



Oifig an Stiúirthóra 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

Dr. Steevens' Hospital

Dublin 8

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 Human Resources**

Date: **18th November 2021**

Re: **HR Circular 038/2021:**

- (i) Working from home due to COVID-19**
- (ii) Special Leave with Pay for COVID-19 – self-referral for COVID-19 test**

Dear Colleagues

In line with the Government announcement on 16 November, public health service employees should revert to working from home unless it is necessary to attend the workplace in person [view here](#). As you are aware COVID-19 infection rates are increasing along with hospitalisation and ICU admissions. The requirement to work from home where possible is a key measure to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace and to alleviate the current demands on our health services.

As previously advised, the employer is required to determine the essential roles which require physical attendance by staff at the workplace. It is also incumbent on health service managers to identify which roles are suitable for home working (WFH) during this critical period of the pandemic, and to facilitate WFH arrangements for those employees whose roles can be done remotely in order to restrict footfall at the workplace to the greatest extent possible. This is necessary to protect the health and safety of employees and to ensure that health service employers are fully complying with current Government advice. Health service managers should therefore review current working arrangements and require their employees to work from home (if not already doing so) unless they are in the category of frontline healthcare employees¹ whose physical presence is required at the workplace due to the nature of the role.

It is important to note that any working from home arrangements that are or will be put in place due to COVID-19 are temporary and should be kept under review. Please refer to the ***HSE Policy on Public Health Service Employees Working from Home during COVID-19*** which is available [here](#).

The purpose of this policy is to:

- support the health and wellbeing of health service employees temporarily working from home during COVID-19;
- ensure effective performance management and employee engagement;
- ensure that all employees are following good practice when working from home; and
- support the effective delivery of high quality services.

Frontline employees whose roles require on-site attendance

In the case of frontline employees whose roles require their physical presence in the work premises, employers must ensure that all workplaces have implemented robust return to workplace procedures and that all procedures comply with the Work Safely Protocol. The HSE's approach to the implementation of this Protocol can be found [here](#).

The HSE National Health and Safety Function (NHSF) also has a range of supports and guidance to managers and workers with regarding to working safely during the pandemic which can be found [here](#).

The latest HSE Occupational Health guidance documents for COVID-19 are available [here](#).

¹ This includes employees in the clerical/administrative/management category whose physical presence at the workplace is deemed by the employer to be essential due to the nature of their role/duties e.g. reception, patient admissions etc.

All employees have a critical role in ensuring that the procedures of the Protocol are followed to suppress COVID-19 in their workplace. It is incumbent on all employees whose physical attendance at the workplace is required to fully comply with their organisation's COVID-19 response plan. Cooperation between employees, the lead worker representative(s) and the employer are fundamental to ensuring that the measures are adhered to.

Please refer also to the [Updated Guidance Note from the LEEF Consultative Group on the Work Safely Protocol](#) which contains a summary of the latest public health advice to prevent the spread of COVID 19 including:

- acting fast, isolating and getting tested if we have symptoms;
- wearing face coverings where appropriate;
- making sure that indoor spaces are well ventilated;
- maintaining adequate social distancing whenever appropriate; and
- covering our coughs and sneezes and keeping our hands clean.

The Updated Guidance Note should be read in conjunction with [HR Circular 034/2021 Guidance and FAQs for Public Service Employers during COVID-19 in relation to working arrangements and temporary assignments across the Public Service dated 29 September 2021](#).

Special Leave with Pay for COVID-19 (SLWP) – self-referral for COVID-19 test

To date, as set out in section 4 of [HR Circular 034/2021](#), Special Leave With Pay (SLWP) for COVID-19 only applies when an employee is medically advised to self-isolate and is displaying symptoms of COVID-19, **or** had a positive test. As the public health advice now allows for self-referral when someone has COVID-19 symptoms, SLWP will also apply to public health service employees in the following circumstance with effect from **20 October 2021**:

- Where employees develop symptoms of COVID-19 and self-refer for a COVID-19 test they may be granted SLWP if they provide written evidence of the COVID-19 test result.
- If the employee tests negative for COVID-19 they may be granted SLWP from the date of sickness absence from work due to displaying COVID-19 symptoms up to the date of the test result. As set out in Appendix D Scenario 5 of HR Circular 034/2021 the employee will be eligible for sick pay under the public service sick leave scheme after the date of the negative test result.
- If the employee receives a positive test result for COVID-19, they may continue to receive SLWP in accordance with the provisions outlined in section 4 of HSE Circular 034/2021.

Please note that this arrangement applies to employees whose self-referral for a COVID-19 test occurs on or after **20 October 2021**.

Please ensure that this updated advice is brought to the attention of all staff, managers and HR managers with immediate effect.

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 Tel: 1850 444 925 Email: ask.hr@hse.ie.

Queries on the occupational safety and health implications of the Work Safely Protocol may be referred to the HSE National Health and Safety Function (NHSF). Log your request at: <http://www.hse.ie/safetyandwellbeing> or go to: <http://pndchssdweb02.healthirl.net/Health.WebAccess/ss>
Alternatively contact the National Health & Safety Helpdesk Tel: 1850 420 420

Queries on the HSE Workplace Health & Wellbeing Unit's Covid-19 Occupational Health Guidance Documents may be referred to hr.wellbeing@hse.ie

Queries from HR/Employee Relations Departments on this Circular may be referred to info.t@hse.ie, National Employee Relations, HR Directorate, 63-64 Adelaide Road, Dublin 2 Tel: 01 6626966

Yours sincerely



Anne Marie Hoey
National Director of Human Resources