

Coronavirus - Guidance to Employees and Line Managers

In our last employee communication (24th March 2020) we highlighted the British Government advice relating to the COVID-19 outbreak and in particular the **new rules on staying at home and away from others**.

To recap these are;

1. Requiring people to stay at home, except for very limited purposes i.e. shopping for basic necessities, one form of exercise a day, any medical needs and travelling to and from work where this cannot be done from home.
2. Closing non-essential shops and community spaces.
3. Stopping all gatherings of more than two people in public.

We received a number of queries on our last update, in particular around the Government **Corona Virus Job Retention Scheme** (Furloughed Workers).

There was very little information available to employers at that time and there was conflicting government information regarding the company's eligibility. Our previous communication was a genuine attempt to confirm the situation as we understood it.

Last week the Government issued clearer guidelines and this allows us to implement the furlough worker scheme.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/check-if-you-could-be-covered-by-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme>

A letter will be issued to affected employees who agree to be classified as 'furloughed workers'.

We will pay furloughed workers 80% of monthly salary, up to a maximum of £2,500, as a wage. This payment is subject to Income Tax, National Insurance contributions and any other deductions. Any entitlement to employment benefits will continue as normal.

We recognise that this may result in financial implications for some employees. The company are currently reviewing options to provide support without compromising the furlough process or the ongoing sustainability of the business.

Outline of Furlough Process

Business Unit Manager's will review business and customer requirements to identify which employees should be 'furloughed' together with the date from which furlough will apply.

People who are sick, self-isolating (classed as sick), on dependent/parental leave or on holiday cannot be classed as furlough until the time of sickness / leave etc. has expired.

A fair and reasonable selection process will be used. Volunteers will also be considered in this process.

Furlough has to be for a minimum of 3 weeks to be eligible for the government grant – each local business will be required to consider any current / future client works requiring particular skill set of people including any standby arrangements, potential for future sickness cover etc. A 'rotation' of employee's may be applied where possible.

Holidays will still require to be taken in line with our Temporary Holiday Arrangements as issued 24th March. (this will be with full pay).

Being mindful of the minimum 3 week furlough period, any holiday request will need to take cognisance of this. Where the business requires individuals to use holiday we will provide reasonable notice as per current holiday policy.

We anticipate the furlough process will be effective from Monday 23rd March, Business Unit Managers will confirm dates for affected workers.

Banking of hours will not be available for employees who are Furloughed.

Some Q&A in relation to Furlough;

What happens if I fall sick during furlough leave? – You will notify your line manager as normal process and provide relevant self-certification, doctor fit note etc.

Can I take holiday during furlough leave? – Yes, you can take holidays however these will require to be taken a minimum of 3 weeks from commencement of Furlough. We may require holidays to be taken in specific ways to be in accordance with the scheme rules and to protect employment.

Can I still receive 100% pay during furlough leave and bank the remaining 20%? – No, when you are furloughed only 80% of your monthly salary, up to a maximum of £2,500, will be paid. Banking of hours will not be available.

Is there a minimum or maximum amount of time I can be furloughed? – At this time the furlough scheme is running from 1st March for 3 months, the government may choose to extend or reduce this period. The scheme requires a minimum of 3 weeks however if workload improves we may recall employees.

Social Distancing



Basic Hygiene

Do

- ✓ wash your hands with soap and water often – do this for at least 20 seconds
- ✓ use hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available
- ✓ wash your hands as soon as you get back home
- ✓ 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 immediately and wash your hands afterwards

We will provide further updates as and when there is significant change.

We thank you for your understanding during these unprecedented times and challenges ahead.

Please note the foregoing is subject to ongoing review and the business may change its position dependent on severity of circumstance.

Government legislation may change and again we will follow this as required.

Latest advice from NHS is contained in the following link <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>