst the government have released very limited information on this at present,

Nviro will intend on using this scheme to help give financial security to employees that would have otherwise lost their jobs.

What other financial support is available from the Government during this crisis?

Whether you are currently in or out of work, if you are on a low income and affected by the economic impacts of COVID-19, you will be able to access the full range of the welfare system, including Universal Credit.

From 6 April the Government is increasing the standard allowance in Universal Credit and the basic element in Working Tax Credit for 1 year. Both will increase by £20 per week on top of planned annual uprating. This will apply to all new and existing Universal Credit claimants and to existing Working Tax Credit claimants.

If you are a home owner or renter, you or your landlord may also be entitled to a Mortgage payment holiday. You may also be able to get a payment holiday on other loans and payments and should contact the relevant providers.