

LONG COVID - MANAGERS GUIDANCE

ALL EMPLOYEES

Revised Guidance

Since March 2020, all COVID related absence has been treated as special paid leave, whether the absence has been due to self-isolation, symptomatic COVID or asymptomatic COVID. To date there has been no limit on the duration of special paid leave as a result of COVID related absence.

COSLA have now issued a collectively agreed temporary amendment to the national terms and conditions for SNCT and SJC employees with further advice relating to the management of COVID related absence, particularly in relation to what has become known as 'Long COVID'.

Therefore, with effect from 30 September 2021 for SNCT employees and 14 December 2021 for SJC employees, all COVID related sickness absences continuing **beyond 12 weeks** will no longer be treated as special paid leave, but will be managed under normal sickness absence procedures in accordance with the Supporting Attendance Policy.

Effective from these dates, any current sickness absences which have already extended beyond 12 weeks will be managed under normal supporting attendance procedures.

Any current absences of less than 12 weeks duration will continue as paid special leave until the absence reaches 12 weeks, at which point it will be treated as sickness absence.

Informing Employees and Applying Discretion

Managers should inform any affected absent employees of the changes to the management of COVID related absence as soon as possible.

Where application of the changes will result in immediate financial detriment to the employee, for example where length of service will result in a move to half-pay sickness entitlement within a few weeks, the manager may consider the application of discretion in consultation with Human Resources. It is not expected, however, that such discretion will be required in most cases.

Recording COVID Absences

Managers should continue to record COVID related absence on People Manager in accordance with [COVID](#) guidance.

Absences continuing beyond 12 weeks should be also be recorded on People Manager, however recorded as sickness absence, in accordance with [sickness absence guidance](#). Managers should use Infections-Long COVID as the reason for absence.

General Guidance

The required period of self-isolation due to a positive COVID PCR test or household contact will be treated as special paid leave and will not be used for absence triggers.

If possible, and the employee is well enough, arrangements should be made to enable the employee to work from home during a period of self-isolation.

COVID related sickness absences of 12 weeks or less following a period of isolation will be granted as special paid leave and will not be used for absence triggers. However, employees should still provide the appropriate self certificate and medical certificate for the period of absence.

Due to temporary Statutory Sick Pay ([Medical Evidence](#)) Regulations 2021 that came into force on 17 December 2021, employees do not currently require to provide a 'fit note' (medical certificate) to cover the first 28 days of illness related time off work (sick leave) and should, instead, self-certify for that period. A medical certificate will be required for absences extending beyond 28 days. This temporary change is due to expire on **26 January 2022**, at which point, the first 7 days of COVID related absence after an isolation period should be covered by a self-certificate.

Individuals can contract COVID-19 more than once. If a subsequent separate COVID-19 infection is diagnosed it should be treated in the same way because the employee will, once again, potentially be able to transmit the virus.

In any situation where an absence is attributed to COVID-19, and it is subsequently established to be another illness, the individual will be moved to normal sickness provisions. For example, a person may self-isolate because of COVID-19 symptoms and following testing it is established to be some other illness.

Employees absent for COVID related reasons, whether the absence is more or less than 12 weeks, should be supported to achieve a return to work at the earliest opportunity. Support may include occupational health referral and reasonable adjustments as appropriate. Line Managers should contact Human Resources for advice.

Review

This guidance will be kept under review and updated in line with any further COSLA circulars or advice. The temporary amendment to the national terms and conditions for SNCT and SJC employees is currently only in place until 1 March 2022.

Human Resources December 2021