

**Update: 15 May 2020:**

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We recognise that there has been a lot of information, advice and guidance from various sources and that it may be difficult to keep up to date with the frequent changes to these FAQs and other documents. As of 27 March 2020 we will not be regularly adding to this lengthy FAQ document, however we will update and make changes to any major changes in the guidelines from the government as a reference document. We will still continue to release weekly guidance on key and trending topics relating to the frequently raised queries we are receiving in HR. These new updates are short, punchy and will provide bite size information for you to easily read and digest. (The first publication should hit your inboxes on 27 March 2020. – DELETE)

These FAQs will not be updated regularly. Please see the date above to ensure you are reading the most up-to-date version. Any changes will be highlighted in yellow.

We know that you will have a number of queries regarding action to take in relation to coronavirus (COVID-19). We hope this FAQ will help answer some of your queries. Our priority is to be able to continue to provide as full a service as possible during this time. We have many different ways of delivering services across the council and you are responsible for making the right decisions, with the approval of Service Managers and ADs, regarding staffing over this period to ensure business continuity. This document aims to give you some guidance and should be read in conjunction with the information on the [government website](#) and [HR Policy & Procedure for Business Continuity](#). If you have any further questions please email [hrcovid19advice@medway.gov.uk](mailto:hrcovid19advice@medway.gov.uk) or call HR Advice on extension 4499 and a member of the HR team will be able to assist.

(We will keep this document updated on a daily basis so please check the date at the top of this document to ensure you have the latest version. DELETE)

## **Section 1: Symptoms, contact with others, self-isolating or social distancing**

### **S1Q1 What are the symptoms of COVID-19?**

S1A1 You can read the information [here](#).

**S1Q2 A member of my team is displaying symptoms of COVID-19 what should I tell them to do?**

S1A2 They should follow the government guidelines [here](#).

The Government has given clear guidance on [Self-isolation](#), [household isolation](#), [Social Distancing](#) and [Shielding](#)

**Self-Isolation**

You'll need to stay at home if you have symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) or live with someone who does.

Staying at home means you should:

- Not go to work, school or public area
- Not use public transport or taxis
- Not have visitors, such as friends and family, in your home
- Not go out to buy food or collect medicine – order them by phone or online, or ask someone else to drop them off at your home

You can use your garden, if you have one. You can also leave the house to exercise – but stay at least 2 metres away from other people

If you have symptoms of coronavirus, you'll need to stay at home for seven days. After seven days:

- if you do not have a high temperature, you do not need to stay at home
- if you still have a high temperature, stay at home until your temperature returns to normal

You do not need to stay at home if you just have a cough after seven days. A cough can last for several weeks after the infection has gone.

If you have been told to self isolate because of COVID-19 and remain off after the seven days you will need to [Get An Isolation Note and submit this to your line manager](#). This service is only for people who: have symptoms of coronavirus; or live with someone who has symptoms of coronavirus

**S1Q3 A member of my team lives alone and is displaying symptoms of COVID-19. What should they do?**

S1A3 They should self-isolate for a minimum of seven days. If it does not develop into COVID-19 they can return to work but otherwise they should remain at home all the time they are unwell.

**S1Q4 I need to self-isolate, what should I do?**

S1A4 If you are well enough to work from home ask your line manager if they can support you with this. If you are unable to work from home or you are too unwell to work after 7 days self-certification and you have been told to self-

isolate because of coronavirus you will need to [Get An Isolation Note](#) and submit this to your line manager. This service is only for people who: have symptoms of coronavirus; or live with someone who has symptoms of coronavirus

### **Household Isolation**

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 seven 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.

For anyone else in the household who starts displaying symptoms, they need to stay at home for seven days from when the symptoms appeared, regardless of what day they are on in the original 14 day isolation period.

It is likely that people living within a household will infect each other or be infected already. Staying at home for 14 days will greatly reduce the overall amount of infection the household could pass on to others in the community

Please see the [explanatory diagram](#) for stay at home guidance for households

**S1Q5 A member of my employee's household has been in touch with someone with COVID-19 but are showing no symptoms, what should my employee do?**

S1A5 They should attend work as usual unless they experience any of the symptoms as set out in the government guidelines [here](#).

