

**ALL EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION FROM THE MANAGING DIRECTOR - COVID-19,
NO 39, 21 JANUARY 2021**

This message contains important information, following the Scottish Government's decision on 19 January 2021 to extend the 'stay at home' message and remote school learning until mid-February 2021.

I hope this latest briefing finds you and your family well. I appreciate that we are once again going through a period of change which can often cause a degree of uncertainty for employees and managers and so first of all I want to express my thanks to you all for your understanding and patience whilst we once again adapt as an organisation to the changes imposed on us due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a large organisation delivering a diverse range of services to a variety of customers with differing needs and priorities, this can be challenging to achieve quickly.

I understand that the recent changes made by Scottish Government in relation to how our schools operate have been felt most acutely in our Facilities Services Division and I know that it has taken a little longer than hoped to agree the revised service delivery model with our constituent Councils. I also understand that there have been questions raised in relation to whether or not some of the services we are currently delivering within our Construction Division should continue in light of the most recent lockdown restriction imposed by the Scottish Government on mainland Scotland. I therefore wanted to write to you to update you and provide some clarity around these areas and other relevant areas such as furlough.

Service Delivery/Stand Down

- **Construction Division**

Whilst during the first national lockdown last summer, Tayside Contracts was only permitted to carry out essential construction works, this is not the case for this current lockdown. The Scottish Government has stated that construction work can continue, assuming all necessary risk assessments and control measures are in place to protect employees from COVID-19. We have consulted with our constituent Councils, reviewed the services we are providing, reviewed the control measures and risk assessments associated with these services and are satisfied that we can continue operating as we are in a COVID safe manner. We will, however, continue to review this position in line with Scottish Government and public health guidance to ensure that we remain compliant and, most importantly, that our employees continue to be safe at work.

Therefore, at the moment, no employees are being stood down within Construction at this present time.

- **Facilities Services Division**

Within our Facilities Services Division, we have had to adapt our service provision to reflect the move to remote school learning and the decision to keep all schools in Tayside open for vulnerable children and the children of key workers. The service delivery model for each of the school related functions (cleaning, catering, school crossing patrol and janitorial) is Client led and relies on information on pupil and teacher attendance numbers which takes time to collate, especially as the first week of the

new school term did not provide a representative picture of attendance numbers. I am pleased to report that we now have this information and this week managers have been making contact with employees to update them on the position relative to their own individual role/s. In summary, for each employee grouping, the current position is as follows:

School Based Catering and Cleaning Employees

Managers will stand down certain employees within catering and cleaning and put them on a rota system to ensure a fair distribution of the remaining workload. Your line manager will have already advised you if you are being stood down and if and when you are required to work.

It is unlikely to be operationally possible to allow all employees in the Facilities Services Division a period of stand down (e.g. those employed in smaller, rural schools where it may not be practicable to cover for them if they were stood down).

This arrangement is likely to be in place until mid-February and will be reviewed again on 2 February when the Scottish Government reviews the current restrictions.

School Crossing Patrol Employees

Our school crossing patrol employees will be stood down as agreed with the Client on a school-by-school basis, based on pupil turnout. This arrangement is likely to be in place until mid-February and will be reviewed again on 2 February when the Scottish Government reviews the current restrictions.

Janitorial Employees

A full janitorial service is required by the Client and therefore no janitorial employees are being stood down at present.

Non-school Based Cleaning Employees

In relation to our non-school cleaning operations, some Clients have opted to close their buildings and employees based in these buildings have been stood down until further notice. This arrangement is likely to be in place until 31 March 2021, unless your workplace re-opens prior to that. For other non-school premises, where there is reduced usage by the client the number of employees to be stood down will depend on the level of service the client requires.

- **Support Services/Office Based**

During the first lockdown all of our Support Service and office-based employees were set up with the necessary IT equipment to enable them to do their role remotely from home. These employees have continued to work from home as necessary and in line with Scottish Government guidance throughout the pandemic with the exception of a very small number of employees who are required to attend the office to carry out tasks that cannot be done remotely. We are asking all Support

Service and office based employees to continue with this arrangement until the Scottish Government advises otherwise.

