**Coronavirus (COVID-19) HR Policy Frequently Asked Questions**

**Updated: June 30 2020**

**Latest Welsh Government advice:**

**Stay local and keep Wales safe:**

* **always observe social distancing;**
* **wash your hands regularly;**
* **if you are meeting one other household, stay outdoors and stay local;**
* **work from home if you can.**

[**Full guidance on staying local and away from others**](https://gov.wales/staying-home-and-away-others-guidance)

These FAQs provide an enhanced and updated version of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) HR Policy Guidance.

This update includes changes to:

* *Latest WG advice on protecting yourself and others from coronavirus*
* *Equipment that can be purchased and reclaimed to aid homeworking (7.3)*

This document brings together the latest information available from Public Health Wales (PHW), along with the Welsh and UK Governments. Your wellbeing remains an absolute priority and we will continue to keep you informed through these FAQs, briefings, and staff emails.

In this document you will also find information on working arrangements for Welsh Government staff. Managers are reminded to be flexible and sensitive to individual circumstances in their conversations with colleagues who may be affected – including using our new IT kit to work from home or other locations where that is a pragmatic option.

To quickly find what you’re looking for, press Ctrl F to bring up the navigation pane then type in your broad search term (e.g. shielding)

If you have any questions in relation to Covid-19, please email them to:

[COVID19.Query@gov.wales](mailto:COVID19.Query@gov.wales)

**Section 1 – Testing, Absences and Supporting Attendance**

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**Section 5 – Leave – Special, Annual and Flexi**

**Section 6 – Volunteering**

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**The latest information and advice is available from:**

[The Welsh Government](https://gov.wales/coronavirus-covid19)

[Public Health Wales](https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/latest-information-on-novel-coronavirus-covid-19/)

[NHS Direct Wales Coronavirus (Covid-19) Symptom Checker](https://www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk/SelfAssessments/symptomcheckers/?ScName=CoronaVirusCOVID19&SCTId=175)

[UK Government](https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response)

**Section 1 -** **Sickness Absence and Supporting Attendance**

**1.1 I have some symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19). What should I do?**

It’s really important that you notify us of any self-isolation or absence as a result of covid-19, **even if you are already home working** and especially if you have been directed by the NHS to self-isolate so we can ensure you have the right support in place. Self-isolation and absence categories include:

* Self-isolation – 7 Days (working from home);
* Self-isolation – 14 Days (working from home);
* Self-isolation – 12 weeks (working from home – NHS directed);
* Self-isolation – Individual in a High Risk Group (working from home);
* Self-isolation – Member of household in High Risk Group (working from home);
* Absent/sick with covid-19 symptoms (not working);
* Confirmed covid-19 case (either working or not working).

You should self-isolate if you develop a new continuous cough or fever or anosmia. Anosmia is the loss of or a change in your normal sense of smell. It can also affect your sense of taste as the two are closely linked.

If are unfit for work you should report your absence to your line manager following the usual attendance management procedures.

If you need to self-isolate, you should complete the [e-form](https://wales365uk.sharepoint.com/sites/Intranet-Policies-Guidance-Resources/SitePages/Staff-Reporting-Covid-19-Symptoms.aspx) on the first day of self-isolation. If you are self-isolating and then become ill as a result of covid-19 and are unable to work, you should report your absence to your line manager following the usual attendance management procedures.

Absences should then be closed in HR Self-Service at the end of the sickness period.

**1.2 Can I be tested for Covid-19?**

Yes, you and one other person form your household can be tested for Covid-19 but testing will only be offeredtothose who **are currently displaying symptoms.** The test will determine if you have Covid-19 but not test if you may have had the virus in the past and recovered. Testing will allow you and your managers to make informed decisions about whether you should remain in isolation, or return to work (where appropriate).

We expect WG employees who meet the criteria (i.e. who have coronavirus symptoms) to take a test **where available**. The testing will follow the guidance set out by Public Health Wales and will initially be deployed to health and social care staff and to the wider group of critical workers where there is risk to business continuity for critical infrastructure or service delivery.  Public Health Wales and Local Health Boards will determine the timing and priority for testing based on their own criteria and capacity.

You should complete the self-isolation [e-form](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwales365uk.sharepoint.com%2Fsites%2FIntranet-Policies-Guidance-Resources%2FSitePages%2FStaff-Reporting-Covid-19-Symptoms.aspx&data=02%7C01%7CGarethA.Owen%40gov.wales%7C0b21ba007b644562724a08d7f5c5cf00%7Ca2cc36c592804ae78887d06dab89216b%7C0%7C0%7C637248102788984845&sdata=MC0XEIyhFDoBwAjasTb02ltaNuIjZYZ7UiqBOVPXqww%3D&reserved=0) with your details, we will then issue you with guidance on how to book a test for yourself and/or one other person from your household).

**1.3 When can I be tested?**

You should get tested in the first three days of coronavirus symptoms appearing, although testing is considered effective up until day five. No testing should be undertaken after day five, unless it’s for a specific reason which will be agreed on a case by case basis by local microbiologists.

**Negative tests and returning to work**

Even if you have had a negative result, it’s important to still apply caution. If everyone with symptoms who was tested in their household receives a negative result, you can return to work if your work cannot be done from home, providing you are well enough, and have not had a fever for 48 hours.

**1.4 I’m worried my absence may mean I hit an absence trigger point?**

If you are absent through illness because you have symptoms of COVID-19, this will not affect your trigger points.

**1.5 If I am absent with Coronavirus (COVID-19) or flu, do I need a GP certificate to confirm my absence?**

You can normally self-certify sickness absence for seven days or less but must cover week two onwards with a GP’s ‘Fit Note’. For now, we are not asking you to contact your GP for a ‘Fit Note’. If you are ill with either a high temperature or a new, continuous cough, your line manager will instead accept extended self-certificates for the entire period of the absence. Your manager will keep in touch with you for the duration of the absence.

**1.6 What if I’m at high risk of developing serious illness if I’m exposed to coronavirus (COVID-19)?**

The Welsh Government has issued [guidance](https://gov.wales/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-people-defined-on-medical-grounds-as-extremely-vulnerable-from-coronavirus-covid-19-html) on shielding and protecting people defined on medical grounds as extremely vulnerable from coronavirus (COVID-19).

**1.7 What is shielding?**

Shielding is a measure to protect people who are clinically extremely vulnerable by minimising all interaction between this group of people and others. The Welsh Government has strongly advised people with [serious underlying health conditions](https://gov.wales/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-people-defined-on-medical-grounds-as-extremely-vulnerable-from-coronavirus-covid-19-html), which put them at very high risk of severe illness from coronavirus (COVID-19), to rigorously follow shielding measures in order to keep themselves safe. Welsh Government published [advice](https://gov.wales/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-people-defined-on-medical-grounds-as-extremely-vulnerable-from-coronavirus-covid-19-html) sets out more detail on who is vulnerable and needs to shield.

There is support and information available for people who are shielding including food boxes for those who can’t get help from family, friends or voluntary groups.