**S1Q6 A member of my employee's household is displaying symptoms of COVID-19, what should they do?**

S1A6 The individual who is symptomatic should self-isolate for seven days, the rest of the individuals in the household should self-isolate for 14 days.

### **Social Distancing**

The single most important action we can all take, in fighting coronavirus, is to stay at home in order to protect the NHS and save lives.

[Social distancing measures](#) are steps you can take to reduce the social interaction between people. This will help reduce the transmission of COVID-19.

The government have updated what they are asking people to do, which is to [Stay Alert, to Control the Virus and Save Lives](#).

For many people, the appropriate course still means staying at home as much as possible, but there are a range of other actions that they are advising people to take if they do need to go out to work or for other activities:

- [staying alert when you leave home](#)
- limiting contact with other people
- keeping distance if you go out – 2 metres apart where possible
- washing your hands regularly
- wearing a [face covering](#) when you are in enclosed spaces where it is difficult to be socially distant – for example in some shops or on public transport
- and if you or anyone in your household has symptoms, you all need to [self-isolate](#)

These measures must be followed by everyone. Separate advice is available for [individuals or households who are isolating](#), and for the [most vulnerable who need to be shielded](#).

People who are clinically extremely vulnerable should have received a letter telling them they're in this group or been told by their GP. If you have not received a letter or you have not been contacted by your GP but you're still concerned, you should discuss your concerns with your GP or hospital clinician.

## **Shielding**

Shielding is a measure to protect people who are clinically extremely vulnerable by minimising all interaction between those who are extremely vulnerable and others. The government are strongly advising people with serious underlying health conditions (listed below) which put them at very high risk of severe illness from COVID-19 to rigorously follow shielding measures in order to keep themselves safe.

Expect Doctors in England have identified people falling into this extremely vulnerable group which includes:

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.

If you have a serious underlying health condition listed above, you are at very high risk of severe illness as a result of COVID-19 requiring admission to hospital.

Shielding is a practice used to protect extremely vulnerable people from coming into contact with COVID-19.

You are strongly advised to stay at home at all times and avoid any face-to-face contact for a period of at least 12 weeks from the day you receive your letter. Please note that this period of time could change.

## Staying at home and shielding

You're strongly advised to stay at home at all times and avoid any face-to-face contact if you're clinically extremely vulnerable to protect yourself.

This is called 'shielding'.

Shielding means:

1. Do not leave your house.
2. Do not attend any gatherings. This includes gatherings of friends and families in private spaces, for example, family homes, weddings and religious services.
3. Strictly avoid contact with someone who is displaying symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19). These symptoms include high temperature and/or new and continuous cough.

The Government is currently advising people to shield until the end of June and is regularly monitoring this position.

During this period there are various resources available to you to help you look after your well-being.

## Living with other people

The rest of your household do not need to start shielding themselves, but they should do what they can to support you in shielding and to carefully follow [guidance on social distancing](#).

At home you should:

1. Minimise the time other people living with you spend in shared spaces such as kitchens, bathrooms and sitting areas, and keep shared spaces well ventilated.

2. Keep 2 metres (3 steps) away from people you live with and encourage them to sleep in a different bed where possible. If you can, use a separate bathroom from the rest of the household. Use separate towels from the other people in your house, both for drying themselves after bathing or showering and for hand-hygiene purposes.
3. If you share a toilet and bathroom with others, it's important that they are cleaned every time after use (for example, wiping surfaces you have come into contact with). Consider drawing up a rota for bathing, with you using the facilities first.
4. If you share a kitchen with others, avoid using it while they're present. If you can, take your meals back to your room to eat. If you have one, use a dishwasher to clean and dry the family's used crockery and cutlery. If this is not possible, wash them using your usual washing-up liquid and warm water and dry them thoroughly. If you are using your own utensils, remember to use a separate tea towel for drying these.
5. Everyone in your household should regularly wash their hands, avoid touching their face and clean frequently touched surfaces.