NOTE: Any employee who is stood down by Tayside Contracts will continue to receive their full contractual pay during the period that they are stood down.

Furlough

As was the case during the previous lockdown, Tayside Contracts intends to utilise the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) where this is permissible under the Scheme. Our Furlough Policy provides more information regarding who can be furloughed, what happens to Terms and Conditions whilst on furlough etc and is available on our website [here](#).

We have started to write to those employees who are in scope to be furloughed and hope to maximise this to protect jobs and services going forward. If you have received a letter and have any further questions regarding furlough, please speak to your line manager or HR Adviser.

It is important to emphasise that there is no difference to any employee whether they are stood down or furloughed, they will receive their full contractual pay as normal in either situation.

Shielding Employees

As previously advised, employees who have been issued with a letter from the Chief Medical Officer, should **NOT** attend work. If you have the ability to carry out your work from home, you are expected to do so but otherwise there is no requirement for you to attend work. In some cases, we will take the opportunity to furlough shielding employees who meet the criteria. If you have not already done so, you should forward a copy of your letter from the Chief Medical Officer to your line manager, this will act as a Fit Note to cover the period of your absence.

Childcare/Time off for Dependants

If the further extension of remote learning for all children (except vulnerable children or children of key workers) to mid-February, 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, opt to change your working pattern temporarily to allow you to attend work or paid time off for dependants may be authorised in exceptional circumstances for a limited period. A decision will be made by your managers on a case-by-case basis after consulting with the HR Manager where appropriate.

Please note that certain Tayside Contracts' employees are classed as key workers and can continue to send their children to school when alternative childcare arrangements cannot be made. You are required to apply for this provision through your school or Local Authority.

COVID-19 Employee Survey

Thank you very much to everyone who took the time to complete our recent COVID-19 Employee Survey. We achieved a response rate of over 50% to the e-mail survey which is a really positive response. Not only did respondents give their views using the multiple choice answers of the survey but we also received a significant amount of feedback within the comments sections of the survey which evidences a high level of engagement with the exercise. There is a significant amount of work involved with analysing the responses, identifying the trends and then putting this into a format that is easy to understand but work is already underway to do this. We will then share these outcomes and the key learning points/areas for improvement with employees and managers.

Support and Guidance - National Assistance Helpline and Ready Scotland Website

Finally, I wanted to take an opportunity to once again re-iterate for any employee who may be struggling at the moment that there is assistance and support available should you need this. This continues to be a very challenging time for us all both in our personal and work lives.

As well as the support that your line manager and our HR Team can provide to you, a National Assistance helpline is available for those who need it or for those who are having to self-isolate. The helpline number is **0800 111 4000** and it is open from Monday to Friday, from 9am to 5pm and it is there to support people who might not be able to call easily on friends, neighbours and relatives for help and people who do not have access to digital technology, or who may not feel very comfortable using it.

If you phone the helpline, you will be put through to your local council who will then help you get whatever assistance it is you need. This might be food, medicine, emotional support or it might be to put you in contact with relevant volunteer groups.

Another valuable source of information and support is the Ready Scotland website which provides support and guidance on areas such as mental health, domestic abuse or for parents and carers, anyone who is pregnant and those with disabilities. This website can be found here:

<https://ready.scot/coronavirus/get-help>

Summary

I hope that you have found this briefing helpful, I appreciate that it is a lot of information to take in but I want to keep you as updated as I can in what has been a fast moving situation. Although the situation we find ourselves in as a nation remains extremely serious, I hope that you, like me, are pleased to hear the First Minister confirm that COVID-19 cases appear to be stabilising, perhaps even declining, and that it appears that all the sacrifices that we have been making are having a positive impact.

Should you have any questions about any of the topics covered in this briefing please speak to your line manager.

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, 21 January 2021