

**COVID-19 Protocol for the temporary movement of staff across the Council**

document created 25 March 2020 and will be reviewed on a continual basis

**Updated 9 April 2020**

## **Purpose**

As a local authority, our key purpose is to protect the people and place from harm – that means our priority must be maintaining critical services for our citizens and communities during the Coronavirus outbreak. These critical services support our regional COVID-19 emergency response but now face the very real challenge of staff shortages and an increase in demand.

This protocol set out a framework to be used in the temporary movement of staff to cover critical and essential services or additional services required as part of our multi-agency response, and details the considerations involved in moving staff to alternative duties, on a temporary basis. It applies to all staff of the council including staff on SNCT terms and conditions of employment, for whom the provisions of SNCT 20-74 and SNCT 20-75 will apply.

## **Background**

There are a number of critical and essential services across the organisation and our partners, for which it is vital that continuity is maintained to support the city of Aberdeen and its citizens. There are also additional services that may be required to be delivered during a pandemic situation. These critical and additional services are under constant review. In light of Covid-19, there is a risk that these services may not be delivered if they are not adequately resourced. Further, our usual staff resources will become depleted as staff become ill or have a need to self-isolate and as a result our workforce is significantly impacted. As such, we need to be able to shift resource across the organisation or to work alongside partners to where the critical demands are highest.

We fully recognise that we cannot do this without the full support and engagement of our staff. The temporary movement of staff to cover essential services has been agreed at our corporate Incident Management Team and will be managed through the People and Organisation Cluster and operationally through chief officers and service managers.

## **Temporary Movement of Staff Principles**

In these challenging times, we look to staff to be flexible and adaptable in the way they deliver their roles and also in consideration of movement to alternative roles and / or tasks either within the same Cluster or to a different Cluster across the organisation, or indeed outwith our usual structures to work with partners to support the Council in managing the COVID-19 emergency and critical service delivery.

## Aberdeen City Council

Where staff are needed to undertake similar work to their usual role but delivering in an alternative way to support business continuity, managers may reasonably ask staff to do this at a local level. Consideration should be given in these circumstances to the tasks required as being 'like work'. This would mean that the required tasks proposed are broadly similar to an employee's current role in relation to required skills, circumstances, grade and hours. Any difference in the work which is not of practical importance shall not be considered.

Given the unprecedented situation and to ensure essential services are delivered in the protection of life and protection of place, we may also find ourselves in a situation of asking staff to work in critical or essential services that are different to their normal area of work. Consideration of the allocation of alternative work will also take into account the types of alternative duties staff have confirmed they are willing to undertake.

This process will be subject to agreement with staff, where it represents a significant difference to their existing role, and will take into account:

- personal and home circumstances;
- any underlying health conditions;
- the nature of the work to be undertaken;
- knowledge, skills, experience and qualifications;
- hours of work. We will look for maximum flexibility in hours worked; many of our essential services will require a commitment beyond our usual core hours;
- the likely duration of the move;
- COVID-19 risk assessment and management

### **What safeguards will be put in place?**

Employees should not work excessive hours or be placed in an alternative job role / alternative duties that would compromise safe practice or health and safety of staff or service users. Temporary movement across locations and areas must comply with health, safety, and risk management arrangements, including the provision of personal protective equipment where required. Risk assessment will be carried out by the service manager, with appropriate support from Health and Safety colleagues where needed. An assessment of suitability for a role will be undertaken by the Talent Team, who will remain available to support employees and managers. Employees should get proper rest breaks and breaks between shifts which comply, unless otherwise agreed, with the working time directive. This is set out in our [working time policy](#).

## **Disclosure Scotland / PVG Checks**

In response to the Covid-19 situation, Disclosure Scotland have confirmed that they will prioritise checks for workers in sectors which are supporting the coronavirus response. This includes social care, social work and childcare. As such, a revised process has been developed to enable employers to submit online applications for PVG scheme membership or scheme updates for priority roles.