If the rest of your household follows this guidance, there is no need for them to take the full protective measures to keep you safe.

## **Section 2: Over 70 and/or underlying health conditions**

Some people, including those aged 70 and over, those with specific chronic pre-existing conditions and pregnant women, are **clinically vulnerable**, meaning they are at higher risk of severe illness from coronavirus.

There is a further category of people with serious underlying health conditions who are **clinically extremely vulnerable**, meaning they are at very high risk of severe illness from coronavirus.

### **Clinically vulnerable people**

If you have any of the following health conditions, you are clinically vulnerable, meaning you are at higher risk of severe illness from coronavirus. You are advised to stay at home as much as possible and, if you do go out, take particular care to minimise contact with others outside your household.

Clinically vulnerable people are those who are:

- aged 70 or older (regardless of medical conditions)
- under 70 with an underlying health condition listed below (that is, anyone instructed to get a flu jab each year on medical grounds):
- chronic (long-term) mild to moderate respiratory diseases, such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), emphysema or bronchitis
- chronic heart disease, such as heart failure

- chronic kidney disease
- chronic liver disease, such as hepatitis
- chronic neurological conditions, such as Parkinson's disease, motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis (MS), or cerebral palsy
- diabetes
- a weakened immune system as the result of certain conditions, treatments like chemotherapy, or medicines such as steroid tablets
- being seriously overweight (a body mass index (BMI) of 40 or above)
- pregnant women

### Clinically extremely vulnerable people

Specific medical conditions have been identified that, based on current knowledge of the virus, place some people at greatest risk of severe illness from coronavirus.

Clinically extremely vulnerable people may include the following people. Disease severity, history or treatment levels will also affect who is in the group.

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.

All other staff should be following the social distancing guidelines wherever possible

**S2Q1 I have a member of my team who is over 70. What should I advise them to do?**

S2A1 All staff, including those over the age of 70 that fall in the Clinically extremely

vulnerable people group are advised to continue [shielding measures](#) to keep themselves safe by staying at home at all times and avoiding all contact with others, except for essential medical treatment or support.

## S2Q2 An employee in my team has an underlying health condition what should I be doing?

S2A2 NHS in England should be directly contacting people falling into this extremely vulnerable group. If so, you should be supporting your employee in following the guidance on 'shielding'

## Section 3: Recording and reporting of absence

### S3Q1 How do I record absence if someone is too ill to work due to suspected COVID-19?

S3A1 HR will be providing a recording spreadsheet for service managers to update and use a work force planning document which will capture all absences from work and provide daily monitoring. In the meantime please record all absences, including the following:

Reason For Absence	Ability to Work From Home or not	Recording Method	Sick Pay / Action Required
Diagnosed with COVID 19	Sick	Record on the sickness absence sheet and SS4U as COVID 19. Manager to inform HR Advice	Full Pay. After 7 days if symptoms persist <a href="#">Get An Isolation Note</a> and send this to your line manager See S3Q6
	Well enough to Work From Home	Record on the sickness absence sheet and SS4U as WFH-SI (Self-Isolating)	Full Pay
Employee with symptoms but not diagnosed with COVID 19	Sick	Record on the sickness absence sheet and SS4U as COVID-SI. Manager to inform HR Advice	Occupational pay or statutory sick pay for seven days. After 7 days if symptoms persist <a href="#">Get An Isolation Note</a> and send this to your line manager See S3Q6
	Well enough to Work From Home	Record on selfserve4you as WFD-SI (Self-isolating)	Full Pay



Family member is displaying symptoms of COVID19 or diagnosed with COVID19. Employee should self-isolate for 14 days	Working From Home	Record on selfserve4you as WFH-SI (Self-Isolating)	Full pay for 14 days
	Unable to undertake normal work from home	Record on selfserve4you as COVID-SI Manager to inform HR Advice	Complete risk assessment and discuss with HR about alternative work. After 7 days if symptoms persist <a href="#">Get An Isolation Note</a> and send this to your line manager See S3Q6
Employee has a significant underlying health conditions and is socially distancing as per the government advice	Working From Home	Record on selfserve4you as WFH-SD (Social Distancing)	Full Pay
	Unable to undertake normal work from home	Manager to inform HR Advice	Complete risk assessment and discuss with HR about alternative work

