



## **Coronavirus – COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

**Issue 2: Date: 27 March 2020 (Issue 1 dated 19 March 2020)**

Please find below a number of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQS) in relation to COVID-19 (Coronavirus). Please read alongside national guidance.

*These FAQs will be reviewed periodically and updated to reflect any changes that emerge from Public Health England/Wales and or UK and Welsh Government.*

### **Q1. What is the difference between self-isolation and social distancing?**

**Self-isolation** – is where you or someone you live with has symptoms of COVID-19 and should follow the stay at home advice. This is about protecting others and slowing down the spread of COVID-19. It is very important that anyone who has the virus, or might have been exposed to it, limits the number of people they come into contact with in line with the Public Health advice.

Staying at home means you should:

- not go to work, school or public areas
- 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

**Social distancing** – this is taking steps to reduce the social interaction between people. They are:

- Avoid contact with someone who is displaying symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19). These symptoms include high temperature and/or new and continuous cough
- Avoid non-essential use of public transport, varying your travel times to avoid rush hour, when possible
- Work from home, where possible.

- Avoid gatherings with friends and family. Keep in touch using remote technology such as phone, internet, and social media
- Use telephone or online services to contact your GP or other essential services

### **Q2. When can I resume duties if I have had coronavirus symptoms?**

**After 7 days** from the date of your symptoms starting, should your temperature have returned to normal **and you feel well** you can return to your normal routine on **day 8**. If you remain unwell, you should wait until your temperature has returned to normal. The cough may persist for several weeks in some people, despite the coronavirus infection having cleared. **A persistent cough alone does not mean someone must continue to self-isolate for more than 7 days.**

**If you are not unwell**, your manager may ask you to undertake alternative tasks from home, for which the necessary equipment will be provided if necessary.

### **Q3. Will I be redeployed to a different role during Coronavirus?**

This is a **challenging time** and we should be as flexible as possible. Your manager may ask you to **move to a different role, function or location, and change your working pattern** for the period of the pandemic.

**You will not be asked to undertake any tasks that you are not trained or qualified to undertake.** This will not require a change to the employment contract and normal working hours, base etc. will resume as soon as is practicable. Where services are stood down the Council will seek to redeploy as many employees as possible, where it is safe to do so.

If you are **concerned at any stage**, you can request that a **risk assessment** is undertaken in advance of any move.

### **Q4. As schools are now closed I am concerned about leaving my child. At what age can I leave a child home alone?**

There's no legal age a child can be left home alone. Every child matures differently, so it would be almost impossible to have a 'one size fits all' law.

However, parents and carers are responsible for keeping their children safe. If leaving your child home alone puts them at risk of harm – because they're too young to care for

themselves for example – the law might consider this neglect.

A child who isn't old enough or who doesn't feel comfortable should never be left home alone. If this is the case, it's best to look into childcare options that might work for your family.

Recommendations from Social Services colleagues is as follows:

- **Babies and toddlers** should never be left alone.
- **Children under 12 years old** shouldn't be left home alone for long.
- **Children under 16 years old** shouldn't be left alone overnight.
- **Over 16 year olds** shouldn't be left alone frequently for long periods of time or for multiple nights.
- Children should never be left in **a home that could put them at risk** – like with no electricity or heat, or with dangerous objects.

**Q5. What will happen to my pay if I am required to self-isolate because I or a member of my family have symptoms?**

- If your role allows you to, and you are fit to work, then you will be expected to work from home and practical arrangements will be made via your manager/ Head Teacher.
- If your role does not allow you to work from home, then you will be on 'approved paid absence' in relation to this virus.
- If you have symptoms and are unfit to work, then you will be on 'approved paid absence' in relation to this virus

**Q6. I have a seasonal cold, should I stay at home?**

If you are unwell and unable to work for any reason unconnected with Coronavirus then you should report your absences in the normal way. You can self-certificate for absence of less than 7 days. If you remain absent after this time you should seek a FIT note from your GP who will if appropriate, issue one by post. You should only then remain at home if you develop symptoms of Coronavirus.

