



**STOCKPORT**  
METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

The following FAQs provide suggested responses for Headteachers and Governors to a variety of situations or queries which may arise in response to the Coronavirus, as well as information on how to log any absences onto iTrent. If you wish to issue any FAQs to your employees you can adapt the questions and answers below. It is likely that the answers will change as the situation continues to evolve and updates will be provided if significant changes are needed.

## Coronavirus (COVID-19) HR FAQs for Schools

(last updated 19<sup>th</sup> May 2020)

<p><b>1.</b></p>	<p><b>An employee has coronavirus symptoms and is not sure whether to come into work. What should I advise?</b></p> <p>The latest advice from Public Health England is that if someone has symptoms of COVID-19, however mild:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They should stay at home for <b>7 days</b> from when symptoms started if they live alone</li> </ul> <p>Symptoms are classed as the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>a high temperature</b> – feeling hot to touch on their chest or back</li> <li>• <b>a new, continuous cough</b> – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour or 3 more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual).</li> <li>• <b>a loss of, or change in, your normal sense of taste or smell</b> (anosmia)</li> </ul> <p>This will help to protect others in the community while the person is infectious. They should not go to a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital. They do not need to contact 111 to tell them they are staying at home unless they have received a letter informing that they are extremely vulnerable to the risks of coronavirus. More information can be found at: <a href="https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/">https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/</a>. They should immediately inform their Headteacher/manager if they believe they need to self-isolate and the absence should be recorded in i-Trent. Advice on how to do this can be found in the questions below. They should also discuss whether it may be appropriate to arrange to have a test for Covid19.</p>
<p><b>2.</b></p>	<p><b>A member of an employee’s household has coronavirus symptoms, what should they do?</b></p> <p>They will need to stay at home, self-isolating for 14 days from the day the first person in the household got the symptoms and they should not leave the house at all. They should report this to their Headteacher/manager as soon as possible. Follow the links above to obtain further information about the virus and staying at home. Enter the self-isolation onto iTrent as set out below. Advice on this may change now it has been announced that testing is more widely available so please check the latest government/Public Health advice</p>

**3. An employee has received a letter from the NHS saying that they have been designated as extremely vulnerable, what do I do?**

Some people are considered extremely vulnerable to the risks of coronavirus and have been advised to adopt shielding measures to protect them by staying at home and avoiding face-to-face contact with others for 12 weeks. Employees should be following this advice. They are not expected to travel to work regardless of their job role. They should work from home if work is available, subject to providing a copy of the NHS letter they have received to the Headteacher / manager. If their normal job cannot be undertaken from home they may be allocated alternative tasks or a role which can be completed at home. Those who are considered extremely vulnerable include:

1. Solid organ transplant recipients.
2. People with specific cancers:
  - people with cancer who are undergoing active chemotherapy or radical radiotherapy for lung cancer
  - people with cancers of the blood or bone marrow such as leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma who are at any stage of treatment
  - people having immunotherapy or other continuing antibody treatments for cancer
  - people having other targeted cancer treatments which can affect the immune system, such as protein kinase inhibitors or PARP inhibitors
  - people who have had bone marrow or stem cell transplants in the last 6 months, or who are still taking immunosuppression drugs
3. People with severe respiratory conditions including all cystic fibrosis, severe asthma and severe COPD.
4. People with rare diseases and inborn errors of metabolism that significantly increase the risk of infections (such as SCID, homozygous sickle cell).
5. People on immunosuppression therapies sufficient to significantly increase risk of infection.
6. Women who are pregnant with significant heart disease, congenital or acquired.