**S3Q2 How do I record my absence from the office if I am self-isolating but well enough to work?**

S3A2 If you are self-isolating but are well enough to continue working from home you should agree these temporary flexible working arrangements with your manager. For monitoring purposes only you should record this via SS4U using WFH-SI (Working from home – Self-isolating). Service managers should record all absences regardless of type on the spreadsheet provided by HR. This will help with daily monitoring and planning.

**S3Q3 How do I record my sickness absence if I am self-isolating and too unwell to work?**

S3A3 If you are self-isolating due to being symptomatic you will need to inform your line manager. HR will be providing a recording spreadsheet for service managers to update and use a work force planning document which will capture all absences from work and provide daily monitoring. In the meantime please record all absences, including the following:

**S3Q4 Normally an employee must provide a doctor’s certificate after seven days, does this still apply for those in self-isolation or confirmed cases of COVID-19?**

S3A4 No, they don’t need a doctor’s certificate. A temporary change to normal sickness absence reporting is in place, see the [HR Policy & Procedure for Business Continuity](#).

**S3Q5 What contact do I need to maintain whilst I am absent from work with diagnosed or suspected COVID-19?**

S3A5 Keep in regular contact with your line manager as per your agreed communication method. HR will also be making regular welfare check calls to those affected.

**S3Q6 If I am unable to work for more than seven days because of COVID-19 do I require a Fit note?**

Q3Q6 Advice from Public Health England and the government is, that if employees show symptoms, you should avoid going to your doctor, pharmacist or hospital to prevent infection from spreading.

Employees will still be expected to:

- explain to your line manager what medical advice you have been given and from whom; and
- keep in regular contact with your line manager.

**In addition, for all employees that are unable to work for more than seven days because they have been told to self-isolate because of COVID-19 should obtain an isolation note through a new online service.**

Isolation notes will provide employees with evidence for their employers that they have been advised to self-isolate due to COVID-19, either because they have symptoms or they live with someone who has symptoms, and so cannot work.

As isolation notes can be obtained without contacting a doctor, this will reduce the pressure on GP surgeries and prevent people needing to leave their homes.

For the first seven days off work, employees can self-certify so they don't need any evidence for their employer. After that, employees should be obtaining evidence of sickness absence. Where this is related to having symptoms of COVID-19 or living with someone who has symptoms, the isolation note should be used to provide evidence of the advice to self-isolate.

People who need to claim Universal Credit or [Employment and Support Allowance](#) because of coronavirus will not be required to produce a fit note or an isolation note. More details on coronavirus and claiming benefits can be found [here](#).

The isolation notes can be accessed through the [NHS website](#) and [NHS 111 online](#). After answering a few questions, an isolation note will be emailed to the user. If they don't have an email address, they can have the note sent to a trusted family member or friend, or directly to their employer (line manager).

The service can also be used to generate an isolation note on behalf of someone else.

These isolation notes should be sent to your line manager in the usual sickness absence reporting way.

## **Section 4: Caring Responsibilities**

**S4Q1 A member of my team needs time off to help someone who depends on them as they are impacted due to others self-isolating or closure of a service such as a nursery, or breakdown in care arrangements etc. is the employee entitled to time off? Do they receive pay?**

S4A1 Please refer to the [Time Off for Dependants policy](#). There's no statutory right to pay for this time off, but consideration should be given to other methods of taking time off from work which may not result in a loss of pay, for example, annual leave, flexible working, working at home, compassionate leave (as per the [Special Leave policy](#)). If a member of your team is working at home please refer to the [Working from Home Guidelines](#).

**S4Q2 I've got young children, can I still work at home?**

S4A2 We appreciate that employees may not be able to complete their normal working patterns whilst working from home during this exceptional period because of requirements to care for dependents, for example. In this scenario you may work for a few hours in the morning and then again for a few hours in the evening compared to your normal 9-5pm working pattern.

