**SOUTH DUBLIN COUNTY COUNCIL**

**FAQ’s for EMPLOYEES AND LINE MANAGERS**

**March 2022**

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## I am office based - What working arrangement should I have currently?

Line Managers can and should request staff members to return to the workplace on a full-time basis where this is required for operation and service delivery purposes. Otherwise, all office-based staff should now be working a minimum of three days per week in the office since 28th February 2022.

## I am outdoor / depot based - What working arrangement should I have?

Any split shift arrangements should have ended since 8th February and all outdoor based staff should have returned to their normal working hours i.e. pre-Covid shift of 8 am to 4.45pm Monday to Thursday and 8am to 2.30pm Friday, and have a full clocking record of their hours worked.

## How can I ensure my safety while working in the office?

The transitional Covid 19 guidance documents remain in place to ensure the offices continue to be a safe working environment. It is each employee’s responsibility to protect themselves by observing appropriate hand hygiene and cough and sneeze etiquette and ensuring sufficient ventilation in their working area. The implementation of the Transitional guidance is the responsibility of all staff and managers working together. This is supported by the Health and Safety and Assistant Health and Safety Officers, Sean Fox and Sami Ullah Khan as well as the Covid Engagement Forum Members Noel McCarthy, Richard McCormack, and Colm Brazil (Worker Representatives), and Galen Doran, Compliance Officer. All information on the Covid Engagement Forum and all Health and Safety matters is available [here](http://intranet/Sites/2?page=1184) or from your Worker Representative and/or line manager if you don’t have access to the intranet.

## What if my work colleague(s) is/ are not vaccinated?

The decision to get vaccinated is voluntary and each employee will therefore make their own individual decisions in this regard. Unvaccinated staff are also bound by the same rules in terms of their work patterns and attendance at work as outlined in the first and second FAQ’s above. All employees should continue to observe appropriate hand hygiene and cough and sneeze etiquette and ensure sufficient ventilation in their working area.

## I am at very high risk for COVID-19 - should I attend my work premises?

The HSE advise that there are levels of risk [People at higher risk from COVID-19 - HSE.ie](https://eur04.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww2.hse.ie%2Fconditions%2Fcovid19%2Fpeople-at-higher-risk%2Foverview%2F&data=04%7C01%7Cmichellereilly%40SDUBLINCOCO.ie%7C891a191dbf094f58ad7708d9f788539b%7C6a3c00c019d0492da8de95fad8fda1d4%7C0%7C0%7C637812987152759013%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=fGzbQBt8JNJM9MIQOqa%2FjmsicT%2FVKYhha1CMhX2JQPc%3D&reserved=0). The Council’s Occupational Health Service will be consulted where employees have concerns about attending their work premises due to their level of risk to advise on whether the employee can attend the work premises.

## Am I required to wear a face covering when in work?

Since 28th February, 2022 the wearing of a face covering is a matter of personal preference, unless required under Transitional Covid 19 guidance documents [Covid 19 Transitional guidance document.](http://intranet/Sites/13)

## What if I feel unwell while in work with Covid symptoms?

If you become unwell or start displaying symptoms when in the offices, [self-isolate](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww2.hse.ie%2Fconditions%2Fcoronavirus%2Fmanaging-coronavirus-at-home%2Fself-isolation.html&data=02%7C01%7Cehunt%40lgma.ie%7Cd5ac679de6db48e55cbf08d85e650a08%7Cef22ca07ab074cf98562d5c5bb0416f4%7C0%7C0%7C637363135347470098&sdata=ZiMl1xwGy0Y5gogJ%2FYE4thjFI1A%2FAPJGn9lAyElO0SI%3D&reserved=0) and make phone contact with your GP, Line Manager, and the Attendance Management Unit in Human Resources Department.

##  What if I live with someone who is Very High Risk?

Employees who live with very high-risk individuals should follow the HSE guidelines to protect themselves and to minimise risk of transmission. Those employees are still be required to attend their work premises.

##  What if I test positive to Covid 19?

Please follow HSE/Medical advice and let your Line Manager and the Attendance Management Unit know immediately. If you are well enough to work remotely this should be facilitated. If you are not, Special Leave with Pay may apply to you. You will need to submit your HSE proof of positive test result to the Attendance Management Unit and complete a self-declaration form.

##  What if I am a close contact?

If you are a close contact of a person that tests positive for COVID-19 (coronavirus), you do not need to get a test or self-isolate unless you have symptoms of Covid 19. This advice is for people of all ages. The full HSE advice is available at this link <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/covid19/contact-tracing/close-contact/>

Special leave with pay does not apply to employees who are required to restrict their movements. Where an employee is required to restrict their movements, they should be facilitated where possible by working from home.