More information including what steps they should take if they are considered extremely vulnerable to the risks of coronavirus can be found here <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>

<p><b>4.</b></p>	<p><b>An employee lives with someone who has received a letter from the NHS saying that they have been designated as extremely vulnerable, what approach should be taken?</b></p> <p>If an employee lives in a household with someone who is extremely clinically vulnerable, as set out in the <a href="#">COVID-19: guidance on shielding and protecting people defined on medical grounds as extremely vulnerable guidance</a>, it is advised they only attend an education or childcare setting if stringent social distancing can be adhered to. If stringent social distancing cannot be adhered to, it is not expected those individuals attend. They should be supported to work at home subject to providing a copy of the NHS letter the person they live with has received. The employee may be allocated tasks or a role that can be completed at home if their usual job does not allow them to work from home. Those who are considered extremely vulnerable have medical conditions as described in question 3 above.</p> <p>More information including what steps the employee should take if they live with someone who is considered extremely vulnerable to the risks of coronavirus can be found <a href="#">here</a></p>
<p><b>5.</b></p>	<p><b>An employee is in one of the categories advised to stay at home because they are clinically vulnerable, does that advice need to be followed?</b></p> <p>Employees who are over 70, pregnant or have a long term health condition that means they are at increased risk of severe illness from coronavirus, will not be expected to work outside of their home. This applies to those employees who have not received an NHS letter but are in one of the categories published by the Government; more information on the health conditions that make a person more vulnerable to coronavirus can be found in Section 8 <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing</a></p> <p>The employee's health condition should be discussed with the Headteacher / manager who may also need to take further HR and/or Occupational Health advice to confirm whether or not the health condition (and its severity) falls within the category.</p> <p>Provided the employee is fit and well enough to work, they should work from home. If they cannot work from home in their usual role they may be asked to undertake reasonable alternative duties from home while working their contracted hours. For a very small number of employees with conditions that make them more vulnerable to coronavirus it may not be possible to find a role that they can complete from home. These employees should still be paid at their normal rate until the Government advice to for this group changes. This absence will be treated in the same way as self-isolation and recorded as such (see question below).</p>

<p><b>6.</b></p>	<p><b>An employee lives with someone who is 70 or over, has a government listed underlying health condition or is pregnant and wants to stay at home with them, what approach should be taken?</b></p> <p>The government advice is that people within the above categories can attend an education setting.</p> <p>Although the household member is self-isolating, the employee themselves does not meet the criteria for self-isolating. The employee's partner/relation/household member is strongly advised to stringently follow advice from Public Health; more information is available <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing</a></p> <p>If the school can identify work which can be undertaken at home the school may arrange for employees to work from home, where this is practical and does not cause staffing issues within the school.</p> <p>Before implementing any changes which would be detrimental to the employee all possible solutions should be explored including reduced hours, partial homeworking etc and HR advice should be sought.</p>
<p><b>7.</b></p>	<p><b>Can an employee be asked to work whilst in self-isolation?</b></p> <p>Yes, it is reasonable for an employee who remains well to work from home. The Headteacher/manager should try to identify work which can be carried out from home. If equipment needs to be provided to enable this then care should be taken not to come into contact with the isolated/quarantined employee. Employees should be reminded that normal policies in relation to Information Governance and keeping data safe continue to apply so particular care must be taken to keep sensitive information confidential from other people within their household. Security and privacy implications are the same as when employees are working in the school; family members or any other third parties who may be in the home while the employee is working must not have access to any personal information the employee is working on. This includes paper documents as well as access to emails, the school/Council network and telephone discussions. Employees should try to maintain a paperless approach wherever possible and ensure that nothing containing personal information is discarded with the normal household waste. Any documents containing personal information should be brought back to the school and securely destroyed using the confidential waste bins.</p>