What we are asking you to do is communicate with your line manager and agree working arrangements with them and when and how you will be contactable. Make good use of computer calendars, and out-of-office and voicemail messages so that colleagues and service users are clear when you will be available and working.

What we don't want colleagues to do is feel that they are being unduly monitored when they are working from home, we trust our employees. We also don't want employees working excessive hours because they feel they need to prove their productivity at home, for example

**S4Q3 Following the announcement regarding school closures, the government has stated that there will be provision for children whose parents are key workers. Does that include me?**

S4A3 The government has now provided a [list of essential workers](#) this includes local authority staff (and our partners) essential to the effective delivery of the COVID-19 response or delivering essential public services.

Medway Council provides a critical service to the public. **All staff are classified as key workers.**

If you have children, please inform your child's nursery or school that you may be called upon to work.

A [letter](#) confirming you have been identified as a key worker has been produced should your child's nursery or school require evidence that you are a key worker.

Schools are remaining open to look after the children of key workers as well as vulnerable children.

Vulnerable children include children who are supported by social care, those with safeguarding and welfare needs, including child in need plans, on child protection plans, looked after children, young carers, disabled children and those with education, health and care plans (EHCPs).

**S4Q4 The Police have stopped and challenged me why I am out and about. Is there anything I can produce to confirm I am a key worker?**

S4A4 Yes. In light of the announcement about essential travel, as a key worker you are able to travel to and from work, please take a copy of this [identified key worker letter](#) and your ID badge should you be asked.

## **Section 5: Pay Related**

**S5Q1 Are those required to self-isolate still paid during the period?**

S5A2 Yes, those in self-isolation will receive full pay for up to 14 days as per the [HR Policy & Procedure for Business Continuity](#) (for zero hour contracts see A12).

**S5Q2 I have an employee on zero hours or casual contract who needs to self-isolate, what pay will they receive?**

S5A2 Those on zero hours and casual contracts will receive at least SSP on their average pay of the last 12 weeks, from day one of sickness or self-isolation rather than day four if they meet the lower earnings limit of £118 per week as an average of the last 12 weeks for SSP to be payable. For those earning less they can now more easily make a claim for Universal Credit or Contributory Employment & Support Allowance (CESA). CESA is payable at a rate of £73.10 per week (over 25's) for eligible people affected by COVID-19 or self-isolating from day one rather than the usual day eight.

**S5Q3 If a member of my team has COVID-19 or is self-isolating with suspected COVID-19, what is their sick pay entitlement?**

S5A3 Usual sick leave and pay entitlements apply if someone has COVID-19. See [HR Policy & Procedure for Business Continuity](#).

**S5Q4 Corporate Management Team have decided to close a council service and/or facility so I have told staff not to come to work. Will they get paid?**

S5A4 They will receive their usual pay. You may require them to work at an alternative location, work from home or remotely. If none of these options are viable then they may be able to undertake continuing professional development, e-learning etc. away from the place of work or at an alternative place of work. Please make sure these plans are in place.

**S5Q5 I am self-employed. How does this affect me?**

S5A5 The government announced that if you are self-employed or a member of a partnership and have lost income due to COVID-19 you can claim a taxable grant worth 80% of your trading profits. Information can be found [here](#)

## **Section 6: HR Policy & People Practice**

**S6Q1 Are there any changes to the sickness reporting procedures?**

S6A1 Yes, there are some temporary changes in place. See the information on the [HR Policy & Procedure for Business Continuity](#).

**S6Q2 What about PDR – do I need to still do this and input the results?**

S6A2 No. We are postponing all PDR related activity for the time being. We are working through options with regard to the pay uplift and will be confirming details as soon as possible.

**S6Q3 What about formal HR procedures that are underway – do I need to still do this?**

S6A3 Managers must discuss on-going cases with HR as soon as possible.

