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Corona Virus (COVID-19) Advice

There is a general concern about the possibility of an outbreak of the COVID-19 virus with a number of staff members asking about how they should prepare for this risk. This note is guidance at the date shown in the footer for staff at Community Action Dacorum and in HITS. The guidance may change with time as more becomes clear about the virus.

What is the Corona Virus?

A coronavirus is a type of virus. As a group, coronaviruses are common across the world. COVID-19 is a new strain of coronavirus first identified in Wuhan City, China in January 2020. Coronavirus is a virus in a group with the common cold and as such some people may get infected and think it's only a cold to start with.

The incubation period of COVID-19 is between 2 to 14 days. This means that if a person remains well 14 days after contact with someone with confirmed coronavirus, they have not been infected.

The first symptoms are a cold with fever or flu like symptoms which then proceed to a cough in most instances and gets better over the next 10 to 14 days but in some people, especially older or with medical conditions such as diabetes, it may proceed to difficulty breathing and feeling really ill, there is also some emerging evidence that pregnant women may be in a higher risk category.

The following symptoms may develop in the 14 days after exposure to someone who has COVID-19 infection:

- cough
- difficulty in breathing
- fever

Generally, these infections can cause more severe symptoms in people with weakened immune systems, older people, and those with long-term conditions like diabetes, cancer and chronic lung disease.

There are 2 main routes by which people can spread COVID-19:

- infection can be spread to people who are nearby (within 2 metres) or possibly could be inhaled into the lungs.
- it is also possible that someone may become infected by touching a surface, object or the hand of an infected person that has been contaminated with respiratory secretions and then touching their own mouth, nose, or eyes (such as touching door knob or shaking hands then touching own face)



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Preventing spread of infection

There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19. The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to the virus.

Public Health England (PHE) recommends that the following general cold and flu precautions are taken to help prevent people from catching and spreading COVID-19:

- cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze. See [Catch it, Bin it, Kill it](#)
- put used tissues in the bin straight away
- wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds often and– use hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available. See [hand washing guidance](#)
- try to avoid close contact with people who are unwell
- clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces
- do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean

If you are worried about symptoms, please call NHS 111. Do not go directly to your GP or other healthcare environment.

Face masks for the general public are not recommended to protect from infection, as there is no evidence of benefit from their use outside healthcare environments.

The Corona Virus in the Workplace

The activities undertaken by Community Action Dacorum are wide and varied. In addition to the risk of coming into contact with a colleague in the workplace, there are many opportunities to interact with infected people in the public. Whilst there are no immediate concerns for health, it is important to assess the risk of any activity in advance and take precautions as necessary. Typical examples of potential risks are as follows, but any activity we undertake could carry increased risks.

International Travel

Any member of staff whose role requires international travel should refer before departure to the FCOs advice on travelling the country to which they are going. The advice can be found on [their website](#) and in the [NHS advice for travellers](#). If the advice from the FCO is not to travel **do not** begin your journey.

Where the FCO is not restricting travel to the area you are going to, you need to risk assess your travel plans with your line manager; your health and safety during travel should be your primary concern. As a guide, ask yourself whether the travel is necessary or whether you could use a video link?

Delivering Activities to Groups of People

Including minibuses, training and clubs based activities. There is no current reason to cancel any activities planned due to the number of people involved in the activities. Should this change, you should follow advice from Public Health England, DBC and HCC to decide whether to go ahead with your activity.

Reviewed: 03/03/2020

Printed: 04/03/2020

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If you are running an activity you should familiarise yourself with the [government's advice for the workplace](#). If a person is unwell and they have not been to specified areas in the last 14 days, then normal practice should continue.

If someone becomes unwell in the workplace and has travelled to China or other affected countries, the unwell person should be removed to an area which is at least 2 metres away from other people. If possible find a room or area where they can be isolated behind a closed door, such as a staff office. If it is possible to open a window, do so for ventilation.

The individual who is unwell should call NHS 111 from their mobile, or 999 if an emergency (if they are seriously ill or injured or their life is at risk) and explain which country they have returned from in the last 14 days and outline their current symptoms.

Whilst they wait for advice from NHS 111 or an ambulance to arrive, they should remain at least 2 metres from other people. They should avoid touching people, surfaces and objects and be advised to cover their mouth and nose with a disposable tissue when they cough or sneeze and put the tissue in a bag or pocket then throw the tissue in the bin. If they don't have any tissues available, they should cough and sneeze into the crook of their elbow.

If they need to go to the bathroom whilst waiting for medical assistance, they should use a separate bathroom if available.

Before beginning any activity, you should risk assess the activity and ensure all staff delivering are aware of your contingency plans.

Delivering Activities to High Risk Individuals

For HITS Interpreters and Community Car drivers, there is an additional risk that they will encounter individuals who maybe unwell. Individual risk assessments should be made on a case by case basis, referring to medical professionals where appropriate. In general, staying at least 2 metres (7') from an infected person is advised. If in doubt consult with your line manager.

If you are unwell

The Community Action Dacorum sickness policy is appended to this document. We will consider all cases on merit and endeavour to take a flexible and pragmatic approach to absence during the period of the outbreak.