If you or anyone you know is shielding, you can find out more about what’s available generally on the Welsh Government website:

<https://gov.wales/cmo-letter-extremely-vulnerable-people-support-explained>

If you have any questions about what help is available in your area, please contact your local authority.

**1.8 I am shielding. Can I work from home?**

Yes, if you can safely work from home then this should be encouraged. Opting for video-conferencing or tele-conferencing where possible instead of holding meetings is a practical precaution. This [guide](https://documents.hf.wales.gov.uk/id:A29640820/document/versions/published) will help you make the most from your ICT at home, while this [guide](https://documents.hf.wales.gov.uk/id:A29355542/document/versions/published) on working from home offers good advice on working in isolation.

**1.9 I need to be shielded but can’t work from home because for example, I have no internet connection, live in shared accommodation or it isn’t feasible to do so.**

Welsh Government response to Coronavirus is that you are strongly advised to stay at home at all times and avoid any face-to-face contact for a period of at least 12 weeks. This means that alternative work locations that may be possible for people who are not shielded are not appropriate here.

In these circumstances you should receive paid special leave, and your line manager should retain contact with you to support your wellbeing.

**Section 2 – Caring Responsibilities**

**2.1 I have caring responsibilities for someone or live with someone who has or who is displaying symptoms of Coronavirus (COVID-19). What should I do?**

You should stay at home for 14 days in line with [NHS](https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/latest-information-on-novel-coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-advice/) Wales guidance, if you are caring for someone who has or may have COVID-19, special leave with pay should be applied where homeworking is not possible. Managers should keep in touch with you and you should take all practicable steps to resume duty as soon as possible.

The 14-day period starts from the day when the first person in the house became ill. Anyone in the household who subsequently starts displaying symptoms, will need to stay at home for 7 days from when the symptoms appeared, regardless of what day they are on in the original 14 day isolation period.

Additional information on households with possible Covid-19 can be found [here](https://gov.wales/stay-home-guidance-households-possible-coronavirus).

**2.2 I live with a medically vulnerable person and want to shield them from the coronavirus?**

Carers should be aware of the following [guidance](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19) on protecting vulnerable people as they may be caring for people in this category. If you are not defined as vulnerable but live with and/or care for a vulnerable person, you are advised to stay at home as much as possible to limit the risk of infecting the vulnerable person you live with. The default should be to work from home and they should follow the [Welsh Government guidance](https://gov.wales/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-people-defined-on-medical-grounds-as-extremely-vulnerable-from-coronavirus-covid-19-html) to minimise your contact and maintain hygienic living conditions to mitigate the risks of coronavirus infection within your household.

The latest medical guidance indicates that you are not required to adopt the protective shielding measures of 12-weeks of self-isolation. You should do what you can to support the vulnerable person in shielding and stringently follow guidance on [social distancing](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people/guidance-on-social-distancing-for-everyone-in-the-uk-and-protecting-older-people-and-vulnerable-adults), reducing their contact outside the home. You are expected to apply medical guidance to your domestic situation.

The imperative is to ensure that a person classed as vulnerable or extremely vulnerable is protected. Therefore, if you are in an essential role which requires you to attend the workplace is also living with and/or caring for someone who is classed as vulnerable or extremely vulnerable, on a case by case basis managers should be prepared to explore whether there is any ability for the you to work from home and/or consider special leave with pay,

**2.3 What happens if my child’s school or other care setting is closed?**

If you are a carer for someone whose school or care setting need to close because of the virus, your line manager should be supportive if you want to adapt your working patterns to care for children or dependants if your role allows. You should speak to them about the type of work, research or training you can undertake. If you are required to take time off due to school closures, paid special leave should be given.

You should agree with your line manager a daily plan of work you can achieve and agree your availability and likely hours to be worked. Both parties should be governed by our flexi bandwidths (6am until 8pm), but if is it in your interests to work some hours outside of the bandwidths, we’d expect a pragmatic approach to be agreed.

Where full day is not achievable and you have no flexi credit, you should credit (top up) your flexi sheets to your full contracted working day at the end of the 4 week reporting period.

Where you have additional or specific caring responsibilities where this arrangement would be unsuitable, we will pay Special Leave. These provisions will be reviewed on a regular basis.

You are expected to act responsibly and where you have already booked annual leave for child caring, for example, over school holidays, you must not cancel this leave and then apply for special leave.

Where you are on continuous special leave with pay, your manager will discuss with you how you can use some of your leave allowance during school closures to avoid a build-up of annual leave that may not be reasonably taken or carried over to the next leave year.

**2.4 I have caring responsibilities and am working from home and though I am able to undertake some work, I’m working less than my contracted hours. Am I able to temporarily work less than their contracted working hours, and have a greater flexi deficit than normal?**

You should agree with your line manager a daily plan of work you can achieve and agree your availability and likely hours to be worked. Both parties should be governed by our flexi bandwidths (6am until 8pm), but if is it in your interests to work some hours outside of the bandwidths, we’d expect a pragmatic approach to be agreed.

Where full day is not achievable and you have no flexi credit, you should credit (top up) your flexi sheets to your full contracted working day at the end of the 4 week reporting period.

Where you have additional or specific caring responsibilities where this arrangement would be unsuitable, we will pay Special Leave. These provisions will be reviewed on a regular basis

**Section 3 – Attendance at the Workplace including Critical Workers**

**3.1 What should be done if I have an employee that will not come to the office as they are concerned about contracting Coronavirus (COVID-19)?**

Everyone should now be working from home unless it is absolutely essential to attend the office.

Employees who are fit for work and required to be in the workplace should follow the guidance on handwashing and respiratory hygiene and the relevant social distancing measures. One of most important aspects of hygiene remains washing hands with soap and water and once cleaned drying them thoroughly with either paper towels or a hand dryer.

Employees are required to notify absence in accordance with usual procedures. If an employee does not attend work when they are expected you should contact them. If the reason for the absence is concern about coronavirus, explore all options with them for carrying out their role in a different way/place.

**3.2 Can I be instructed not to attend work if I am could be a risk to others given I may have been in contact with people/areas that have coronavirus (COVID-19)?**

We all have a shared responsibility to manage our health and safety and fitness for work in relation to COVID-19. This means following the[Gov.wales](https://gov.wales/coronavirus-covid19) and [NHS Wales guidance](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/) if you report or show COVID-19 symptoms. You should be sent home if you have these symptoms and follow the [Stay at home: guidance](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-people-with-confirmed-or-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection) and [social distancing](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people/guidance-on-social-distancing-for-everyone-in-the-uk-and-protecting-older-people-and-vulnerable-adults) guidance.

**3.3 An employee with a disability/long-term health condition is worried about coming into work or travelling for work because they are more susceptible to infections and the impact of the coronavirus. What can I do?**

If you cannot do your job from home or another suitable location then paid special leave should be given. Managers will need to discuss your particular workplace adjustments and health and wellbeing needs.