<p><b>8.</b></p>	<p><b>What will an employee be paid if they are self-isolating?</b></p> <p>If the employee is not ill but meets the criteria for self-isolation, as outlined above then the national conditions of service which relate to being prevented from attending work due to possible contact with infectious disease shall apply. The employee will receive full pay for their contracted hours, subject to providing full information to the Headteacher/manager, for the duration of the advised self-isolation or quarantine. This applies to school employees employed under NJC for Local Government Conditions of Service and to Teachers employed under School Teachers Pay and Conditions Document / Burgundy Book.</p>
<p><b>9.</b></p>	<p><b>How are absences or working from home recorded on iTrent?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the employee is too ill to work because of Coronavirus symptoms the absence should be recorded as sickness using the code Z24 which has been amended to accommodate Coronavirus on the iTrent system.</li> <li>• If the employee is self-isolating because they have mild symptoms but is still able to work, the absence is recorded under 'Other leave' and then use the category of 'Self-isolation – working'.</li> <li>• If the employee is self-isolating because a member of their household has symptoms, but is still able to work the absence is recorded under 'Other leave' and then use the sub-category of 'Self-isolation – working'.</li> <li>• If the employee is self-isolating because they have received an NHS shielding letter, or they live with someone who has, and they are not ill, record the absence under 'Other leave' and then use the category 'Self-isolation – not working' if they are not able to work from home because their role is unsuitable for homeworking and no other work has been allocated.</li> <li>• If the employee is self-isolating but not able to work the absence is recorded under 'Other leave' and then use the sub-category of 'Self-isolation – not working'.</li> </ul> <p>If this status changes, such as needing to self-isolate or becoming ill, it is important to enter an end date and begin a new self-isolation or sickness status.</p> <p>It is important that Schools continue to record that any employee or anyone in their household has developed symptoms of coronavirus even if employees have been working at home and are well enough to continue working. This is to ensure that there are accurate records and to enable headteachers to check in on the wellbeing of their employees who have reported symptoms.</p> <p>Any recording on iTrent under 'other leave' does not affect pay, this information is to ensure correct data on the numbers of employees self-isolating and whether they are working or not.</p>

<p><b>10.</b></p>	<p><b>What happens if an employee is in self-isolation and then becomes ill?</b></p> <p>If the employee becomes too ill to work, they should inform the Headteacher/manager as quickly as possible. Any period of time when the employee is well but in self-isolation / quarantine should be recorded in iTrent as indicated above but should be amended if the employee becomes ill.</p>
<p><b>11.</b></p>	<p><b>Do employees need a 'fit note' if they are ill or in self-isolation?</b></p> <p>Employees will not need a GP 'fit note' (previously known as a 'sick note') if they are self-isolating but are well enough to work. If they are unwell they should self-certify for the first 7 days of their illness. To prevent transmission of coronavirus, particularly to those with weakened immune systems, is important that they do not visit their GP surgery. They do not need to contact NHS 111 unless their symptoms last longer than 7 days.</p> <p>If they are ill for more than 7 days with coronavirus symptoms they will need to provide their Headteacher/manager with a 'self-isolation notes' from NHS 111. They can obtain this note on through <a href="#">NHS 111 online</a>.</p>
<p><b>12</b></p>	<p><b>What if an employee is unwell with another illness?</b></p> <p>If an employees is unable to work due to another illness that is unrelated to coronavirus, the School's usual sickness absence policy and procedure applies. The employee should self-certify as usual for the first 7 days. They will then need to provide a GP fit note after the first 7 days of illness. The employee should phone their GP surgery or book a telephone appointment online (if this is available at the practice). The employee should not go to the GP surgery unless they are told to do so by a member of the Practice staff regardless of whether they have symptoms of coronavirus or not.</p>

<p><b>13.</b></p>	<p><b>A staff member says they want to stay at home and care for their school/nursery age children themselves, what can I do?</b></p> <p>Education staff have been designated as 'Key workers' and therefore hold critical roles which will provide, or support, essential education and childcare services during the current crisis. It is vital that that the school service continues. There is a very clear requirement that employees undertake the duties they are designated.</p> <p>Many key workers will not be able to work from home as they will be providing key activities in the school. However, if you have a member of staff who could undertake duties from home, you may agree this.</p> <p>Provision has been made to keep schools open for the children of key workers. You should inform your employee that they should alert their children's school that their child still needs to attend. The school may require proof that the parent is a key worker. You may therefore need to supply a letter to confirm this. Further information is available here <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision</a></p>
<p><b>14.</b></p>	<p><b>If our school is closed, will staff be paid?</b></p> <p>Employees will be paid their contracted hours if prevented from attending work. However, staff are required to perform any reasonable work as instructed from either home or an alternative location.</p>
<p><b>15.</b></p>	<p><b>Employees are worried about meeting parents / carers and other visitors to the school as part of my job, can they refuse?</b></p> <p>No, employees are expected to carry out their duties, subject to following personal hygiene advice from Public Health England and strict social distancing measures</p> <p>The School should be supplying essential products to promote good hygiene, including hand soap and hand sanitiser.</p> <p>In addition there should be processes in place within school to minimise the number of people on the school site in the interest of infection control. Any visitors to school should be limited and parents should come into school buildings only when strictly necessary and by appointment. Any such meeting should take place at a safe distance.</p>

