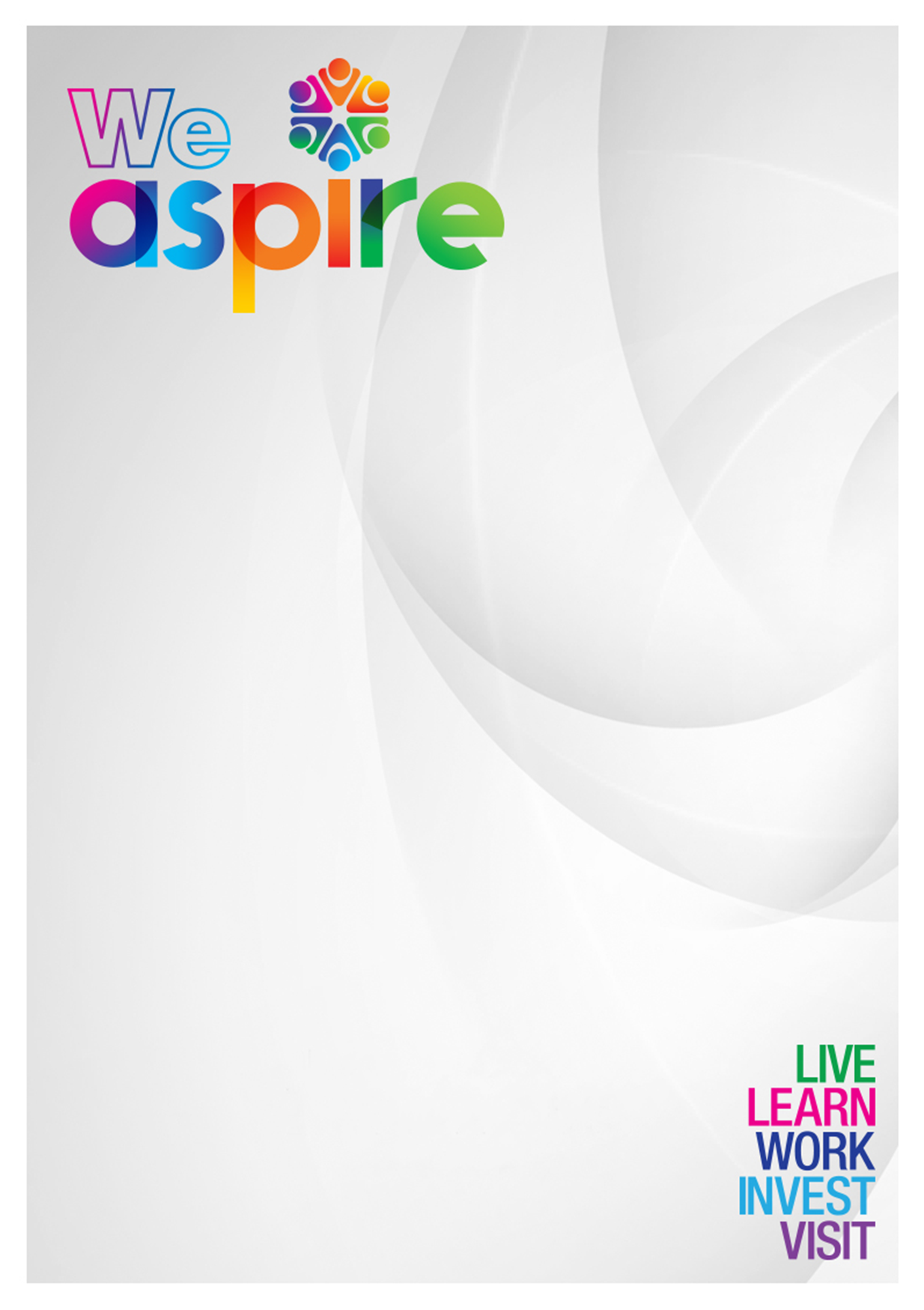
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**HR-02/2020**

**COIVD-19 (Coronavirus)**

**Updated guidance information for Staff 24th March 2020**

Please see below information to be disseminated to all staff related to HR guidance in the midst of the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) outbreak. This has been updated following the Prime Minister’s announcement advising that all staff should stay at home except for those in business critical services.