**3.4 What are the arrangements for employees who have been identified as critical and required to attend the workplace?**

For some frontline, operational and specialist teams who have been identified by their areas as being in critical roles, remote or home working may not be an option for some or all of their working time. Your teams should make sensible arrangements to protect you, for example rotas and staggered start and finish times to avoid busy commuting times on public transport. Departments should ensure that they put arrangements in place to allow you to adhere to social distancing guidance whilst in the workplace

**3.5 Am I a critical worker?**

We need to keep numbers of children in school and childcare settings to the minimum possible.  If a child can be cared for safely at home, they should be.  Schools and childcare settings should only be open to vulnerable children and the children of critical workers who cannot be cared for at home.  Although some of the occupations are clear, that isn’t the case for civil servants so we are working to clarify the relatively small numbers of our staff who would satisfy the critical worker criteria. You must seek confirmation from your line manager or HRBP that you are a critical worker.

**3.6 Can I can be furloughed?**

No Welsh Government employee will be furloughed.

**3.7 If I’m required to wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) at work, such as face masks, do I need to remove any facial hair?**

PPE equipment, such as masks, are provided for your protection and the protection of others. You should consider if you need to remove facial hair in order for the face mask to be effective in forming a seal to the face.

There may be different reasons for not removing facial hair, such as your faith. The NHS have provided advice on [Facial Hair and PPE](https://www.nhsemployers.org/covid19/health-safety-and-wellbeing/infection-control#Advice%20on%20requiring%20staff%20to%20shave%20off%20facial%20hair%20and%20fitting%20PPE) which should be followed as best practice. This is based on guidance put in place and recommended by HSE.

**3.8 Will my office be shut or will I be sent home to work?**

Two of our main office hubs – Cathays Park and Llandudno Junction remain open to allow us to manage our critical civil contingencies work and crisis response management. All other sites are closed. Although we expect the vast majority of staff to work from home and avoid travel during the crisis period, some critical functions will require colleagues to attend the office for a variety of reasons. We want to keep everyone as safe as possible – including our reception, security and other support staff. Reducing the number of our offices that will remain open is one of the things we can do to minimise the risk and focus precious resources where they are needed most.

If you are working from home, please check your house insurance allows covers you to do so.

**3.9 Will there be any changes to the car parking arrangements across the estate?**

In responding to the challenges of COVID-19 and with reduced numbers of people likely to be working from **Cathays Park** we have agreed with Trade Union Side to suspend the ‘Team of Four’ parking arrangements. Therefore, from 18th March 2020 and until further notice parking at Cathays Park will change temporarily to ‘first come, first served’.

You must be an eligible user of CP2 parking facilities and you will still need to present both your Welsh Government building pass and your up-to-date parking permit. If you are unable to produce either of these, we will not be able to grant access to the on-site parking facilities.

Only the ‘P’ parking spaces will be available on a ‘first-come-first served basis’. Mobility and Contractor parking arrangements are not included in this temporary change.

Given the circumstances we have also decided to suspend external visitor and visitor officer spaces. Again, from 18th March 2020 and until further notice these spaces will allocated for the exclusive use of staff working in the ECCW.

If you have any car parking questions, please email the [**CP Car Parking Queries mailbox**.](mailto:cpcarparkingqueries@gov.wales)

**3.10 Am I able to use the post room to send mail out?**

If you’re identified as a Critical Worker and have been issued with a certificate to travel to the office. Llandudno Junction or Cathays Park offices, yes. Where offices are closed there will be no outward postal service available for use, staff who need to use the postal function must do so themselves via a post office. Staff will be reimbursed via e-payments for the cost of any postage using their divisional cost codes.

**Section 4 – Travel & Disruption**

You should not consider travelling to the offices, for meetings or events unless they are absolutely essential. You should be utilising the ‘smart working’ tools Instead, options including Skype, MS Teams audio and video conferencing.

**4.1 What if I become ill whilst travelling for business? Should I be advised to return home or should I stay in the hotel? If in the hotel, will Welsh Government pay?**

If you have travelled for meetings or events classed as absolutely necessary, You should return home if possible and appropriate.  You can use a hire car if you are well enough to drive, or encourage family/friends to pick you up – if safe to do so.  Your Deputy Director should use their judgement and discretion on a case-by-case basis responding to individual circumstances and needs.  WG will pay costs of extended hotel stays, if needed.

**4.2. I am concerned about travelling for meetings and events? What should I do?**

You should not consider travelling for meeting and events unless they are absolutely essential. Instead, consider other options including Skype, audio and video conferencing.

**Section 5 – Leave – Special, Annual and Flexi**

**5.1 What if an employee has to take special leave because of school closures?**

Following announced school closures, line managers should be fully supportive of employees, considering flexible working arrangements, including working from home, adapting working patterns to care for children. If an employee is required to take time off to care for children due to school closures, paid special leave should be applied.

**5.2** **I’m working longer hours and I may struggle to take my annual leave. What can I do?**

The temporary Covid-19 working arrangements set out in the [Overtime Policy](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fdocuments.hf.wales.gov.uk%2Fid%3AA654141%2Fdocument%2Fversions%2Fpublished&data=02%7C01%7CGarethA.Owen%40gov.wales%7Cc05093a191b94fb6f6b008d7f19c319c%7Ca2cc36c592804ae78887d06dab89216b%7C0%7C0%7C637243525453318088&sdata=U33IOIPhS%2Fj1LEaqsA%2BlEoFEWYVaNgV3oCg%2Ff1yFAEc%3D&reserved=0) apply to **all** staff – whether part-time or full-time. This means that over a 4-week flexi period, part-time staff will need to have worked the same number of hours as full-time staff in order to start claiming hours as overtime. The ‘threshold’ for claims (for both F/T and P/T staff) is **185 hours** i.e. standard conditioned hours over the 4 week period (148 hours) plus 37 additional ‘flexi’ hours (= 185 hours).

       Any overtime payable is calculated at the end of each 4 week flexi accounting period;

       Additional hours worked over and above conditioned hours (whatever the working pattern) should be logged as usual on the flexi-sheet;

       At the end of each 4-week accounting period, staff who have accumulated more than 185 hours will be able to claim those additional hours as paid overtime;

       Claims should be made via the [standard overtime claim form](https://wales365uk.sharepoint.com/sites/Intranet-HR-Recruitment-Vacancies/SitePages/Allowances-Overtime-and-Traveltime.aspx) at the end of each 4-week accounting period;

       The claim form should state that the overtime claim relates to Covid-19.

       Anyone claiming overtime will begin the next accounting period with 37 hours flexi-credit.

There is an exception to the ‘threshold’ in relation to hours worked at weekends and on public/privilege holidays which both attract an overtime payment premium (i.e. double-time for Sundays and public/privilege days; time-and-a-half for Saturday working):

       Staff who are asked to work at weekends or on public/privilege holidays as a result of Covid-19 (note this does need to be at management request and not of their own choosing), **do not** need to have reached the ‘threshold’ set out above in order to submit a premium payment claim. We are therefore advising staff who need to submit such claims to do so separately.