## Can I attend the work if I am a Close Contact?

Yes, unless you are symptomatic. [Find out what to do if you have symptoms of COVID-19](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/covid19/symptoms/overview/#if-you-have-symptoms-of-covid-19)

## What if an employee is displaying symptoms of COVID-19?

The employee should [self-isolate](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww2.hse.ie%2Fconditions%2Fcoronavirus%2Fmanaging-coronavirus-at-home%2Fself-isolation.html&data=02%7C01%7Cehunt%40lgma.ie%7Cd5ac679de6db48e55cbf08d85e650a08%7Cef22ca07ab074cf98562d5c5bb0416f4%7C0%7C0%7C637363135347470098&sdata=ZiMl1xwGy0Y5gogJ%2FYE4thjFI1A%2FAPJGn9lAyElO0SI%3D&reserved=0) until 48 hours after their symptoms are mostly or fully gone. These arrangements do not preclude employees from working from home at an earlier stage if this is feasible.

##  What if an employee has had a negative test for COVID-19?

Where this is the case but the employee is still not well enough to attend the office or is still displaying symptoms, the employee should continue to [self-isolate](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww2.hse.ie%2Fconditions%2Fcoronavirus%2Fmanaging-coronavirus-at-home%2Fself-isolation.html&data=02%7C01%7Cehunt%40lgma.ie%7Cd5ac679de6db48e55cbf08d85e650a08%7Cef22ca07ab074cf98562d5c5bb0416f4%7C0%7C0%7C637363135347470098&sdata=ZiMl1xwGy0Y5gogJ%2FYE4thjFI1A%2FAPJGn9lAyElO0SI%3D&reserved=0) until 48 hours after their symptoms are mostly or fully gone. These arrangements do not preclude employees from returning to work at home at an earlier stage if this is feasible and employees should know that any absence from work will be treated as certified/uncertified sick leave.

## Why have I been asked to attend the office more than 3 days per week?

Some office-based staff are required by their line manager to attend the office for more than three days for business reasons. The offices are a safe environment in full compliance with Covid guidelines. Staff as always should protect themselves and others by observing hand hygiene and cough and sneeze etiquette and ensuring sufficient ventilation in their working environment.

## What are suitable locations for me to work remotely from?

Currently the option available for remote working is only working in a suitable working environment in your home. In the future additional locations may emerge such as remote working hubs, but these will be solely a matter for the Council to determine. Remote working requires that the employee must remain available, whilst working remotely, to attend the workplace at short notice. Working remotely while outside of Ireland is not permitted.

## When will the Remote Working policy be in place?

A Remote Working policy for the local government sector is currently being developed and work has commenced to prepare for its implementation locally, including the development of an online application process. Once ready, the policy and application process including implementation dates will be communicated to staff as soon as is realistically feasible.

The current provision for remote working on the 2 days per week basis is temporary and may change as part of the preparations for the policy implementation and application process.

Under the current arrangements that provide for remote working, Managers must satisfy themselves that there is satisfactory compliance with the time and attendance policy and procedures and that all work is delivered within the required timeframe and to the required standards. The employee must provide the necessary assurance that their working environment satisfactorily meets the health and safety requirements.

Any disagreements between an employee and their line manager regarding the application of remote working should in the interim be addressed through the Council’s Grievance Policy and Procedure.

## I am currently availing of the Work-sharing Scheme and so I only work 3 days per week – what should my office presence be?

Line Managers can immediately request staff members to return to the workplace on a full-time basis for operation and service delivery requirements. Otherwise, all office-based staff should now have returned to the office and be working a minimum of three days per week in the office, since 28th February 2022. This also applies to any staff member who is availing of the work-sharing scheme.

## Can I claim any expenses for working remotely?

There is no public sector provision for the payment of expenses relating to working remotely. However, it is open to employees to make claims directly from Revenue in respect of actual costs incurred in working from home at the end of the relevant tax year, in accordance with the relevant tax laws. Any claim in this regard is solely a matter for the individual concerned.

## Can I claim travel expenses from my home when I must go on site visits but working remotely?

Revenue rules regarding travel expenses continue to apply. An employee’s base, for the purposes of travel and subsistence, continues to remain their office location. Any requirements to travel for work purposes should be organised on those days you are working in the office. No payment of travel expenses will be made for travel from home to normal office location.

## When can I avail of Flexi-time again?

Flexi-time arrangements were re-introduced with effect from 24 August 2020 but apply only in circumstances where employees are attending the work premises on a full-time basis and are working their normal, pre-COVID work attendance patterns, i.e., attending the offices 5 days per week on a full-time basis. Where this is the case and the staff member was availing of Flexi prior to Covid, a request to restore flexi time should be approved by the relevant Director of Services/Head of Function and submitted to the Attendance Management Unit. Otherwise, flexitime, including any flexi-time accruals and deficits, continues to remain suspended for those employees who are working remotely.

## Advice in relation to Covid 19 symptoms, cases and close contacts during the transition phase.

[The public health advice in place right now should be referred to](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/3361b-public-health-updates/) for the most current requirements in all cases.