

## **ALL EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION FROM THE MANAGING DIRECTOR - COVID-19, NO 14, 23 APRIL 2020**

### **COVID-19 Testing for Tayside Contracts Key Workers**

Tayside Contracts recently received confirmation from the NHS that testing for COVID-19 is to be extended to key workers out with the Health and Social Care setting. I am pleased to announce that this applies to eligible key workers of Tayside Contracts.

Testing is available to eligible key workers and their immediate family living in the same household as them when either the employee, or family member, is symptomatic of COVID-19.

The NHS has provided us with a pro forma which we are required to complete and send to them for screening to enable them to determine if you or your family member are eligible for testing. Your Unit Head will be responsible for collating information in preparation for sending to the NHS via our HR Team on a regular basis.

As a reminder, the most common symptoms of COVID-19 are a new continuous cough and/or a fever/high temperature (37.8C or higher).

NHS Information describes a 'new continuous cough' as if you:

- Have a new cough that has lasted for an hour
- Have had 3 or more episodes of coughing in 24 hours
- Are coughing more than usual

Please note that, at present, part of the eligibility criteria for testing is the impact a positive test result would have on your ability to continue to attend work to deliver key services. This means that employees who are not carrying out any work or those who are working from home are unlikely to be eligible for testing at this stage and will not be referred for testing by Tayside Contracts.

If you are experiencing any of the symptoms above and believe that you may be eligible for testing, please contact your line manager in the first instance.

### **Furlough**

As you will be aware, as part of its response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government has introduced the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS). This allows all eligible UK employers to designate certain eligible employees as 'furloughed workers'. The employer will have access to government financial support to continue paying these furloughed employee's salaries and protect the employees from redundancy.

Following initial discussions with the Trades Unions and our constituent Councils, Tayside Contracts is currently investigating and taking legal advice regarding whether it may be possible to utilise the Government's CJRS and place some employees on furlough.

The Government has stated that they do not expect that the CJRS will be used by many public sector organisations, as most public sector employees are continuing to provide essential public services or contributing to the response to the coronavirus outbreak. However, in a small number of cases, for example where organisations are not primarily funded by the Government and whose staff cannot be redeployed to assist with the coronavirus response, they have stated that the scheme may be appropriate for some employees. As certain Tayside Contracts' posts are not funded directly by the

Government and instead are funded by income generation, we believe Tayside Contracts may be eligible to apply under the CJRS.

Should Tayside Contracts decide to apply to utilise the job retention scheme, because of the rules of the scheme, furlough will only be available to a small minority of employees, most likely a proportion of employees within our Catering Unit, Construction Division and support services function.

I would like to emphasise that furlough is a temporary measure and furloughed employees will have the same employment rights going forward as those who are not furloughed. Further, employees would be paid their full contractual pay when on furlough as Tayside Contracts would 'top up' the 80% of wages/£2,500 monthly cap stipulated by the Government.

The main reason for adopting this course of action is to protect income and jobs going forward

We will be consulting with our Trade Unions further and will write out to those employees in the potential furloughing groups with further information in due course.

Please continue to refer to Tayside Contracts' website [www.tayside-contracts.co.uk](http://www.tayside-contracts.co.uk) on a regular basis to check for further updates.

If you have not already done so and wish to provide your email address to us in order to benefit from electronic access to communications such as these, please forward your email address to [Communications@tayside-contracts.co.uk](mailto:Communications@tayside-contracts.co.uk). We will not forward your email address onto any third parties or use it for any other purpose other than to communicate with you.

**Iain C Waddell, Managing Director, 23 April 2020**