* Anyone claiming an overtime payment **cannot** at the same time record these hours on their flexi-sheet as this would effectively be double-counting the hours worked.

**To note**

As the overtime is as a result of Covid, claims can only be made for the 4 week periods from March 9th. Any credit or debit accumulated prior to 9th March should be frozen for time being. Those with a deficit going into March 9th will of course have the opportunity to offset that against any credit since then **if they wish**. They may, however be in a position where they are working sufficient hours to claim overtime during this period. Guidance on completing the form is available here:

<https://documents.hf.wales.gov.uk/id:A29924318/document/versions/published>

* **Overtime is not currently payable to members of the Senior Civil Service.** However UK Civil Service are looking at this arrangement and will update in due course.
* **Overtime for full-time employees (outside the SCS)**

Where you accumulate more than 37 hours flexi in a 4 week reporting period, you may claim the excess as overtime. This temporary amendment is to take account of the variable work patterns some employees undertake week on week to manage work and caring responsibilities. Overtime and flexi cannot be claimed for the same period. You also qualify for any premium payments, related to the requirement to work at weekends or on public or privilege holidays.

* **Overtime for part-time employees (outside the SCS)**

For part-time employees, hours worked in excess of their agreed hours do not qualify for overtime rates until they exceed full-time net conditioned hours of 37 hours per week. Any additional hours worked up to 37 are paid at the agreed plain time rate[[1]](#footnote-2). All other arrangements are the same as full time employees. Where you accumulate more than 37 hours flexi in a 4 week reporting period, you may claim the excess as overtime. Overtime and flexi cannot be claimed for the same period. You also qualify for any premium payments, related to the requirement to work at weekends or on public or privilege holidays.

Full guidance on Overtime can be found [here](https://wales365uk.sharepoint.com/sites/Intranet-HR-Recruitment-Vacancies/SitePages/Allowances-Overtime-and-Traveltime.aspx)

**5.3 Will we be allowed to carry over additional Annual or Flexi Leave where I’ve not been able to take it because of COVID-19?**

Line managers can ask you to cancel or postpone annual leave (or flexi leave) if it is necessary to deliver business. However, they must give the appropriate notice, for example, one week’s notice for one week’s leave (annual leave only). Line managers may also agree to employees carrying over or being paid for leave you were unable to take by the end of their leave year**.**

Welsh Government will allow staff to carry over 24 days and/or bank 10 days (pro ratad). Those with banked leave have an additional year in which to take that leave. In exceptional circumstances where this is not suitable, payment for excess leave may be made following an approved business case to the HR Director.

**5.4 Should I be taking annual leave at this time?**

It’s important to feel able to take annual leave at this time, as it is the main way that you can step away from the work, and recharge your batteries and protect your wellbeing for the future.

Line managers are encouraged to allow requests for annual leave if possible, and act flexibly to resource remaining work.

**5.5 My employee has annual leave agreed but they are not able to go on their planned holiday due to COVID-19. Can they cancel their annual leave?**

Employees should be encouraged to take their annual leave to help make sure they take appropriate rest from work during the year.

You should allow employees to cancel annual leave if this supports business need, e.g. due to large number of employees not able to work.

Employees should be reminded that future annual leave requests will be handled in line with department's policies, e.g. business needs, requests from others, etc

**5.6 My employee has a flexi debit that is growing due to the working pattern they are having to adopt to work from home. How do I manage this?**

You should talk supportively to your employee to see if changes to the way of working are possible to prevent or minimise this. If it is only possible to work shorter days and the flexi debit increases above normal permitted limits, you should view this sympathetically and at the end of the 4 week reporting period, remove any debit from the flexi (effectively crediting the debit up to zero hours).

Where someone cannot work at all during a day, special leave should be applied for, and granted under the category ‘**PAID SPECIAL LEAVE** - Epidemic/Pandemic - Caring Responsibility’

**Section 6 – Volunteering**

**6.1 I’d like to volunteer to help others?**

Many of you have expressed an interest in volunteering to help your local communities with the coronavirus response. The most valuable contribution you can, and should be making, during this unprecedented time, is in your vital role of supporting citizens of our country, through delivering your work in the most effective way, and, wherever possible, doing this by working from home.

The primary focus for us all must be on the role we are currently doing in our department, for which we have skills and are most competent in doing.

Additionally, we may be needed and willing to move into other roles, directorates or departments where there may be a greater demand for our resources and skills, helping to deliver our ministerial priorities to the people of Wales.

The exception is trained medical or emergency service staff and our reservists. You can continue to volunteer for your communities outside working hours. A link to the policy can be found here:

<https://documents.hf.wales.gov.uk/id:A8063392/document/versions/published>

For those of you who wish to “serve twice” and volunteer to support the coronavirus crisis, existing paid special leave limits and volunteering guidance continue to apply; there is no change to these provisions.

Additionally, many of us are choosing to contribute through volunteering in our own time, and you may of course continue to do this.

However, all volunteering activities, whether through using departmental leave or in your own time should be done remotely, from home, wherever possible.

In the midst of this crisis, our health is paramount. In all instances, to protect ourselves and others, it is vital that we all observe the Chief Medical Officer’s advice on social distancing and self-isolation.

You can join a local volunteer organisation through your county voluntary council or sign up on [**Volunteering Wales**](https://volunteering-wales.net/vk/volunteers/index.htm)where you can search for opportunities such as a volunteer shopper, a delivery volunteer or befriending over the phone. Once you’ve registered your interest to become a volunteer you’ll be sent opportunities that match what you want to do. This website also gives important information on staying safe whilst volunteering.

You can also check for any local volunteering opportunities with your local authority. If you are not in an at risk group and you want to help (within the social distancing guidelines), please visit the Welsh Government [Looking Out for Each Other](https://gov.wales/safe-help) pages for ideas and advice.

[How to help your GP practice](https://gov.wales/simple-steps-help-your-gp-practice-help-you)

[How to help your pharmacy](https://gov.wales/simple-steps-help-your-pharmacy-help-you)

**Section 7 - Working from Home inc ICT**

**7.1 What can I do to work from home smarter?**

We’ve produced a really handy guide to working from home that you can access [here](https://documents.hf.wales.gov.uk/id:A29355542/document/versions/published).