**16. I have casual workers, temporary and supply teachers who are no longer needed, do they continue to be paid? Should the furlough scheme be used in these circumstances?**

Substitute teachers and non-teaching staff in temporary/fixed term posts should receive their normal pay for the period of time that they have been engaged to work. They can continue to be required to work either at home or in school as a key worker if needed.

Casual workers should be paid for any work which had already been offered or assumed as there has been regularity to the work. You can of course still require the worker to undertake work for the number of hours being paid. If a casual worker is ill, they should be entered on iTrent as sick (contrary to normal advice) so that statutory sick pay can be accessed if they are eligible.

If any supply or casual worker who is well informs you that they no longer wish to be considered as available for work, then no further payment needs to be made.

Extensive advice has been taken on the furlough scheme and it is not anticipated that it will be used as public bodies will probably not be able to recoup the money from government. This is an extract from gov.uk about the furlough scheme and how it applies to the public sector:

The government expects that the scheme will not be used by many public sector organisations, as the majority of public sector employees are continuing to provide essential public services or contribute to the response to the coronavirus outbreak.

Where employers receive public funding for staff costs, and that funding is continuing, we expect employers to use that money to continue to pay staff in the usual fashion – and correspondingly not furlough them. This also applies to non-public sector employers who receive public funding for staff costs.

Organisations who are receiving public funding specifically to provide services necessary to respond to COVID-19 are not expected to furlough staff.

Therefore if you would have used casual /supply workers you should continue to arrange payment for them in line with government expectations but you can also expect work to be undertaken. If there are any particular issues please log them with HR as this advice will be kept under review.

Further information in relation to the furlough scheme is available in question 22 below

**17. Are there any changes to notice periods during the Coronavirus crisis?**

A joint statement between the Local Government Association, National Governance Association and teaching trade unions has been issued. Here is an extract:

The extent of the impact will vary from school to school and therefore we do not believe that there should be any changes to the notice periods. In this difficult period, there will need to be an element of flexibility all round. We would encourage schools to have a flexible response, if it appears that teachers and leaders are impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and submit a resignation outside of the normal timeframe. For those employees that are looking to resign and/or retire themselves, we would encourage you to provide your governing boards and/or senior leadership team with as much notice as possible and stay within the standard notice period dates as far as is possible, as you would do in normal circumstances. It may also be helpful to direct boards to NGA's current guidance on managing the head teacher recruitment process in the current situation.

**18. How is the school sickness insurance scheme cover affected by the current situation?**

This scheme is operated by the insurance team which is part of the Finance service; the following advice has been provided:

1. Does the sickness insurance scheme cover claims for members of staff self-isolating?  
A – No. The policy only pays claims where the member of staff is absent due to illness or personal injury
2. Does the sickness insurance scheme cover claims for members of staff who are off work due to contracting the coronavirus?  
A – Yes as this is classed as illness under the policy.
3. Does the scheme cover claims now the school is closed?  
A – No. The terms and conditions of the policy states:

**SECTION 6: ELIGIBLE DAYS**

- a) Reimbursement will be made to schools for the days when pupils are educated. This means schools **will not be** reimbursed for absences occurring during the following periods;
- INSET days ;
  - School holidays;
  - Bank holidays;
  - When schools are closed for polling duties;
  - When schools are closed due to strike action; and
  - When schools are closed for any other exceptional circumstances.