**S6Q4 What do I do if I receive a grievance or I want to raise a grievance?**

S6A4 Where possible an informal resolution approach should be sought. If this doesn't resolve the matter or informal resolution is not appropriate please speak to HR as soon as possible

**S6Q5 I have a recruitment campaign live, will I be able to continue?**

A5 Yes the Recruitment Team will undertake a critical vacancy review to ensure we prioritise those posts that are identified as critical service delivery. Please consider alternative methods of interviewing. The Recruitment Team will be able to advise.

## **Section 7: Other**

**S7Q1 An employee doesn't feel they want to come into work as they are afraid of catching COVID-19, what should I do?**

S7A1 You should listen to any concerns staff may have. If there are genuine concerns, you must try to resolve them to protect the health and safety of your employee. For example, if possible, you could offer flexible working. If the employee still does not want to come in, you may be able to agree for them to take the time off as holiday or unpaid leave. You do not have to agree to this.

**S7Q2 I have a training course coming up, should I still go?**

S7A2 Work Force Development Team will be in contact with regard to any planned course they have put together. If a course is not essential it is advised to postpone at this time.

**S7Q3 I have a member of staff on Long Term sick Leave and/or Maternity leave. Should I keep them informed?**

S7A3 Yes, please continue your keeping in touch arrangement and ensure they have the latest advice provided. [Here](#) is a template to assist.

**S7Q4 This FAQ doesn't cover my situation or I need further support regarding HR advice, where can I get this?**

S7Q4 Please email [hrcovid19advice@medway.gov.uk](mailto:hrcovid19advice@medway.gov.uk) or call HR Advice on extension 4499 and a member of the HR will be able to assist.

**S7Q5 An employee with COVID-19 has come into the workplace, what do we need to do?**

S7A5 If someone with confirmed COVID-19 comes to work, the workplace does not necessarily have to close. The local Public Health England (PHE) health protection team will get in contact with the employer to:

- discuss the case
- identify people who have been in contact with the affected person
- carry out a risk assessment
- advise on any actions or precautions to take.

You should contact [Taff Morgan](#), Emergency Planning Manager if this occurs. [Read the guidance here.](#)

**S7Q6 There are frontline staff in my team who are saying that they don't want to deal with members of the public who are coughing and sneezing, what can I do?**

S7A6 We must maintain business as usual the best we can, therefore you should carry out an individual risk assessment and seek advice from your Assistant Director before any change of service is applied.

## **Section 8: Mental Health & Wellbeing**

**S8Q1 A member of staff has expressed concerns about their wellbeing what help can we offer?**

S8A1 Social isolation, reduction in physical activity, unpredictability and changes in routine can all contribute to increasing stress. Many people including those without existing mental health needs may feel anxious about this impact.

Understandably, you may find that shielding, distancing and self-isolating can be boring or frustrating. You may find your mood and feelings are affected and you may feel low, worried or have problems sleeping and you might miss being outside with other people.

At times like these, it can be easy to fall into unhealthy patterns of behaviour which in turn can make you feel worse. There are simple things you can do that may help, to stay mentally and physically active during this time such as:

- look for ideas of exercises you can do at home on the NHS website
- spend time doing things you enjoy – this might include reading, cooking, other indoor hobbies or listening to favourite radio programmes or watching TV
- try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, drink enough water, exercise regularly, and try to avoid smoking, alcohol and drugs
- try spending time with the windows open to let in the fresh air, arranging space to sit and see a nice view (if possible) and get some natural sunlight, or get out into any private space, keeping at least 2 metres away from your neighbours and household members if you are sitting on your doorstep

Constantly watching the news can make you feel more worried. If you think it is affecting you, try to limit the time you spend watching, reading, or listening to media coverage of the outbreak. It may help to only check the news at set times or limiting this to a couple of times a day.

In addition [Care First](#) is a comprehensive information, support and wellness resource provided to support employees.