Please take some time to check:

* you’re able to connect your laptop to your Home Wi-Fi network.
* your RSA key fob or RSA mobile app enable you to connect to the Welsh Government Network via Global Protect and you can access all necessary applications such as iShare.
* your laptop power supply and Skype headset are available for home working.
* you know how to forward calls from your desk phone to an alternative number or have set up phone Twinning.
* you have read the ‘[Effective Working from Home Handbook](https://documents.hf.wales.gov.uk/id:A29355542/document/versions/published)’.
* you know which personal equipment you can and can’t connect to your work laptop (see working in isolation guide).
* you know how to use the corporate tools e.g. Skype, please don’t use other tools form your home equipment as an alternative.
* you know how to spot scams/phishing emails (there are quite a few circulating about COVID-19).  See [https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/training/top-tips-for-staff-web/story\_html5.html](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ncsc.gov.uk%2Ftraining%2Ftop-tips-for-staff-web%2Fstory_html5.html&data=02%7C01%7CDarran.Davies%40gov.wales%7Cf3614624b7b64b47108908d7c74838b2%7Ca2cc36c592804ae78887d06dab89216b%7C0%7C0%7C637196985302739424&sdata=6rcolHEivZrVKXZsO%2Bv%2Bi9xDXPZb26BTLcqHkKSTumo%3D&reserved=0) for a short video on how to spot a phishing scam.

If you need further information on how to connect to the Welsh Government network from home, please search for ICT Guides on the Intranet, speak to your local ICT Responder or call the ICT Service Desk.

**7.2 Can I go to the office to collect my equipment to use at home?**

If you have equipment that you did not manage to take home with you i.e. standard office chair or an already assigned specialist chair, keyboard, mouse, mouse mat, lap top riser, headset, specialist chair or footrest and is ***essential*** for you to be able to work effectively at home it may be possible to collect these items from your **nearest office** under the following arrangements:

* You must be able to collect and transport the equipment yourself..
* You **must** also be able to return and transport the equipment yourself if it is necessary to do so once office working is restored.
* You should only travel to the office if it is essential that you need the equipment to be able to work at home.
* You should **only** travel to the office if you are well enough to do so. You must **not**go to the office if you have any symptoms or if a member of your household has symptoms.
* You will need your building security pass in order to gain access to the office and remove items. Please remember your pass as temporary passes will not be issued on the day.
* You will need to complete the ‘[Request Office Equipment for Home form](https://welshgov-myit.onbmc.com/dwp/app/#/itemprofile/13303)’ which can also be found on MyIT under the Remote Services section. Your local facilities manager will then contact you to arrange a date and time that you can call to collect your equipment.
* **If you are collecting an office chair** you need to read the [Furniture and Equipment for Home Use guidance](https://documents.hf.wales.gov.uk/id:A30364170/document/versions/published) which contains important details of your responsibilities and information regarding the size and weight of chairs and suggested two person handling.
* You must be able to visit the respective office on the time / day which Facilities advise; access will not be allowed at any other time.
* We are managing the movement of people around our offices for health and safety reasons so stocks of equipment will be made available and you will not be permitted to visit other parts of the building such as your desk at the current time. You must have your building security pass with you to access the building and pick up any equipment.
* Any equipment that is moved will be taken at your own risk. You will need to make sure that you have a suitable vehicle and consider manual handling guidelines.
* Please note that **monitors** are attached to arms and don’t come with a stand so these unfortunately cannot be removed.
* If you have:
  + An underlying condition that hasn’t to date merited a specialist chair but which is being exacerbated by homeworking
  + Have an underlying condition for which the freedom chair has been recommended by Workplace Adjustment Team (WAT)
  + Are developing a musculoskeletal disorders as a result of working from home and generic advice on breaks isn’t improving your condition

You should complete an online DSE assessment and if advised by WAT that a chair is needed, you should arrange to pick up the chair from your local office in liaison with the local facilities team.

* Any items taken home must be returned when you are back in the office, though headsets can be taken back and forth as needed.
* If you are working at home and have any concerns about:
  + reasonable adjustments, please contact the [**Workplace Adjustments Team**](mailto:AddasiadauIrGweithle.WorkplaceAdjustments@gov.wales) for advice;
  + ICT software or adjustments, please contact the ICT Service desk for advice;
  + furniture or other standard equipment, please contact the Facilities Helpdesk for advice.

**7.3 I need a monitor and other equipment to work from home, can I buy and reclaim?**

Due to the high level of requests for additional kit to assist home working, we are currently unable to process any new or outstanding requests for equipment nor would we be able to provide monitors, printers.

For many people, the laptop and headsets will be sufficient to work effectively at home and you can make adjustments to make your work space more comfortable.  There are some steps that you can take to make life easier:

* You can connect your laptop to your TV or home monitor if you need a larger screen. If you are unable to use an alternative screen in your home you will need to speak to your line manager to discuss your specific needs.
* You are able to plug in a personal keyboard and mouse (including Bluetooth). Other personal items must still not be connected in line with our Security policy. If you use some household items such as a box or some books to raise your laptop you can create a user experience more like the office.
* If you are in a quiet room at home you do not need a headset to use Skype or MS Teams.  Alternatively you can use a personal set of headphones (not Bluetooth) for example, those that came with your mobile phone as they have a microphone built in.
* In exceptional circumstances where you cannot reasonably work without a the following equipment, your line manager can authorise you to purchase and be reimbursed for the following if really needed and within the limits (inc VAT):
* Mouse and Keyboard set (up to £25)
* Monitor (up to £150)
* Laptop Riser (up to £20)
* Headset (up to £20) – if not available via MyIT[[2]](#footnote-3)
* Where the WAT team advise, following a DSE assessment, that other office equipment is needed in order to work from home, Welsh Government may exceptionally reimburse for reasonable costs towards the equipment
* These can be claimed via e-payments via own budget, but only with a valid receipt. Costs will then be met centrally once we have worked through the details of how recharging costs will work in practice. Additional guidance on how to use e-payments can be found [here](https://documents.hf.wales.gov.uk/id:A29918299/document/versions/published).
* If you purchase ICT equipment and claim the costs back, it is our expectation that these will be retained by you for future smart working from home. Welsh Government will not reimburse for more than one item of equipment (monitor, mouse, keyboard, laptop riser, headset) within 3 years of first claim.
* The purchase of ICT and other office equipment for the home may have tax implications. The equipment you purchase and are subsequently reimbursed for should not be for private use. The provision of equipment should be based on your duties and the need for you to have the equipment to undertake these duties.

**7.4 Where is the IT kit I ordered for my new starter?**

As may can appreciate, we have an unprecedented demand on our on-site team in CP2 to complete New User laptop requests along with other very high priority demands coming from across the business to tackle COVID-19. All new users will be issued with a laptop but the build cannot take place until all New Starter arrangements have been completed. Before contacting ICT can you please check that you have completed the following:

* Submitted a New User Account for the user via MyIT
* Completed the Laptop request for the user via MyIT

Until confirmation is received from Shared Service Centre (SSC) that a New User Account has been approved and created ICT are unable to action the laptop build. To progress a New User Account please speak with your HR Business Partner or SSC.

The commencement of the laptop build process is completely dependent on the approval of the New User account from HR. Once approval has been received we will commence the laptop but may not be able to provide an estimated date for completion as this is dependent on the numbers already being built

**7.5 I have no connectivity at home. What can I do?**

If you already pay for broadband at home then no additional expenses can be claimed without creating a potential tax liability. If your broadband is capped and you’re unable to remove that cap for free, WG will reimburse the differential.