You will be advised directly by your manager regarding the status of your service and what you should do in the days ahead.

We appreciate this is an unsettling time and we thank everyone for their continued cooperation and dedication, particularly those who are continuing to staff our frontline services, and providing support for our communities.

For the most up-to-date guidance for employees and managers, please go to <https://mynl.co.uk/article-categories/coronavirus-information/>

This guidance document includes information on the following: (click on the link to be taken to the section in the document):

* [What if I am told that my service is not critical?](#notcritical)
* [What happens if I am in self-isolation?](#isolation)
* [What happens at the end of my self-isolation period?](#end)
* [What happens if I fall sick with Coronavirus?](#sick)
* [What will happen with my annual leave?](#annual)
* [What if I have to care for children](#caring)
* [Guidance on working from home?](#homeworking)

**What if I am told that my service is not critical?**

If your manager has not yet communicated with you regarding the status of your service, you should make contact with your immediate line manager to establish the position of your service and whether you are required to support any essential services.

If you are able to work from home we would ask that you do so. If you are not able to work from home due to the nature of your job, but you are available for work, you will be placed on special paid leave, however you should ensure that you are able to keep in touch with your service and to make yourself available as you may be required to support another critical service within the Council.

General staff messaging will be issued through [MyNL](https://mynl.co.uk/article-categories/coronavirus-information/) which can be accessed from any device or your home computer via this link <https://mynl.co.uk/article-categories/coronavirus-information/>. Please check this on a regular basis when you are at home for communications which may be relevant to you.

**[What happens if I am in self-isolation?](#self)**

Self-isolation means you have been advised to stay at home to help control the spread of the virus to friends and others. This is because you have indicated that you are symptomatic or that you have been in close proximity to someone who is or may be infected with the virus.

In line with NHS guidance, you should self-isolate for 7 calendar days, if you think you have symptoms of coronavirus. If you live in a household with others and someone in the household has symptoms, you should self-isolate for 14 days. In both of these cases, your absence will be recorded as sickness absence but will not count towards triggers associated with the Council’s attendance management policy.

For more information on what self-isolation means, go to <https://www.nhsinform.scot/coronavirus#stay-at-home-advice>

Advice on what to do if you need to self-isolate can be found [here](https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-covid-19-stay-at-home-advice)

**[What happens at the end of my self-isolation period?](#end)**

If you have come to the end of your self-isolation period, whether it is 7 or 14 days, and you are fit and well and have been told that **you are required to work as part of an essential service**, we would ask that you contact your immediate line manager and make arrangements to return to work. Please contact your line manager directly if you are unsure about the status of your service.

Where possible we need all workers for essential services to return to their place of work. Your manager will be able to advise you on the specific instructions for how you should return to work as some arrangements in your workplace may have changed.

For those in essential services, your manager will contact you the day before you are due to return (at day 6 or day 13 or at the end of the 12 week period) to confirm you are fit and confirm arrangements prior to returning.

On your return you should log into myself to return yourself to work. An easy guide on how to do this can be found [here](https://mynl.co.uk/wpfd_file/how-to-end-a-sickness-absence-on-myself/). If you have any problem doing this, please contact the People Helpdesk on 01698 403 151.

If you have come to the end of your self- isolation period, whether it is 7 or 14 days, and you are fit and well and have been told that you are **not required to work** as part of an essential service, we would ask that you stay at home and contact your immediate line manager and inform them that you are out of self-isolation.

You will also need to log into myself to return yourself to work. An easy guide on how to do this can be found [here](https://mynl.co.uk/wpfd_file/how-to-end-a-sickness-absence-on-myself/). If you have any problem doing this, please contact the People Helpdesk on 01698 403 151.

**What happens if I fall sick with Coronavirus?**

If you fall sick with Coronavirus, whether this has been confirmed or not, you should not be at work and your family should follow all self-isolation protocols. If you have fallen sick you should advise your line manager immediately and they will contact the Employee Service Centre to record your absence.