In addition, Care first have set up a helpful and informative [webinar session](#) which provides helpful pointers and tips to stay on top of our mental wellbeing and how to tackle going into isolation as well as talk about where we can get support from if we need to talk to somebody

The NHS have released [ten top tips for taking care of your mental health and wellbeing](#)

**S8Q2 An employee doesn't feel they want to come into work as they are afraid of catching COVID-19, what should I do?**

S8A2 You should listen to any concerns staff may have. If there are genuine concerns, you must try to resolve them to protect the health and safety of your employee. For example, if possible, you could offer flexible working. If the employee still does not want to come in, you may be able to agree for them to take the time off as holiday or unpaid leave. You do not have to agree to this.

**S8Q3 I have a member of staff of with COVID-19, how often do I need to stay in touch?**

S8A3 HR can assist managers and are able to pick up the welfare check with those members of staff who are off with a diagnosed COVID-19. Please email [hrcovid19advice@medway.gov.uk](mailto:hrcovid19advice@medway.gov.uk) to arrange for a HR representative to support you.

**S8Q4 My family have been financially affected by COVID-19. Is there any other support for us?**

S8A4 Care First is a comprehensive information, support and wellness resource provided to support employees. Care First details can be found [here](#) and they can offer financial advice to employees. Further advice regarding COVID-19 and financial assistance can be found at the following sites:

- [The Money Advice Service – Coronavirus and your money](#)
- [Universal Credit – Coronavirus and claiming benefits](#)

## **Section 9: Homeworking (self-isolating or social distancing)**

**S9Q1 A member of my team is self-isolating. Should they be expected to work during this time?**

S9A1 If possible, staff who are self-isolating may be asked to work from their place of isolation. This may also involve covering duties for other services where they are able to. We appreciate that this may not be possible depending on their job roles and seriousness of symptoms. Employees should be encouraged to take work laptops home with them each evening or to ensure they can log in from a home PC to work remotely. If none of these options are viable then they may be able to undertake continuing professional development, e-learning etc. ). If a member of your team is working at home please refer to the [working at home guidelines](#).

**S9Q2 What about ICT issues – where can I get information on remote working?**

S9A2 Where relevant, all staff are expected to ensure they know how to log in to our systems remotely. Full guidance on working remotely is available on Service Desk [here](#). ICT advise that you begin to test remote working from home, **as soon as possible** to ensure that they are able to log in remotely and have access to the correct files and applications. In the event of the need arising for



you or your staff to work from home, please see our [remote working procedures](#).

Most answers to ICT queries can be found on Medspace including the following tools:

[Office 365 Learning](#)  
[Microsoft Teams](#)

However, should you still require assistance, please contact the service desk on 01634 332888.

### **S9Q3 Can I work from home?**

S9A3 We need to ensure we continue to deliver council services whilst supporting and protecting our customers and staff. Your situation will need to be discussed with your line manager and a decision will be made on a case by case basis, following the [Social Distancing national guidelines](#).

## **Section 10: Service Delivery**

### **S10Q1 Are there any preparations I should be making in case the workplace has to be closed or we are unable to deliver a service?**

S10A1 You should have been reviewing your business continuity plans and ensuring that any concerns are escalated through your manager to your Assistant Director. Managers should make sure everyone's contact numbers and emergency contact details are up to date. Ask staff who have work laptops or mobile phones to take them home each day so they can carry on working should they have to self-isolate or are unable to come in to the workplace. You should also arrange paperwork tasks that can be done at home for staff who do not work on computers and could work at home). If a member of your team is working at home please refer to the [working at home guidelines](#).

Please ensure that you let the Communications Team know about any variations to service by emailing [communications@medway.gov.uk](mailto:communications@medway.gov.uk).

If required, the Communications Team will issue a briefing note to ensure all staff can give appropriate information to customers. The information will also be placed on our website and our customer services phone lines.

## **Section 11: Health and Safety**

### **S11Q1 I have an apprentice under the age of 18, can they work from home?**

S11A1 Yes, they can providing a risk assessment is completed. [Please see template here](#).