If a broadband internet connection is needed to work from home and is not already available, then the broadband fee can be reimbursed by WG and is non-taxable.

With Deputy Director and budget holder approval you can purchase a 4G sim based router via MyIT. This can be on a 30 day rolling or 2 year contract on the corporate EE or Vodafone network.  Please ensure that there is a 4G network in your house before ordering.

Official telephone calls and extra data charges can be claimed back by annotating bills with the additional costs highlighted, in line with T&S policies.

**Welsh Government will only reimburse the costs until you are once again able to work from a WG office. The funding for this will cease when your office re-opens and you will become solely responsible for any ongoing costs, so please bear this in mind before committing to any additional expenditure.**

Please note the agreement to funding is given at a departmental level with the approval of your line manager following a discussion around the need and reimbursement will be made with evidence of extra costs via e-payments.

Did you know can forward your office phone?  You can do this by following the guidance contained within the [working in isolation booklet](https://documents.hf.wales.gov.uk/id:A29355542/document/versions/published)

**7.6 I need IT support, how can I get help?**

You should try [MyICT](https://welshgov-myit.onbmc.com/) in the first instance or alternatively call on 0300 025 5555. They are open from 7am through to 7pm Monday to Friday excluding bank holidays

**Section 8 - Wellbeing**

**8.1 How do I stay physically fit working from home?**

Follow the advice in the [Effective Working from Home - Your guide to working in isolation](https://documents.hf.wales.gov.uk/id:A29355542/document/versions/published) handbook on working conditions – e.g. lighting, seating, posture and taking regular breaks.

Take a look at this [Staying Active](https://gov.wales/safe-help/staying-active) advice and tips on the Welsh Government website.

Try these [Desk stretches](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.bupa.co.uk%2Fnewsroom%2Fourviews%2Fdesk-stretches&data=02%7C01%7CEloise.Vincent%40gov.wales%7Ceb092db751d848d7d60008d7d47fd7de%7Ca2cc36c592804ae78887d06dab89216b%7C0%7C0%7C637211517858625811&sdata=nMkiBJyi9L767znNXZdtP3gYRUIFksp6wl%2BDCjb2Wdg%3D&reserved=0).

Remember to use your [Wellbeing Hour](https://documents.hf.wales.gov.uk/id:A20891726/document/versions/published). Try to do something which takes you away from a screen and enables you to have some fresh air and move around. This can be used for your outdoor exercise (in accordance with the [social distancing guidance](https://gov.wales/coronavirus-social-distancing-guidance) or for exercising, yoga or mindfulness within the home.

Download some of these [10 free fitness apps](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fbrightside.me%2Finspiration-health%2Ften-awesome-free-apps-for-working-out-at-home-143455%2F&data=02%7C01%7CEloise.Vincent%40gov.wales%7Ceb092db751d848d7d60008d7d47fd7de%7Ca2cc36c592804ae78887d06dab89216b%7C0%7C0%7C637211517858645797&sdata=VYWmcByb0SGzZW2pwn8qN1RpZGsQ3pj8GIj9NR6xBPc%3D&reserved=0) for working out at home.

The DSE Assessment [Healthy Working](https://www.wglearninglab.gov.wales/search?query=healthy%20working&strict=false&popupUri=%2FResource%2F8e594506-4b08-4d4e-814f-ca90d1e82364) includes a home working module and it may be a good idea to familiarise yourself with this as soon as possible:

Cardinus have set up a new [Health and Safety Hub](https://www.cardinus.com/covid-19-health-safety-hub/#HOMEWORKING) on safe working when you are homeworking temporarily.

Get active at the Welsh Government [virtual gym](https://wales365uk.sharepoint.com/sites/Intranet-Need-to-know/SitePages/Get-exercising-at-the-Welsh-Government-virtual-gym.aspx)

Ensure that you are not working excessive hours.

Take regular breaks from your screen to protect your eyes. Use the 20/20/20 rule: look away from your screen every 20 minutes, at something 20 feet away for 20 seconds. Also, ensure you blink regularly to maintain natural eye lubrication.

**8.2 How do I look after my and my dependants’ mental health?**

Visit the [Stress and Mental Wellbeing](https://wales365uk.sharepoint.com/sites/Intranet-HR-Recruitment-Vacancies/SitePages/Stress-and-Mental-Wellbeing.aspx) intranet page.

Try to:

* Eat well
* Try to keep active move around, walk or stretch at least every 30 minutes
* Stick to a daily routine – including taking breaks and setting daily goals
* Stay in touch with others –social interaction is extremely important
* Find ways to relax
* Ensure your working environment is set up the best way possible
* Have a “home time”. A good work/life balance is essential.

Contact Mind Matters. They have a wealth of resources and advice. Sign up to their mailing list at [mindmatters@gov.wales](mailto:mindmatters@gov.wales) and visit their intranet page [here](https://wales365uk.sharepoint.com/sites/Intranet-About-Us/SitePages/Mind-Matters.aspx)

Access our [**EAP**](https://wales365uk.sharepoint.com/sites/Intranet-HR-Recruitment-Vacancies/SitePages/You-and-Your-Wellbeing.aspx)

The following websites have a wealth of resources on mental health help:

[**Charity for Civil Servants**](https://www.foryoubyyou.org.uk/)

[**The Samaritans**](https://www.samaritans.org/wales/how-we-can-help/support-and-information/if-youre-having-difficult-time/if-youre-worried-about-your-mental-health-during-coronavirus-outbreak/) have information on their website: and their 24/7 helpline is **116 123.**

[**Mind**](https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/) Their helpline number is **0300 123 3393**

[**Childline**](https://www.childline.org.uk/get-support/contacting-childline/message-from-childline/)Counsellors are available via the online chat on the website. Their helpline number is **0800 1111**.

[**AnxietyUK**](https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk/) have resources on their website and a helpline open 10:00 – 20:00 - **03444 775775**

Visit the [**Learning lab**](https://www.wglearninglab.gov.wales/workspaces) to watch some TED talks and see our health and wellbeing courses. There are courses and other resources linked under Mind Matters and Covid 19. Courses include resilience and wellbeing, stress, mindfulness, mental health at work and mental wellbeing.

Civil Service Local has developed a handy [A-Z to Better Wellbeing toolkit](https://civilservicelocal.blog.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/94/2018/11/A-Z-to-Better-Wellbeing-toolkit.pdf)

**Keep in touch** with family, friends and colleagues remotely – whether by phone, skype, facetime, email etc. A virtual lunch or coffee break is conducive to good mental health.

**Take time out for yourself.** If you are going to be in your home for an extended period, it is important you plan breaks in your working day and organise activities you’re interested in at night. It might be the chance to work through your personal to-do list or take up a new hobby.

Spend time doing things that you enjoy – this might include reading, [cooking](https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/), or listening to/watching favourite [radio](https://www.bbc.co.uk/podcasts) or TV programmes.

