

Managers' Briefing

Covid-19 home working actions



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Introduction

As employees of the public sector, as you would expect, we are at the forefront of responding to the vulnerable in our society and providing critical services that can only be delivered with you and your teams' support.

This is a fluid situation and during a period which may extend up to 12 weeks, we may have to deliver our services in a different way if the government direct us to do so. This may include building closures and very different ways of working that we are used to.

The government advice is that people who can work from home should do so and that people who cannot work from home should come to work as usual. They are clear that the purpose of this is to slow the spread of the virus, rather than to protect individuals.

We recognise that our employees have many skills and previous work experience that we might find useful at this time. Taking that into account, where you or your employees feel they are available to offer support to other Services this should be highlighted allowing us to plan early to support you with any relevant training. This call may become more necessary as we progress.

Your role

This brief outlines the actions managers should take to allow relevant team members to work from home as quickly as possible in line with the Service imperatives to provide critical services to the city and our most vulnerable service users.

Key Actions

1. **Your first action is to send all employees home immediately who are either:**
 - over 70 or
 - pregnant.

These people should go home and if possible to undertake meaningful work and you should make arrangements to further consider suitable work for them to undertake.

2. **We also require you to ask staff to let you know if they have a significant underlying health condition, for example those conditions which weaken immune systems and those with long term health conditions or who are eligible under NHS guidelines for free flu vaccine due to their personal health situation.**

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You should also advise them to go home even if it is not possible to undertake meaningful work and you should make arrangements to further consider suitable work for them to undertake.

3. Thirdly, you should consider whether your operation can support further instances of home working – as per the guidance below

Home working assessment and guidance

For people outside categories 1 and 2 above, you should consider the following when determining if home working for a period of time is an option. It is a management decision, based on the needs of the business, to determine whether people can or cannot work from home and this will not be a matter for self-selection.

- **Can employees deliver meaningful work from home?** – these will usually be employees who have mobile technology, but not in every case
- **For what period of time** can they deliver meaningful work with or without technology?
- **Are there any other considerations** particular to your employees that they wish to share? For example caring responsibilities
- **The need to define outputs and activities** during home working and provide management support and review
- **Rotating attendance amongst team members** where there is a need to make sure core presence in the office.

You should use management judgement to make your decision on who should work from home in line with the service requirements with reference to your Service contingency plan. This position is continuously changing and you will be asked to review the position regularly.

Your initial home working arrangements should be communicated to your own line manager by 19 March 2020.

It is recognised that the organisation cannot offer meaningful work to everyone for continuous home working over an extended period but managers are asked to maximise the level of home working in line with business continuity plans.

Device/network security

You should consider rotating staff attendance at the work place, and of course **all staff with technology will need to visit the office once a month** to connect their device into the network. This is required to ensure the security of the network. Please try to avoid having all home working staff visit the office at the same time.

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Team rotation

You may need for operational reasons to have some members of the team in the office, even if they have the technology to work from home. In this case, you should rotate the team so that all spend some time home working and some time in the office.

Managers' responsibilities

- **Support** - Listen to your team members and provide support where you can, this is a difficult time for everyone. Use our employee assistance support, Workplace Options available on 0800 247 1100.
- **Communication** - Managers must communicate and keep in touch with staff at all times, no matter where they are working, making sure they are kept informed and receiving all relevant communications in a timely fashion. Escalate any questions you cannot answer.
- **Workloads** - Your teams' work should be supported and monitored in the normal way. Where work requirements change, then existing home working arrangements will be reviewed. These are not to be taken as fixed.
- **Contact details** - All home workers must provide you with contact numbers for immediate communications – home working will not be possible without a contact number
- **IT security** - Employees who are enabled to work from home, must reconnect their device to the network within a council premise (which may not be their normal workplace) on a monthly basis or as directed by your manager.
- **Annual leave** - It's important for the business and for employees during this stressful time, to make sure proportionate holidays are taken and managers should clarify that existing and approved holidays remain in place. We recognise however there may be exceptions subject to Service delivery needs.

Changing position

As you have seen in the past few days, the position can change almost daily. The Chief Executive's briefing has already identified the council's critical services which are social care, cleansing and public health, and education.

In these unprecedented times, we will continue to assess how we can deliver these with our available workforce. We will keep you updated.

Further advice and guidance

If you require further support with these actions then please contact your Service HR team.