**S11Q2 If a member of staff is working from home, what Health & Safety Guidelines and risk assessments do we need to follow?**

S11A2

- [Guidelines for Manager for Homeworking DSE Assessment](#)
- [DSE Poster](#)
- [Site Visits while working from home briefing note](#)
- [Briefing Note 8, What accidents to report when working from home](#)
- [Accident Reporting Forms](#)

**S11****Q3 I'm a first aider. Has anything changed for me?**

S11

A3 Yes. Medway Council's first aiders/staff are not to perform rescue breaths or mouth-to-mouth ventilation at present. Only perform chest compressions until the ambulance arrives. The use of resuscitation face shield (in first aid boxes) will give some protection however **ALL** council staff must abide by the guidance given.

**S11****Q4 Will staff and visitors to the building who require the assistance of an evacuation chair be safe?**

S11

A4 Any visitors who may require an evacuation chair must contact Geoff Dingsdale, Health and safety team or Frank Akehurst before leaving the reception area as we need to ensure we have sufficient trained staff available should the need arise.

**Section 12 - Recovery**

As you will be aware the Prime Minister announced an outline route map for the gradual lifting of restrictions over the coming months with some gentle changes coming into effect this week. As a Council we welcome the clarification on the way forward and the continued cautious approach to ensure that we all play our part in minimising the opportunity for the further spread of COVID-19.

We appreciate you will have many questions about what the latest government announcement means for your service and, more importantly, how it affects you and where you work, but it is still early days.

In anticipation of the government restrictions being lifted over the coming months, and the introduction of the new '[Covid-19 secure' guidelines](#), your service managers have been busy pulling together recovery plans to consider the best approach for safely resuming a service which had to stop or change the way it worked, as well as putting plans in place to ensure we can continue to provide the services which have remained during the lockdown period.

Your service managers are following the new COVID-19 secure guidelines including the practical steps for businesses focused on five key points of:

1. Work from home, if you can
2. Carry out a COVID-19 risk assessment, in consultation with workers or trade unions
3. Maintain 2 metres social distancing, wherever possible
4. Where people cannot be 2 metres apart, manage transmission
5. Reinforcing cleaning processes

Work on these practical steps needs to continue before we can reopen any of our public buildings or change our current situation where many of you are working from home or are redeployed or are indeed not able at the current time to work at home. Your and our customers' safety is our primary concern so we need to ensure that safe distancing and other measures are put in place before any changes are made to the way we run our services or where you work.

As part of our recovery process we are taking the opportunity to explore how we can build on many of the good things we have been trialling or developing over the past six weeks. This includes our more flexible working arrangements and productive use of technology.

But for the time being, please continue as you have been doing during the past few weeks – you do not need to return to work at this stage if you are working or staying at home but please do keep in touch with your manager who will keep you updated on any changes to arrangements that may be required.

## **Section 13 – Risk Assessment**

### **13.1 Managing risk**

Objective: To reduce risk to the lowest reasonably practicable level by taking preventative measures, in order of priority.

Employers have a duty to reduce workplace risk to the lowest reasonably practicable level by taking preventative measures. Employers must work with any other employers or contractors sharing the workplace so that everybody's health and safety is protected.

In the context of COVID-19 this means working through these steps in order:

1. In every workplace, increasing the frequency of handwashing and surface cleaning.
2. Businesses and workplaces should make every reasonable effort to enable working from home as a first option. Where working from home is not possible, workplaces

should make every reasonable effort to comply with the social distancing guidelines set out by the government (keeping people 2m apart wherever possible).

Where the social distancing guidelines cannot be followed in full, in relation to a particular activity, businesses should consider whether that activity needs to continue for the business to operate, and, if so, take all the mitigating actions possible to reduce the risk of transmission between their staff.

Further mitigating actions include:

- increasing the frequency of hand washing and surface cleaning
- keeping the activity time involved as short as possible
- using screens or barriers to separate people from each other
- using back-to-back or side-to-side working (rather than face-to-face) whenever possible
- reducing the number of people each person has contact with by using 'fixed teams or partnering' (so each person works with only a few others).

3. Finally, if people must work face-to-face for a sustained period with more than a small group of fixed partners, then you will need to assess whether the activity can safely go ahead. No one is obliged to work in an unsafe work environment.

In your assessment you should have particular regard to whether the people doing the work are especially vulnerable to COVID-19.