

Employment Framework: Summary of key temporary changes during the COVID-19 pandemic

It has been necessary to temporarily amend some HR Policies and Procedures aimed at assisting managers and employees to continue to deliver essential services throughout the period of the pandemic. These changes have been developed in consultation with our trade union colleagues and will be applied with immediate effect. It is anticipated these arrangements will be in place for a minimum of 3 months. HR are continuing to provide a Duty Service during this period.

1 Mental Health and Wellbeing

Employees are encouraged to take time to manage their health and wellbeing and make use of the self-help materials available on interchange. The Managers' Toolkit for Managing Remotely and Ensuring the Mental Health and Wellbeing of all Employees is available on interchange and managers have been reminded of this.

2. Health and Work

Information, support and guidance continues to be provided to employees who are absent from work due to long term absence during the pandemic period. Although all formal absence review meetings have been suspended until further notice, it is important to keep in touch with employees on sick leave.

The Health and Work Policy has been amended as follows:

- Employees and currently engaged casual workers with less than 26 weeks service will have entitlement to full pay if they have Covid-19 related absence over the period of the pandemic.
- Sickness absence related to Covid-19 will be ignored for attendance management purposes i.e. trigger levels, warnings etc.
- All employees and currently engaged casual workers absent from work due to Covid-19 related sickness absence will receive their normal pay even if they have exhausted their contractual allowance.
- All cases of formal absence management under the policy will be suspended.

3. Special Leave

The Council is taking extraordinary measures to protect staff and delay the spread of COVID-19 during the period of the pandemic. The use of special leave was initially extended to facilitate this (from 5 to 15 days paid leave).

Following the national lockdown the position was extended further for the following groups as follows:

- All employees with a long-term condition, covered by the government's shielding programme, and who have been told to isolate, will continue to receive their normal pay. (12 week period)
- All employees with covid symptoms who are self-isolating for the recommended 7 day period will continue to receive their normal pay.
- All employees who live in a household with someone who is self-isolating because they are displaying symptoms, will receive normal pay until the recommended period of self-isolation ends and the employee is able to return to work.
- Pregnant mothers will continue to receive normal pay until the start of maternity arrangements for pay or until they are able to return to work safely based on a risk assessment which takes account of whether or not the employee is less than or more than 28 weeks pregnant.
- Employees with emergency caring responsibilities will be granted special

leave with full pay while they need to carry out such responsibilities, unless they are a keyworker who is required to work who qualifies for places for their children in a childcare facility.

- Employees who are not key workers, cannot work from home and cannot secure a deployment position will continue to receive their normal pay if they have been asked not to attend work. (See Place of Work arrangements below).

4. Homeworking and Core Hours

Arrangements for flexible working have been amended to support the increase in homeworking to allow employees who are homeworking to also carry out caring duties, for example by changing current work patterns, start and finish times. All work should be carried out, where possible, within the hours of 0700 to 1900 and managers are monitoring to ensure hours worked are not excessive.

The Toolkit and Guidance on Managing Remote Working are available on interchange.

5. Overtime

Overtime continues to be monitored and wherever possible limit expenditure on overtime. Overtime should only be authorised for key workers where other employees cannot be deployed to deliver essential services.

6. Secondees and Interim Arrangements

Secondees and Interim Arrangements – Where employees have been appointed or seconded on an interim basis and are due to come to an end, these arrangements will remain in place unless otherwise notified by their line manager.

7. Employees Undertaking Temporary Higher Duties and Secondments

The Council's Secondment Policy and procedures to remunerate Employees Undertaking Temporary Higher Duties have been suspended for the period of the pandemic for new arrangements.

Where an employee takes on new duties graded at a different level from their current job role they will receive their normal pay or the rate of pay for their new job role, whichever is the higher. Any change in payment will be made from day one of their deployment.

Employees taking on new roles will be properly inducted, trained, supervised and provided with necessary personal protective equipment.

8. Annual Leave

Annual leave entitlement is unaffected by the pandemic. Approval of annual leave is being managed to allow essential services to be provided while ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of employees.

Employees in non-critical services are expected to take their annual leave on a proportionate basis throughout the leave year, or in a similar pattern to previous use of annual leave.

Employees in critical services should take contractual leave that is above the 4 weeks (20 days) covered by the statutory carry over regulations before the end of the current 2020 leave year. That means that at least contractual leave entitlement and the remaining 8 days of statutory leave should be used in the current leave year.

Employees who have bought additional leave under the Holiday Buy Back Scheme

should use this leave as planned.

Management Guidance has been prepared – COVID 19 & Annual Leave.

9. Place of Work

All Moray Council buildings are closed to the public, with the exception of a number of schools providing a childcare hub for keyworkers.

All employees who are not key workers are working from home where possible. Where this is not possible, HR are holding details on the deployment register which is being used to identify and deploy people to key worker duties to ensure the continued delivery of essential and critical services.

If deployment to a new location involves excess mileage an allowance will be paid equal to the difference in cost of travel compared to travel to normal work location.

10. ID Badges

Staff who are undertaking key workers duties and are required to travel, if stopped by the police use their Council ID badge as proof of who they are and explain what they are doing.

11. Recruitment

All normal external recruitment to the Council has ceased. Urgent and essential recruitment for key workers continues where necessary, through myjobscotland as normal. A number of suspended recruitments are also being re-activated, e.g. for promoted teaching posts

12. Disclosure Scotland/PVGs

Disclosure Scotland have made a number of amendments to normal processes in direct response to the Covid-19 situation.

1. Employees are permitted to start work pending the outcome of the PVG application. A risk assessment is undertaken to ensure that appropriate measures are put in place.
2. Disclosure Scotland has suspended all fees for key workers and volunteers.
3. A temporary change for electronic applications became effective from 30th March.

13. Deployment of Staff to Alternative Duties

A process for employees who have been internally transferred has been developed to ensure that they are appropriately remunerated where the new role is on a higher grade or attracts enhanced payments. It also ensures that the required confirmation is sent to employees.

14. Home Visits

Home visits should only be carried out where they are required to deliver essential services by key workers and no other method of communication or service delivery is practical.

Specific guidance on home visits will be provided to the appropriate employees by their managers. Guidance is available on the interchange.

15. Employee Assistance Programme (Time for Talking)

The Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) through Time for Talking has been extended so employees can access support. The provision is for a 24/7 support service offering: structured telephone counselling; telephone support; live chat and

information and resources including links, podcasts and meditation exercises

16. Occupational Health Support

The Council's Occupational Health provider continues to providing support during the COVID-19 crisis. A new advice line is available providing support to employees on areas such as working from home, emotional support/wellbeing and musculoskeletal advice for work related concerns.

17. Disciplinary/Grievance/Performance Management/FARMs

It's been agreed with the trade unions that the majority of employee relations activity (such as managing absence, disciplinaries and grievances) are put on hold until they can be properly progressed. An assessment of any potential situations where an employee may be at detriment by this is being undertaken and may be progressed on a case by case basis.

18. Further COVID-19 Guidance

A COVID-19 page has been set up on the interchange. This contains general information on how to keep yourself safe and healthy and how the coronavirus might affect your work.

Human Resources April 2020.