



Oifig an Stúirthóra Náisiúnta, Acmhainní Daonna

Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhísí Sláinte

Ospidéal Dr. Steevens'

Baile Átha Cliath 8

Office of the National Director of Human Resources

Health Service Executive

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To:

- Chief Executive Officer**
- Each National Director**
- Each Assistant National Director HR**
- Each Assistant Chief Finance Officer**
- Each Hospital Group CEO**
- Each Hospital Group Director of HR**
- Each Chief Officer CHOs**
- Each Head of HR CHOs**
- Head of HR, PCRS**
- Each CEO Section 38 Agencies**
- Each HR Manager Section 38 Agencies**
- Each Employee Relations Manager**
- Each Group Director of Nursing & Midwifery**
- Each Group Director of Midwifery**
- Each Clinical Director**
- Director National Ambulance Service**

From: Anne Marie Hoey, National Director of Human Resources

Date: 11th January 2021

Re: HR Circular 002/2021- Frontline Healthcare Employees with
Childcare Responsibilities during COVID-19

Dear Colleagues

In light of recent Government announcements ([click here](#)), I wish to advise that there is no special paid leave available for COVID-19 caring arrangements.

Where school closures are in effect across the country, it should be noted that childcare services, including regulated childminders, and other existing childcare arrangements remain open and can continue to operate for children of essential

workers¹. In addition, a household of an essential worker, without an existing childcare arrangement, can form a bubble with another household for the purpose of providing childcare. These measures are intended to support essential workers, including frontline healthcare workers whose physical presence at the employer's work premises is required, in balancing their working and childcare commitments during this critical period of the pandemic.

In circumstances where the above options have been exhausted, employers should consider alternative arrangements for flexible working (e.g. adjusted hours/shifts) to facilitate essential healthcare employees to attend the work premises in order to maintain delivery of essential healthcare services to patients/service users. The measures that should be considered include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Opposite shift rotation (where both parents are frontline workers)
- Longer work days / shifts which allows for more days at home
- Combination of shorter days during the week, with longer days at weekends when other support may be available
- Shift patterns, cognisant of risk mitigation, to assist with care and also facilitate physical distancing
- Swapping of days where part-time working arrangements are in place
- Providing expertise to new services and teams, e.g. those set up to support contact tracing, swabbing, occupational or public health, etc.
- Staggered starting and finishing times, including consideration of day on/day off arrangements
- Switching to days and/or nights, where possible
- Virtual clinics

Employers and employees need to be flexible and innovative in terms of ensuring that essential healthcare employees can continue to attend on site during this time whilst accommodating their childcare responsibilities where necessary.

Where all alternative options have been explored and none of these options are found to be feasible, the essential healthcare worker may be facilitated to work from home (WFH) and can be allocated different duties, outside of their normal role, that can be carried out remotely and support service needs.

Employees who are being facilitated with a WFH arrangement and are awaiting assignment of duties that can be carried out remotely are considered to be available for duty and will continue to be paid² pending assignment of duties.

¹ <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/3bd76-essential-workers-at-level-5/>

² Employees who are working from home (WFH) will be paid their normal basic salary and fixed allowances (where applicable). Employees who are classified as working from home, including those who are awaiting assignment of duties by management, should **not** be treated as being on special leave with pay for COVID-19, sick leave, annual leave or any other type of leave (unless such leave was already pre-booked/confirmed in the normal manner).

Where management believe they have put forward reasonable options to facilitate the employee's attendance on site but the employee does not feel that this addresses their childcare situation, the form at **Appendix 1** should be completed to facilitate further engagement and resolution.

In addition to the above, any employee who wishes to avail of existing leave allowances during this time is entitled to have such requests considered by their employer, as always, including parental leave, annual leave etc³.

These arrangements will be kept under review.

Please ensure that this Circular is brought to the attention of managers and staff within your area of responsibility.

Queries

Queries from individual employees or managers should be referred to local HR/Employee Relations Departments. Please note that the National HR Helpdesk is also available to take queries from employees on 1850 444 925 or ask.hr@hse.ie.

Queries from HR/Employee Relations Departments on other aspects of this Circular and related documents may be referred to Corporate Employee Relations, HR Directorate, 63-64 Adelaide Road, Dublin 2. Tel: 01 6626966, Email: info.t@hse.ie

Yours sincerely,



Anne Marie Hoey

National Director of Human Resources



Need information and advice on COVID-19 Go to www.hse.ie/coronavirus

³ This provision will also apply during periods of normal/scheduled school closures if an employee wishes to be facilitated to be at home.

Appendix 1:

Management Review of Working Arrangements for Frontline Healthcare Employees with Childcare Responsibilities during COVID-19

<u>Name of Employee:</u>	
<u>Name of Manager:</u>	
<u>Date:</u>	
Options Available	Feedback/Notes following discussion with employee
1. Opposite shift rotation (where both parents are frontline workers.	
2. Longer work days/shifts, which allows for more days at home.	
3. Combination of shorter days during the week, with longer days at weekends, when other support may be available.	
4. Shift patterns, cognisant of risk mitigation, to assist with childcare and facilitate physical distancing.	
5. Swapping of days where part-time working arrangements are in place.	
6. Providing expertise to new services and teams, e.g. those set up to support contact tracing, swabbing, occupational or public health etc.	
7. Staggered starting and finishing times, including consideration of day on / day off arrangements.	
8. Switching to day and/or nights, where possible.	

9. Virtual clinics	
10. Other	
Decision reached	
Sign:	Date:
Manager:	
Employee:	