

Important Advice and Guidance on Coronavirus for Service Users

The Coronavirus outbreak is now well established and although the UK is still in the containment phase it is inevitable that the virus will affect more and more people in the near future. As an Employer you have a duty of care to your PA / Carers to ensure, to the best of your ability, a safe working environment. It is also very important to take all necessary steps to ensure that you too remain safe and healthy.

In order to help you in this fast moving situation we have prepared the following guidelines to help you stay safe and legally compliant.

What information do you need to give to PA's / Carers?

You should provide all your PA / Carers with information about Coronavirus, in particular:

- Symptoms of Coronavirus
- Basic hygiene to help protect themselves and others
- Where they can get more information
- When they should seek medical guidance if they have or may have been exposed to the virus

Symptoms

At the time of writing the common symptoms are:

- Respiratory symptoms
- Fever, cough
- Shortness of breath
- Breathing difficulties

Hygiene

The current guidance is to:

- 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
- Wash your hands with soap and water often – do this for at least 20 seconds
- Try to avoid close contact with people who are unwell
- Don't touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean

Further information and when to seek medical assistance

Share the links in the 'useful links' section (below) with your PA / Carers and encourage them to keep themselves up to date with the latest Government advice. Presently people are advised to contact the NHS 111 number if they feel unwell or if they may have been exposed to the Coronavirus. They should not go to the GP as they could spread the virus if they have it.

What happens if your PA / Carer contracts Coronavirus?

You should share information with their PA / Carers about coronavirus (above) and tell them about the circumstances in which they should seek medical advice. PA / Carers should be encouraged to inform you as soon as possible if they either have symptoms or may have been exposed to the virus, or have been directed to self-isolate – e.g. following advice from a GP or NHS 111.

In the event that your PA / Carer contracts Coronavirus or is directed to self-isolate it is likely that they will be unable to provide care for you for at least 2 weeks and quite possibly much longer. You will need to plan some contingency arrangements to ensure that continuity of care is maintained for you. If you have any doubt or issues concerning what to do in the event of your carer becoming ill we would advise contacting your local support service for advice and guidance.

If Agency PA / Carers are used, do you need to check if these workers have been exposed to Coronavirus?

It is the primary responsibility of the Agency supplier to ensure that, to the best of their ability, that workers supplied to clients are suitably vetted and capable of providing their services safely. However, it is advisable for you to share information with agency workers about coronavirus in the same way as you would their own PA / Carers. The PA / Carers should be told about the circumstances in which they should seek medical advice and encouraged to inform you if they either have symptoms or may have been exposed to the virus, or have been directed to self-isolate – e.g. following advice from a GP or NHS 111.

If a member of staff is not unwell but has chosen to self-isolate, are they entitled to sick pay (SSP)?

Almost certainly YES. Your PA / Carers are entitled to Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) if they meet all of the qualifying criteria for it. SSP applies if PA / Carer is actually sick and unable to work (due to illness or injury) but the current regulations also extend SSP to someone who is not unwell if they are abstaining from work:

- On the basis of being given a written notice issued under legislation;
- Because they are infectious or could reasonably be believed to be infectious or to have been in contact with an infected person; and
- The infection is a disease which is subject to legal regulation for public health reasons.

The government has issued specific Coronavirus regulations which put measures in place to protect public health. Under the regulations a person can be directed to self-isolate because they could be infected or have been exposed to someone else who was infected by Coronavirus.

If your PA / Carer has been advised to self-isolate then they will be treated as if they are unable to work due to sickness and therefore be eligible to receive SSP.

You are currently advised to exercise discretion when requesting written evidence of sickness given that the current advice is for people to avoid going to their GP and they may therefore not be able to provide a sick note ('fit note') if they've been told to self-isolate for 14 days.

How should you fill in a timesheet to show a period of sickness due to Coronavirus?

In the event of your PA / Carer not attending work due to the Coronavirus we will ask you to show periods of self-isolation on the timesheets, marking it clearly as 'self-isolation' so we can identify the link to coronavirus and apply the special rules for SSP.

What Is the situation if your PA / Carer is unable to attend work due to an external factor (a school closure for example)?

If your PA / carer is unable to attend work due other mitigation factors, for example due to school closure meaning they do not have childcare, or to care for an ill relative, then the time missed from work would be classified as Time off for Dependents and would be unpaid. See the link below for guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/time-off-for-dependants>

Some other Useful links for further information

Government guidance

We advise everyone to stay updated with the government guidance – this is a fast-moving area and the guidance is being updated daily at 2 p.m.

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): latest information and advice](#) on the gov.uk website includes:

- Advice from the FCO (foreign and commonwealth office) which particularly relates to anyone travelling to or back from countries and areas affected by the virus.
- An updated list of countries/areas that are affected and advice about actions to be taken when returning to the UK from those places.
- Guidance issued by Public Health England and the Department for Health.

Anyone working in the healthcare sector should also review the following guidance:

[Guidance for healthcare providers: healthcare workers with relevant travel, healthcare or household contact history.](#)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-social-or-community-care-and-residential-settings-on-covid-19/guidance-for-social-or-community-care-and-residential-settings-on-covid-19>

Additional guidance is likely to be added to the [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) website so do review this regularly, putting 'coronavirus' into the search function.

Other guidance for employers

ACAS has released guidance for employers - [ACAS Coronavirus: advice for employers and employees](#) that you can refer to.