**Q7. How will if I know if I am classed as a key worker?**

The Council's key workers are aligned to portfolio critical services responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. Employees classed as key workers will receive a letter from the Chief Executive. Employees who work in none critical services, who volunteer or are redeployed to one our key services will be issued with a letter. The position will regularly reviewed.

If they you are unsure if you are classed as a key worker or not you should check with your manager/Head Teacher.

**Q8. Why do key workers need a letter and what will it be used for?**

It is possible that there will be Government restrictions on travel for anyone who is not classed as a key worker. The letter from the Chief Executive, in combination with a valid Flintshire County Council photo ID security pass will be accepted as proof of key worker status in the event of any such restrictions.

Key workers are advised to carry their driving licence photo card in addition to the letter and Council or School photo ID security pass with them at all times when working, including home to work travel.

**Q9. I have been asked to attend a meeting with a large number of people. Is this correct?**

Some meetings may be necessary to support the Council's response to the Coronavirus. Many meetings are being cancelled, but if the meeting needs to go ahead, you should check if skype, teleconferencing, or video conferencing is available. If you attend in person, you should adhere to the social distancing measures and keep 2 metres (3 steps) away from other people.

**Q10. What can I do to minimise sore hands as I am washing them more frequently?**

Wet yours hands **before** you apply the soap

- Rinse your hands thoroughly
- Pat hands dry
- Use regular moisturiser

**Q11. I am interested in volunteering for NHS Wales and/or one of the many community groups that are responding during the current COVID—19 situation, would there be any issues from the Council's perspective if I do this?**

There is no reason why volunteering could not take place (assuming it is not impacting your duties and the Council's wider priorities which are currently shifting).

However, we might need to utilise the skills of employees in discharging our wider obligations in response to the virus.

The amount of hours worked will need to be monitored if any volunteering were to be become excessive on top of your normal working hours.

Volunteers need to remain mindful that any voluntary activity they undertake could place them and/or their family at an increased level of risk and follow all local/national guidance at all times.

**Q12. What can we do to maintain our mental wellbeing at this time?**

**Keep connected** - talk and connect with each other using methods other than face to face i.e. by phone / face time etc.

**Ask someone how are you today?** And let them know you are there for them. We will all have things that are worrying us over these changeable times. Recognise how you and others are feeling and support each other.

**Keep updated** with the guidelines so you feel informed on what we all need to do.

**Q13. I am feeling anxious what can I do?**

Remind yourself that it is completely normal to be feeling increased anxiety at this time. In fact you may find yourself going through a wide range of emotional responses. Be kind to yourself and accept what you are feeling in the moment and notice that feelings pass no matter how intense they may feel at the time. Take a moment to stop and breathe. Take a break from social media and the news as much as you are able to

If you already have a tendency to become anxious your mind may immediately jump to worst case scenarios which may heighten your anxiety further. Limit yourself to how often you check the news and updates and take time to recognise that you are feeling anxious

the use techniques such as taking a breath, bringing your mind back to the current moment.

**Q14. I am struggling to sleep what type of things will help me?**

Heightened anxiety levels, ongoing stressful situations and general increased workload has an impact on our ability to rest and get the sleep we need. We may find ourselves struggling to relax after a busy shift or having to make difficult decisions and choices. We may then ruminate on thoughts and find it difficult to "switch off".

A lack of sleep lowers your ability to concentrate, impedes your potential to make effective decisions and compromises your immune system. The only way to remedy this is to get more sleep. The NHS has more information on the impact of not getting enough sleep, and advice on sleep and shift work is available from the BMJ. Take regular breaks before you feel that you're getting tired or burned out. This might feel counterintuitive but it will build your resilience to stressful situations. Ask colleagues for help if you feel overwhelmed or that your ability to care for your patients is being compromised.

Try and do as many things as you usually would, such as talking with family and friends. NHS sleep advice <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sleep-and-tiredness/how-to-get-to-sleep/>

The Sleep Council: <https://sleepcouncil.org.uk/>