It is also recognised that there may be a need to move staff to alternative duties urgently in advance of the PVG certificate / update being returned and this protocol sets the circumstances below where it would be possible for this to take place:

- The employee has a current PVG certificate for vulnerable adults/children provided to Aberdeen City Council; or
- The employee has a current PVG certificate for vulnerable adults/children provided to another employer and a copy has been seen by a Council representative; or
- The employee has a current PVG certificate for vulnerable adults/children provided to a college/university/voluntary organisation and a copy has been seen by a Council representative; or
- The employee does not have a PVG certificate but their suitability for the role has been established by a relevant manager

Each request for an individual to commence in advance of the PVG certificate being returned must be recorded on a Request to Start Ahead of PVG Risk Assessment form. Please contact the Talent team at [Talent@aberdeencity.gov.uk](mailto:Talent@aberdeencity.gov.uk) to discuss any specific cases.

## **Payment**

There will be no reduction in pay associated with undertaking alternative duties. Employees will continue to receive, as a minimum, their usual salary. Should an employee undertake additional hours or higher-graded duties, they will be remunerated appropriately. Term time employees who are scheduled to be on leave during school holiday periods and are willing to work will usually receive TOIL. In exceptional circumstances where TOIL is not possible, payment may be agreed by the Chief Officer.

Employees who move to alternative role / duties must complete a timesheet (hyperlink) detailing hours worked in the alternative role / duties that are within current contracted hours and grade as well as additional hours, higher graded hours, hours worked overnight, hours worked at the weekend etc. This must be approved by the manager of the alternative role / duties. Timesheets must cover the entire duration the employee has been undertaking alternative / additional duties, even if this has already started.

Employees supporting other internal council services and working within their contracted hours and grade will continue to be costed to their existing cost centre codes. Any hours worked outwith current contracted hours and grade, or those which

## Aberdeen City Council

attract enhanced rates of pay, will be costed to the 'host cluster'. Wherever possible, employees will only be moved where there is a minimal cost implication and it is expected that host services will deploy these employees in a way that minimises cost wherever possible.

Employees supporting other organisations, including ALEOs, will continue to be costed to their existing cost centre codes, including any additional costs. These costs will be invoiced to the organisation on completion of the role / duties.

### **Recording**

A new leave category has been added to Core HR – “Covid Work from Home/Alt Work”- to capture employees who have moved to alternative roles / duties. Employees who have moved roles must update CoreHR utilising the new leave category, to ensure that live tracking is taking place for all employees supporting critical services. This must be completed retrospectively for those already undertaking these duties.

### **Further points**

- Our first approach as an employer will be, wherever possible, to align staff to the areas of work they have indicated a preference for.
- We recognise that we have a duty of care to staff to ensure that staff are suitably trained and/or briefed and/or qualified to undertake their work, based on an assessment of the needs of the task.
- We will continue with our statutory / legal requirements in respect of Disclosure Scotland checks and professional registration and we will also ensure we maximise the flexibility of our workforce.
- Advice in relation to managing temporary movement of staff can be obtained from the People and Organisation Cluster and further information about Covid-19 can be found on [People Anytime](#).
- We expect employees to remain as flexible as possible and our focus is on maintaining critical services. However, if an employee is no longer able or does not wish to continue in their alternative role / temporary duties for any reason, any concerns should be discussed with their allocated line manager / point of contact in the first instance.

### **Service Managers Must:**

## Aberdeen City Council

- Undertake a risk assessment of the role or task required and be clear on the duties that individuals moving to the service will be undertaking
- Complete an induction and/or relevant training or briefings
- Maintain daily records of who is completing the work
- Have suitable supervision in place
- Be clear that the normal / substantive line manager retains wellbeing responsibility for the employee undertaking temporary duties
- Maintain contact with People and Organisation for the set-up, tracking and processing of staff movement

Please refer to the guidance on the [temporary movement of staff](#) page on People Anytime.

### **Guiding Principles**

Our Guiding Principles are central to our approach to these circumstances and in particular our principles of **Purpose** and One **Team** are more important than ever. All staff are needed to work as **One Team** to support each other in delivering these critical and essential services so that we, as an organisation, can achieve our **Purpose** of supporting the people and place of Aberdeen during this difficult time.