Gain new skills and knowledge with free courses at the [Open University,](https://www.open.edu/openlearn/free-courses/full-catalogue) [Futurelearn](https://www.futurelearn.com/), [EDX](https://www.edx.org/), [Alison](https://alison.com/)

It is important during this time that you continue to book and use annual leave as you would normally to avoid burnout. Discuss with your manager about how this will work in your team.

**8.3 What if I have domestic issues that make it difficult to work from home?**

For those experiencing domestic abuse, measures to curb the spread of COVID-19 such as self-isolating and mandatory lock downs could trap you in your home, isolated from the people and the resources that could help you. It may be necessary for you to work from home over a long period of time. You may also have children who are at home from school who need to be protected.

The Welsh Government is fully aware of the implications of the current situation for you, as well as the continued need for unobtrusive contact and confidentiality when you access support.

When you are working from home, you may wish to call, email or text your line manager, Case Adviser Team, HR Business Partner or TUS for support options including special leave. The Employee Assistance Programme is available to all employees. Please call 0800 174 319 or [www.carefirst-lifestyle.co.uk](http://www.carefirst-lifestyle.co.uk). (Username – welsh, Password – government)

**8.4 Where can I turn if I am the victim of domestic abuse?**

The Welsh Government’s Live Fear Free helpline is available on **0808 80 10 800**; Text service: 078600 77333; or [www.gov.wales/live-fear-free](http://www.gov.wales/live-fear-free), and provides easy to access, helpful confidential advice on a variety of matters which may be relevant to your situation. It is open 24/7.

**If you are in immediate danger, call 999 and ask for the police - the police will continue to respond to emergency calls.**

**If you are in danger and unable to talk on the phone, call 999 and then press 55. This will transfer your call to the relevant police force who will assist you without you having to speak.**

The UK Government’s advice is that you are able to leave your home if you are in danger from domestic abuse and looking for refuge. The UK Government advice and organisations that can help can be found [here](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-and-domestic-abuse/coronavirus-covid-19-support-for-victims-of-domestic-abuse)

Specific advice in relation to coronavirus has also been issued by [Women’s Aid](https://www.womensaid.org.uk/covid-19-coronavirus-safety-advice-for-survivors/) .

**8.5 How do I manage my caring commitments/childcare?**

You should discuss this with your line manager as soon as possible. These are exceptional times and we are trying to be as pragmatic as possible to support parents and carers whilst delivering critical Welsh Government business, including our emergency response. If your role allows, you will be able to adjust your working patterns so that you can continue working from home for all or some of your usual contracted hours if you need to care for dependents and carry on working. This may include spreading out the hours you are able to work over a few periods throughout the day.

Agree a daily work plan with your manager so that you are clear about how you can balance your individual circumstances with your work commitments. Ideally this should be within our flexi bandwidths of 6:00am to 8:00pm but there may be circumstances in which colleagues might need to work outside these hours.

**8.6 Where can I find support and information for older people?**

[Older Peoples' Commissioner](http://www.olderpeoplewales.com/en/coronavirus.aspx)

[Age UK](https://www.ageuk.org.uk/cymru/information-advice/health-wellbeing/coronavirus/) They also offer a ‘[check in and chat service](https://www.ageuk.org.uk/cymru/information-advice/age-cymru-advice/check-in-and-chat/)’ for people over 70.

[The Silver Line](https://www.thesilverline.org.uk/) is the only free confidential helpline providing information, friendship and advice to older people, open 24 hours a day, every day of the year. Telephone 0800 4 70 80 90.

**8.7 Where can I find support and information for carers?**

Carers should be aware of the following [shielding guidance](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19)

There is support and information available for people who are shielding including food boxes for those who can’t get help from family, friends or voluntary groups.

If you or anyone you know is shielding, you can find out more about what’s available generally on the Welsh Government website:

<https://gov.wales/cmo-letter-extremely-vulnerable-people-support-explained>

If you have any questions about what help is available in your area, please contact your local authority.

The following websites may also offer support:

[Carers UK](https://www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/health/looking-after-your-health/coronavirus-covid-19)

[Carers Trust](https://carers.org/guidance-coronavirus)

**8.8 Where can I find support and information for disabled people?**

[Disability Wales](http://www.disabilitywales.org/coronavirus-questions-answered/)

[Learning Disability Wales](https://www.ldw.org.uk/project/coronavirus/)

**8.9 How can I keep my children occupied whilst we must stay at home?**

In addition to work being provided by your school, there are plenty of ways to keep your children busy.

There is a new network in the [Learning Lab](https://www.wglearninglab.gov.wales/workspaces) to share resources for children’s learning and family activities while we’re asked to stay at home.

To join the ‘Resources for Families’ network:

* Select ‘Networks’ on the left hand side
* Find ‘Resources for Families’ in the list of networks, or use ‘Search Networks’
* Select the blue ‘Join’ button
* When first viewing the network, make sure you select the ‘Subscribe’ dropdown to be notified when new content is posted.

You can leave home without actually leaving the couch, from virtual zoo exhibits to museum gallery tours [here](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.insider.com%2Fmuseums-theme-parks-offer-virtual-tours-ideal-for-social-distancing-2020-3&data=02%7C01%7CEloise.Vincent%40gov.wales%7Ceb092db751d848d7d60008d7d47fd7de%7Ca2cc36c592804ae78887d06dab89216b%7C0%7C0%7C637211517858755736&sdata=SVWDbQ1TU5ya0fRUNpDk9y8mO7GZSta7wZZmMvH6fJQ%3D&reserved=0) and [here](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.msn.com%2Fen-us%2Ftravel%2Ftravel-trivia%2Fstuck-at-home-these-12-famous-museums-offer-virtual-tours-you-can-take-on-your-couch-video%2Far-BB119nm6&data=02%7C01%7CEloise.Vincent%40gov.wales%7Ceb092db751d848d7d60008d7d47fd7de%7Ca2cc36c592804ae78887d06dab89216b%7C0%7C0%7C637211517858765725&sdata=7%2FsPC%2FAzvSVpi3N2ItkYy5jWVrZunv6Y8ehA5%2Bc%2FXmQ%3D&reserved=0)

Take a look at the activities and resources at the [BBC](https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize), [National Geographic](https://www.natgeokids.com/uk/) and [Futurelearn](https://www.futurelearn.com/). Or start learning a new language with [Duolingo](https://www.duolingo.com/)

**8.10 How do I talk to my children about COVID19?**

Take a look at the resources below if you want advice on talking to your children about COVID19

[BBC](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-51734855)

[British Psychological Society](https://www.bps.org.uk/news-and-policy/advice-talking-children-about-illness)

[PHW EasyRead Information on COVID19](https://www.wlga.wales/SharedFiles/Download.aspx?pageid=62&mid=665&fileid=2700)

**8.11 Where can I find help on rent/mortgage payments and housing?**

Welsh Government [Guidance for tenants in the private rented sector](https://gov.wales/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-tenants-in-the-private-rented-sector-html)

Tenants are currently entitled to at least [three months’ notice](https://gov.wales/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-tenants-in-the-private-rented-sector-html#section-39094) if their landlord wishes to evict them.