Reimbursement cannot therefore be provided for any staff absences following schools instructed closures on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> March 2020. Any questions about the insurance scheme should be emailed to [insurance@stockport.gov.uk](mailto:insurance@stockport.gov.uk)

<p><b>19.</b></p>	<p><b>Alternative work arranged for an employee involves driving their own car but they are concerned about their insurance. Is there a solution to this?</b></p> <p>The Association of British Insurers has issued guidance to say insurers won't penalise a driver who is carrying out a task outside the scope of their current cover which is necessary as a result of the COVID19 pandemic. Specific details are in point 4 &amp; 5 below:</p> <p><b>Home and Motor Insurance Pledges</b></p> <p>ABI Home and Motor insurers have made the following pledges to support home and motor insurance customers during the COVID-19 crisis.</p> <p><b>1. Support those who need to make a claim.</b> Insurers have implemented business continuity plans and work closely with service providers to do everything possible in these challenging circumstances to continue to handle claims and support their customers. We recognise there will be many customers who will need additional support and insurers will prioritise those in vulnerable circumstances.</p> <p><b>2. Support those who are working from home.</b> If you are an office-based worker and need to work from home because of government advice or because you need to self-isolate, your home insurance cover will not be affected. You do not need to contact your insurer to update your documents or extend your cover.</p> <p><b>3. Support those who cannot work from home.</b> If you have to drive to your workplace because of the impact of Covid-19, your insurance policy will not be affected. You do not need to contact your insurer to update your documents or extend your cover.</p> <p><b>4. Support those who use their cars to help their communities.</b> If you are using your own car for voluntary purposes to transport medicines or groceries to support others who are impacted by Covid-19, your cover will not be affected. You do not need to contact your insurer to update your documents or extend your cover.</p> <p><b>5. Support our key workers.</b> If your work is critical to the national response to Covid-19 and you need to use your own car to drive to different locations for work purposes because of the impact of Covid-19, your cover will not be affected. You do not need to contact your insurer to update your documents or extend your cover.</p>
<p><b>20</b></p>	<p><b>Can I claim an allowance for working from home?</b></p> <p>HMRC have a scheme for claiming tax relief for expenses associated with working from home. Here is a link to the scheme <a href="https://www.gov.uk/tax-relief-for-employees/working-at-home">https://www.gov.uk/tax-relief-for-employees/working-at-home</a>.</p>

## **21 Recruitment – Advice from Local Government Association (LGA)**

### **Can schools continue to recruit teaching and support staff during Covid-19?**

Yes, they can. It is important that schools have the workforce they need, and recruitment should continue where it is necessary and practical to do so. The LGA trust schools to use their judgment on whether recruitment is needed and how this can best be done given the circumstances.

### **Can schools continue to recruit head teachers during Covid-19?**

The recruitment of Headteachers is a matter for individual schools and their governing bodies. Schools may wish to refer to the guidance issued by The National Governance Association (NGA) on how governing boards should recruit Headteachers during Covid-19.

### **How can schools recruit during Covid-19 while social distancing is in place?**

Social distancing guidelines will mean it is not possible for most schools to recruit in the usual manner. Interviews should therefore either happen remotely (i.e. via an online video or telephone interview) or be delayed to a later date. Schools will need to ensure that all employment laws are met and that applicants have equality of opportunity throughout the selection process. LGA trust schools to use their judgement in implementing this.

### **Will there be changes to the way pre-employment checks are carried out as a result of social distancing guidance?**

When recruiting, schools must continue to adhere to the legal requirements regarding pre-appointment checks.

LGA refer schools to Part three of the statutory guidance 'Keeping Children Safe in Education'. Please note that the following temporary changes have been made to the DBS standard and enhanced ID checking guidance:

- ID documents to be viewed over video link
- Scanned images to be used in advance of the DBS check being submitted
- The applicant will be required to present the original versions of these documents when they first attend their employment or volunteering role. The change came into effect from 19 March 2020.

In addition, the Home Office guidance regarding face to face interviews when checking the right to work has been revised. As of 30 March 2020, the following temporary changes have been made:

- Checks can now be carried out over video calls
- Job applicants and existing workers can send scanned documents or a photo of documents for checks using email or a mobile app, rather than sending originals
- Employers should use the Employer Checking Service if a prospective or existing employee cannot provide any of the accepted documents.

