

**ALL EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION FROM THE MANAGING DIRECTOR - COVID-19, NO 36,
22 DECEMBER 2020**

This message contains important information, following the First Minister's recent announcement of further COVID-19 related restrictions.

I hope that this latest briefing finds you and your family well and that you are looking forward to a well-earned festive break, whatever that may look like for you and your family this year, in these unusual times.

As 2020, one of the most exceptional years in history, draws to a close, I wanted to first of all write to you all to express my sincere gratitude and pride for the way in which you have all contributed to the successful delivery of essential services to our three constituent Councils and the communities of Tayside since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic nine months ago. Secondly, I wanted to **provide some information in light of the First Minister's announcement on Saturday 19 December regarding the move of mainland Scotland into a protection level 4 from Saturday 26 December and the change in the arrangements for the return of the schools in January.**

The last 9 months have been a challenging time for everyone both personally and professionally and although I have only been Managing Director for two of those months, I know from speaking with many people in Tayside Contracts, just how hard you have all worked to ensure our communities continued to be kept safe, and were enhanced through the provision of your excellent services.

Since I started with the organisation at the beginning of November, I have been so impressed by the enthusiasm and commitment shown by our people in Tayside Contracts to ensure that our services were provided to a high standard, despite almost all of our normal ways of working being replaced with different, 'COVID compliant' ways. This has not been easy - from ensuring that we stay 2 metres away from other individuals, to wearing a face covering whilst working to working from home, we have all been challenged beyond what we ever imagined prior to March 2020. I really hope you are very proud of what you achieved, because I certainly am.

There is no doubt that most of us will be keen to reach the 'finishing line' of 2020 and the start of the festive holiday period, a time to relax and recharge as much as we can. However, the recent announcement by the First Minister was unexpected and we, as an organisation, are still currently working our way through all the implications of this, specifically for our school related operations and school-based employees. I thought it was important however for me to provide clarity for you all as I know that there may be some anxiety and confusion about what is being asked of employees from 26 December and beyond.

The arrangements for our different groups of employees are therefore as follows:

ALL SCHOOL BASED FACILITIES SERVICES DIVISION EMPLOYEES

The First Minister announced that the school holiday period would be extended for all children until Monday 11 January with the exception of vulnerable children or the children of key workers who will return to school as previously scheduled i.e. on either Wednesday 6 (Angus area) or Thursday 7 January (Dundee and Perth and Kinross areas).

For the week from Monday 11 January to Friday 15 January, vulnerable children and the children of key workers will continue to attend school in-person but all other children will be taught using remote online learning.

From Monday 18 January onwards, the Scottish Government expects schools to be open to all staff and pupils for in-person teaching and learning as normal.

Despite these revised arrangements for school pupils, we are asking all school-based Facilities Services Division employees to please attend work as normal on the day that you were due to return to work. This includes school cleaning, catering, school crossing patrol and facilities employees.

NON-SCHOOL BASED EMPLOYEES

Non-school Based Cleaning Employees

Some non-essential office buildings are not permitted to open beyond 26 December due to the protection level 4 status. Your line manager will be in touch with you to advise you further.

Non-school Based Catering Employees (Community Meals)

There are no changes necessary as the provision of community meals is an essential service. Therefore, from Saturday 26 December onwards, please attend work as normal.

Construction Division Employees

There are no changes necessary as Construction related work is permitted to continue in a protection level 4 situation. Therefore, from Saturday 26 December onwards, please attend work as normal. This includes Transport Services, Street Lighting and Collace Quarry employees.

Office Based Employees

Please continue to work from home where you can and report for work as normal on the day that you were due to return to work.

Previously Shielding Employees

For those employees who were previously shielding and have been issued with a letter from the Chief Medical Officer, I appreciate that you may now be feeling especially anxious about attending work beyond 26 December. If this is the case, please discuss your concerns with your manager who will review the relevant risk assessments with you and discuss and agree any further control measures that may be appropriate. It is likely that you will soon receive a further communication from the Chief Medical Officer and that this will provide further information to you about the latest COVID-19 development.

Childcare

If the closure of the schools/nurseries for all children (except vulnerable children or children of key workers), presents you with a childcare issue and you have explored all reasonable alternatives for childcare, please contact your line manager to discuss your specific circumstances further. It may be that you can request to take annual leave or opt to change your working pattern temporarily to allow you to attend work.

Keeping Each Other Safe

I must acknowledge, as I am sure you are already aware, that there is significant concern nationally that the Christmas Day relaxation agreed by the Scottish Government will lead to a spike in COVID-19 cases in January and that this ultimately may lead to more hospital admissions and deaths. This concern is further compounded by the recent news of a COVID-19 variant which appears to be even more transmissible than the original virus. The Scottish Government has stated that the safest way to celebrate Christmas this year is to celebrate with your own household in your own home - and as far as possible to keep any interaction with other households to a minimum. This is by far the safest way to spend this Christmas and keep your loved ones safe.

I would therefore urge you, if you feel you can, to please keep your festive gatherings small, short, and local to prevent further transmission of this awful virus that has brought with it so much damage, devastation, and grief already.

Finally and on a more positive note, I hope that you are as encouraged as I am that we are moving into 2021 in the knowledge that there is some light at the end of this lengthy tunnel with the roll out of the vaccine against COVID-19, although there is no question that this will be a mammoth task for our colleagues in the NHS. Despite the most recent news, I remain hopeful that in the months ahead, some of the restrictions we are currently living and working with will be relaxed, we will move towards our 'new normal' and I will be able to meet more of you face to face in your work locations.

In the meantime, please stick with all the rules to keep yourselves, your colleagues and your families safe.

Merry Christmas everyone, thank you once again and here's to a happy and healthy 2021 for us all!

Should you have any questions about this briefing please speak to your line manager or if you are seeking support for a wellbeing issue this can be accessed through your line manager, our HR Team or via the wellbeing resources published on our website [here](#).

Please continue to refer to Tayside Contracts' website 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 We will not forward your email address onto any third parties or use it for any other purpose other than to communicate with you.

Keith McNamara, Managing Director, 22 December 2020