If you are required to self-isolate and are not feeling unwell, work from home where possible. If you are unwell your focus should be on getting better. Please keep your line manager up to date with your illness throughout your recovery.

If you are feeling unwell and have any of the symptoms of the COVID-19 virus, please stay home. You can either work from home or be unwell, just let us know. The important thing is to think of your colleagues and be cautious.



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What should I do now?

There are one or two things you can do to protect yourself and your colleagues during the outbreak:

1. Don't Panic!
2. Wash your hands thoroughly and frequently. See the guidance.
3. Update your emergency contact details on the HR Online system. This will help us to know who to contact if we need to do so. Make sure we have your personal number, should we need to reach you out of working hours and your next of kin, should you fall ill. We will handle this data in line with our GDPR policy.
4. If you feel unwell, don't pass it on. If you have to be away from work let us know.
5. Look after your colleagues, they may need your help.
6. Risk assess pragmatically, if you don't think it's safe – don't do it.
7. Talk to us. We will be as flexible as possible for you and will assess any reasonable request on its merits.
8. Keep smiling. Most people who encounter the virus will only suffer from a flu like infection, it's not pleasant but in most cases, it will be over in a couple of weeks.



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Sickness/Injury Payments and Conditions

A) NOTIFICATION OF INCAPACITY FOR WORK

- 1) You must notify us by telephone on the first day of incapacity at the earliest possible opportunity and by no later than two hours before your normal start time. Text messages and e-mails are not an acceptable method of notification. Other than in exceptional circumstances notification should be made personally, to your Line Manager.
- 2) You should try to give some indication of your expected return date and notify us as soon as possible if this date changes. The notification procedures should be followed on each day of absence unless you are covered by a medical certificate.
- 3) If your incapacity extends to more than seven calendar days you are required to notify us of your continued incapacity once a week thereafter, unless otherwise agreed.

B) EVIDENCE OF INCAPACITY

- 1) Medical certificates are not issued for short-term incapacity. In these cases of incapacity (up to and including seven calendar days) you must sign a self-certification absence form on your return to work.
- 2) If your sickness has been (or you know that it will be) for longer than seven days (whether or not they are working days) you should see your doctor and make sure he/she gives you a medical certificate and forward this to us without delay. Subsequently you must supply us with consecutive medical certificates to cover the whole of your absence.

C) PAYMENTS

- 1) You are entitled to statutory sick pay (SSP) if you are absent for four or more consecutive days because of sickness or injury provided you meet the statutory qualifying conditions. SSP is treated like wages and is subject to normal deductions.
- 2) Qualifying days are the only days for which you are entitled to SSP. These days are normally your working days unless otherwise notified to you. The first three qualifying days of absence are waiting days for which SSP is not payable. Where a second or subsequent period of incapacity (of four days or more) occurs within 56 days of a previous period of incapacity, waiting days are not served again.
- 3) Any contractual sickness/injury payments are shown in your individual Statement of Main Terms of Employment.
- 4) Any days of contractual sickness/injury payments which qualify for SSP will be offset against SSP on



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a day-to-day basis. A deduction will be made for any other state benefits received if you are excluded or transferred from SSP.

- 5) If you are entitled to any payments in excess of SSP and your entitlement expires, full or part payment may be allowed at our discretion where it is considered that there are special circumstances warranting it.
- 6) Where the circumstances of your incapacity are such that you receive or are awarded any sum by way of compensation or damages in respect of the incapacity from a third party, then any payments which we may have made to you because of the absence (including SSP) shall be repaid by you to us up to an amount not exceeding the amount of the compensation or damages paid by the third party and up to, but not exceeding, any amount paid by us.

D) RETURN TO WORK

- 1) You should notify your Line Manager as soon as you know on which day you will be returning to work, if this differs from a date of return previously notified.
- 2) If you have been suffering from an infectious or contagious disease or illness such as rubella or hepatitis you must not report for work without clearance from your own doctor.
- 3) On return to work after any period of sickness/injury absence (including absence covered by a medical certificate), you are also required to complete a self-certification absence form and hand this to your Line Manager.
- 4) Upon returning to work after any period of sickness/injury absence, you may be required to attend a "return to work" interview to discuss the state of your health and fitness for work. Information arising from such an interview will be treated with strictest confidence.

E) GENERAL

- 1) Submission of a medical certificate or sickness self-certification absence form, although giving us the reason for your absence may not always be regarded by us as sufficient justification for accepting your absence. Sickness is just one of a number of reasons for absence and although it is understandable that if you are sick you may need time off, continual or repeated absence through sickness may not be acceptable to us.
- 2) In deciding whether your absence is acceptable or not we will take into account the reasons and extent of all your absences, including any absence caused by sickness/injury. We cannot operate with an excessive level of absence as all absence, for whatever reason, reduces our efficiency.
- 3) We will take a serious view if you take sickness/injury leave which is not genuine, and it will result in disciplinary action being taken.
- 4) If we consider it necessary, we may ask your permission to contact your doctor and/or for you to be

Reviewed: 03/03/2020

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independently medically examined.