### **Can employers extend notice periods during Covid-19 to prevent staff from leaving at a time of need?**

**22 Can we use the furlough scheme for any of our staff who are no longer working (eg Breakfast & After School Club)?**

The DfE published updated guidance on Friday 17<sup>th</sup> April relating to Covid-19 and financial support for education which included information relating to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CRJS) for furloughed workers

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-financial-support-for-education-early-years-and-childrens-social-care/coronavirus-covid-19-financial-support-for-education-early-years-and-childrens-social-care>

It has been outlined in all previous guidance/information documents that it is not envisaged that schools would need to furlough their staff in relation to Covid-19. There are however some staff within schools where the salary costs are included within the overall school budget, but such costs are not financed by public funds (ie DSG) as they are funded by external private income (ie parental fees).

The updated guidance makes reference to specific cost areas within a school that are financed by separate private income streams (but interestingly does not list ‘before/after school clubs’ as an example). It is therefore difficult at this stage based on the DfE guidance provided; to be 100% clear on the categories of activity within a school and financed by ‘private income streams’ that will or will not be applicable for a CJRS claim.

The current LA/HR guidance remains that school staff should not be furloughed where possible subject to the exceptions outlined in the guidance above however it is an individual School decision on whether to furlough any staff. The checklist below may assist you in your decision-making process:-

**Section 1**

Can the school make the necessary savings from the School’s budget      Yes      No

Can the employee be redeployed to help support the COVID19 response  
Yes      No

**Section 2**

Are each of the following 5 conditions met?

The employee works in an area of business where services are temporarily not required and their salary is not covered by public funding      Yes      No

The employee would otherwise have been made redundant or laid off  
Yes      No

The employee is not involved in delivering provision that has already been funded  
Yes      No

The employee is not required to deliver provision for a child of a critical worker and/or vulnerable child  
Yes      No

The grant would not lead to finance reserves being created  
Yes      No

<p><b>23</b></p>	<p><b>Can HR give further guidance on pregnant staff – DfE and PHE sites are slightly conflicting? One says pregnant staff should stay at home and the other says pregnant staff with underlying conditions should be at home.</b></p> <p>Some people, including those aged 70 and over, those with specific chronic pre-existing conditions and pregnant women, are clinically vulnerable, meaning they are at higher risk of severe illness from coronavirus'. As restrictions begin to ease, this group who are clinically vulnerable should continue to take particular care to minimise contact with others outside their household.</p> <p>Women who are pregnant with significant heart disease, congenital or acquired are considered to be extremely vulnerable and will most likely have received an NHS letter.</p> <p>In both circumstances the employee is advised not to travel to work but work from home if well enough to do so.</p>
<p><b>24</b></p>	<p><b>Do staff get a break before the School is open?</b></p> <p>If staff have volunteered to work during the School holidays they will need to be given compensatory time off at a later date, preferably before normal school provision resumes.</p>
<p><b>25</b></p>	<p><b>Vulnerable staff – what is the HR advice on their return to work – with or without the 12 week letter?</b></p> <p>The current advice is unchanged which means that if the employee has received an NHS shielding letter, or is clinically vulnerable as described by the government 'Staying Alert and Safe 'Social Distancing' document (please see section 8 of the document. <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing</a>) they are not expected to attend work.</p>
<p><b>26</b></p>	<p><b>What is the position for staff who have children that are not back at school?</b></p> <p>Education staff have been designated as 'key workers' and therefore hold critical roles which will provide or support essential education and child care services. There is provision for schools and nurseries to be open for the children of key workers.</p> <p>Alternatively, if you have a member of staff who could undertake duties from home, this could be agreed if you wish, but you may wish to be clear that this will be kept under review and so may not be able to continue</p>

<p><b>27</b></p>	<p><b>What is the position for staff returning from maternity leave who do not have childcare in place?</b></p> <p>Education staff have been designated as 'key workers' and therefore hold critical roles which will provide or support essential education and child care services. There is provision for nurseries to be open for the children of key workers. It is recognised that the employee's planned childcare may not now be possible (eg if relatives who are now self-isolating had been due to provide childcare) and this may be causing additional anxiety as alternative childcare will need to be sought. Early conversations before the employee is due back is recommended.</p> <p>Alternatively, if you have a member of staff who could undertake duties from home, this could be agreed if you wish, but you may wish to be clear that this will be kept under review and so may not be able to continue.</p>
<p><b>28</b></p>	<p><b>What if a member of staff is required to use public transport to get to work?</b></p> <p>The DfE have advised to consider all other forms of transport before using public transport.</p> <p>Further information can be found <a href="https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-travel-guidance-for-passengers">https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-travel-guidance-for-passengers</a></p> <p>It is worth bearing in mind that travel may take longer than normal on some routes due to reduced capacity and social distancing measures. Employees should allow sufficient time particularly if the journey involves changes between different forms of transport.</p> <p>It is also advised in accordance with government advice that if using public transport, face coverings should be worn wherever possible.</p>