We have had clear medical guidance from NHS and our Occupational Health providers that *after 7 days of symptoms, the virus is no longer contagious*.   You may still be suffering some symptoms associated with the virus such as a persistent cough, but as soon as you feel fit and able to return to your work duties, you should follow the procedure set out above for returning from self-isolation and establish whether you are required to return to work as part of a critical service or whether you need to stay at home, either working from home or on special leave.    If you are unsure of your position please contact the Employee Service Centre on 01698 403 151 or via email [ESC-HelpdeskTeam@northlan.gov.uk](mailto:ESC-HelpdeskTeam@northlan.gov.uk)

**What will happen with my annual leave?**

For all staff who are staying at home, whether you are working from home or not, we would encourage you to take all annual leave you have scheduled over the Easter break. If you are required to work within a critical service, you may be asked to cancel and re-book your leave but you will be fully notified in good time if this is the case.

To accommodate the likely difficulties in employees taking leave for the rest of this year, the leave year 2020 will be extended to the 31 March 2021. Any leave not taken by 31 March 2021 will be lost. If you have a particular difficulty in using all leave by this date you should speak to your line manager in the first instance.

Where you are symptomatic (sickness absence) the Managing Attendance policy provisions for annual leave should be applied. This means that any entitlement to annual leave not taken can be re-taken at a later date (subject to the exigencies of the service). This will include those who are self-isolating for 7 or 14 days (also recorded as sickness absence).

Where annual leave has already been agreed and you wish to take it, (unless in an area of the business that is essential front line service delivery where employees are required to work) then this should be honoured by your service.

Where leave is already agreed and you are required in the workplace (due to essential service delivery) then your manager can stand this down with the correct notice, providing there is a clear business reason. This notice should be double the timescale that the authorised leave is for (e.g. if you are due to take 5 days leave, you should be given 10 days’ notice of a cancellation).

**What if I have to care for children?**

It is recognised that the school closures may give rise to additional caring requirements, it should be acknowledged that the council is a Category 1 responder under the Civil Contingencies Act and this means we have particular legal duties and powers to respond to an emergency and a duty to continue to deliver services which members of the public rely on.

Leave can also be granted via the Special Leave policy which can be found [here](https://mynl.co.uk/knowledge-base/special-leave/). Special leave should be requested under section 21 – other special leave. Due to the extenuating circumstances, this provision has been extended to a maximum of 20 working days (pro-rata for part-time employees).

If you work within Education and have childcare issues, please discuss with your Head Teacher/Line Manager about bringing your children to school. You may also be able to access this provision if you are classed as a key worker.

For teacher special leave provision, the application of special leave will be in line with the [leave of absence of teachers](file:///C:\Users\hardyj\AppData\Local\Packages\Microsoft.MicrosoftEdge_8wekyb3d8bbwe\TempState\Downloads\F7-Leave-of-Absence-for-Teachers%20(1).pdf), Appendix 1, Special Leave (c) (i) and due to the extenuating circumstances, the maximum provision noted above applies.

Time off for this reason should be discussed with your line manager in the first instance.

**Guidance for working from home**

The UK Government is urging everyone to now work at home where possible. This presents practical challenges for councils. All councils will already have flexible working policies that set out protocols for employees whose roles readily lend themselves to working at home and we would expect those arrangements to now be activated.

Employees should ensure that they are taking steps to look after their wellbeing during their period of working from home. This includes:

* maintaining regular contact with their manager and colleagues
* taking regular breaks
* avoiding being ‘always on’ by ensuring that they identify non-working time
* contacting the employee assistance programme if they need support, for example, in relation to heightened feelings of anxiety. Our Employee Counselling Service Time for Talking can be contacted on 0800 970 3980.
* being aware of the things that can cause them poor wellbeing and the activities and resources that can help to address this

Managers will be expected to keep in regular contact with employees who work from home. They will:

* Agree, on a regular basis what work they are required to undertake from home and what outputs are expected
* Ensure they follow the home working guidance, found here
* Agree a time in the day or each week to contact them via skype or telephone
* Update them regularly on what is happening at work and if there are any changes they need to be informed of.

Managers should also keep in touch with those self-isolating for this extended period.

For the most up-to-date guidance for employees and managers, please go to <https://mynl.co.uk/article-categories/coronavirus-information/>