The UK Government has agreed with mortgage lenders that they will offer repayment holidays of 3 months to households in financial difficulty due to COVID-19. This has been extended to buy to let mortgages. Answers to some frequently asked questions are on the [UK Finance](https://www.ukfinance.org.uk/press/press-releases/uk-finance-responds-statement-chancellor-regarding-support-mortgage-customers) website.

[FCA Mortgage Coronavirus Info for consumers](https://www.fca.org.uk/consumers/mortgages-coronavirus-consumers)

Welsh Government [Help to buy loan interest repayment holiday](https://gov.wales/housing-minister-confirms-help-buy-wales-loan-interest-repayment-holiday)

Shelter Cymru [Coronavirus advice](https://sheltercymru.org.uk/get-advice/coronavirus/) and can provide housing related advice by phone on **08000 495 495**.

**8.12 What if I/family members have financial worries?**

If a member of your household or family is self-employed and has lost income due to the coronavirus they should visit the UK Gov page:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-a-grant-through-the-coronavirus-covid-19-self-employment-income-support-scheme>

The UK Gov is also providing the following additional help for the self-employed:

* [deferral of Self Assessment income tax payments due in July 2020 and VAT payments due from 20 March 2020 until 30 June 2020](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/covid-19-support-for-businesses#support-for-businesses-through-deferring-vat-and-income-tax-payments)
* increased amounts of [Universal Credit](https://www.gov.uk/universal-credit)
* [Business Interruption Loan Scheme](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/covid-19-support-for-businesses#support-for-businesses-through-the-coronavirus-business-interruption-loan-scheme)

If they are a director of their own company and paid through PAYE they may be able to get support [using the Job Retention Scheme](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/check-if-you-could-be-covered-by-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme). Welsh Government is also providing financial support through Business Wales – visit:

<https://businesswales.gov.wales/coronavirus-advice> for further information.

Visit the **Charity for Civil Servants** <https://www.foryoubyyou.org.uk/>

The following organisations also offer financial advice and resources:

[Citizen Advice](https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/)

[Money and Pensions Service - Coronavirus Financial Advice](https://mailchi.mp/maps.org.uk/news-from-the-money-and-pensions-service-january-2824249?e=ce548efa9d)

You can also contact [Money Advice Services](https://www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk/en/search?query=whatsapp) to receive free independent advice using live chat, WhatsApp or by phone.

[National Debt Line](https://www.nationaldebtline.org/)

[Step Change](https://www.stepchange.org/)

[Money Saving Expert](https://www.moneysavingexpert.com/)

**8.13 How can I protect myself / others from fake news and scams?**

Fake news is not new, but as concern about the coronavirus (COVID-19) mounts, falsified reports have flooded social media. The UK Government’s SHARE checklist will help you to spot fake news:

Source - make sure information comes from a trusted source

Headline - always read beyond the headline

Analyse - check the facts

Retouched - does the image or video look as though it has been doctored?

Error - look out for bad grammar and spelling

There are a number of scams circulating through various media including ransomware, credential theft, bitcoin or fraud. Some are online shopping scams where products never arrive or a fake link to information contains malware which steals information from infected devices. There have also been reports of doorstep crime and telephone scams.

If you spot any fake news or scams you can report them to the platform you found the post on or [Action Fraud](https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/) / 0300 123 2040.

Further information on types of scams and what to look out for can be found in our latest [Security Bulletin](https://documents.hf.wales.gov.uk/id:A29591331/document/versions/published)

**8.14 Where can I find local information – list of Local Authorities:**

* [Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council](https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/en/resident/emergencies-crime-prevention/coronavirus-covid-19-latest-information/)
* [Bridgend County Borough Council](https://www.bridgend.gov.uk/my-council/council-priorities-and-performance/coronavirus-covid-19-latest-information-and-advice/)
* [Caerphilly County Borough Council](https://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/Coronavirus)
* [Carmarthenshire County Council](http://newsroom.carmarthenshire.gov.wales/2020/02/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance/#.XnOrmoj7Q2w)
* [Ceredigion County Council](http://www.ceredigion.gov.uk/coronavirus)
* [City and County of Swansea](https://www.swansea.gov.uk/coronavirusadvice)
* [City of Cardiff Council](https://www.cardiff.gov.uk/ENG/Your-Council/Strategies-plans-and-policies/Emergency-Planning-and-Resilience/coronavirus-information/Pages/default.aspx)
* [Conwy County Borough Council](https://www.conwy.gov.uk/en/Spotlight/Press-Releases/Council-Services-Current-Situation-180320-1000hrs.aspx)
* [Denbighshire County Council](https://www.denbighshire.gov.uk/en/resident/community-and-living/coronavirus/coronavirus.aspx)
* [Flintshire County Council](https://www.flintshire.gov.uk/en/Resident/Emergency-Planning/Coronavirus-Covid-19-council-services-update.aspx)
* [Gwynedd Council](https://www.gwynedd.llyw.cymru/en/Residents/Emergencies/Coronavirus-Covid-19.aspx)
* [Isle of Anglesey County Council](https://www.anglesey.gov.uk/en/Residents/Emergencies/Covid-19-Coronavirus-information.aspx)
* [Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council](https://www.merthyr.gov.uk/coronavirus)
* [Monmouthshire County Council](https://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/services/planning-for-emergencies/coronavirus/)
* [Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council](https://www.npt.gov.uk/22404?lang=en-gb)
* [Newport City Council](http://www.newport.gov.uk/en/Council-Democracy/Coronavirus-COVID-19.aspx)
* [Pembrokeshire County Council](https://www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/newsroom/leaders-coronavirus-update-thursday-19th-march)
* [Powys County Council](https://en.powys.gov.uk/coronavirus)
* [Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council](https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/EmergenciesSafetyandCrime/InformationforResidentsCoronavirus/CoronavirusCOVID19latestinformationandadvice.aspx)
* [Torfaen County Borough Council](https://www.torfaen.gov.uk/en/AboutTheCouncil/Homepage-Stories/COVID-19-Coronavirus.aspx)
* [Vale of Glamorgan Council](https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/our_council/press_and_communications/latest_news/2020/March/Coronavirus-Updates-2020.aspx)
* [Wrexham County Borough Council](https://beta.wrexham.gov.uk/service/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-information)

1. [https://www.gov.uk/overtime-your-rights/parttime-workers](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.gov.uk%2Fovertime-your-rights%2Fparttime-workers&data=02%7C01%7CGarethA.Owen%40gov.wales%7C9ef9df10e72e4f56de9d08d7d55459bc%7Ca2cc36c592804ae78887d06dab89216b%7C0%7C0%7C637212430560763830&sdata=jQQYoSaX5anhx6M99qVGO6MNzVel1sjOsQoOlFGO3eQ%3D&reserved=0) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Skype Headsets should be available via MyIT from early July 2020. Please check MyIT for stock availability **before** purchasing your own headset. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)