<p><b>29</b></p>	<p><b>How do we refer to staff absence linked to shielding letters? Should we expect them back in work? When do we take action around stages for staff absence and what happens to pay after many weeks of absence?</b></p> <p>If an employee has received a letter from the NHS saying that they have been designated as extremely vulnerable, they are not expected to travel to work. They should work from home and undertake work if it is available. If the normal job cannot be undertaken from home they may be allocated alternative tasks or a role which can be completed at home.</p> <p>The absence should be recorded in iTrent under the category of 'Self-isolation – working' unless there is a reason why they are not working, in which case use 'Self-isolation – not working'. These categories are under 'Absence' and then 'Other Leave'.</p> <p>If the employee is not ill but meets the criteria for self-isolation then the National Conditions of service which relate to being prevented from attending work due to possible contact with infectious disease shall apply. The employee will receive full pay for their contracted hours, subject to providing you with full information for the duration of the advised self-isolation or quarantine. This applies to both NJC for Local Government Conditions of Service and to Teachers employed under the Burgundy Book.</p> <p>Whilst employees are shielding (because they are clinically extremely vulnerable and have received an NHS letter) or are staying at home because it is agreed they are clinically vulnerable, they will remain on full pay and will not be recorded as on sickness absence. Sickness trigger points will therefore not be applied.</p>
<p><b>30</b></p>	<p><b>Should the sickness absence triggers apply when the sickness absence is due to Covid-19?</b></p> <p>For employees who declare that a period of sickness absence is due directly to Covid-19, the HR advice is that the absence should not normally count towards the sickness triggers as set out within the sickness absence policy. Reporting of sickness absence and the requirement for medical evidence are unchanged. Recent changes to widen testing for Covid-19 should make it clearer for employees to clarify whether or not sickness absence is Covid-19 related or not.</p>

**31 What measures will the LA have in place to support staff with mental health issues, around returning to work?**

The coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak means that life is changing for all of us for a while. It may cause us to feel anxious, stressed, worried, sad or frustrated.

It is important to remember it is ok to feel this way and that everyone reacts differently. Remember, this situation is temporary and, for most of us, these difficult feelings will pass.

There are some simple things that can help us to take care of our mental health and wellbeing during times of uncertainty. Doing so will help us think clearly, and make sure we are able to look after our self and those we care about.

Here are 10 ways staff can help improve their mental health and wellbeing if they are worried or anxious about the coronavirus outbreak.

**1. Stay connected with people**

Maintaining healthy relationships with people they trust is important for their mental wellbeing.

**2. Talk about your worries**

It is normal to feel a bit worried, scared or helpless about the current situation. Remember: it is OK to share concerns with others they trust – and doing so may help them too.

**3. Support and help others**

Helping someone else can benefit us as well as them, so try to be a little more understanding of other people's concerns, worries or behaviours at this time.

**4. Feel prepared**

Working through the implications of returning to work should help us feel more prepared and less concerned. Think through a normal week, how will it be affected and what do we all need to do to solve any problems that the current control measures may provide.

**5. Look after your body**

Our physical health has a big impact on how we feel. At times like these, it can be easy to fall into unhealthy patterns of behaviour that end up making you feel worse.

**6. Stick to the facts**

Find a credible source that can be trusted – such as SMBC Connect, GOV.UK or the NHS website – and fact-check information received from newsfeeds, social media or other people. Think about how possibly inaccurate information could affect others too. We should try not to share information without fact-checking against credible sources.

**7. Stay on top of difficult feelings**

Concern about the coronavirus outbreak is perfectly normal. However,

