

## ALL EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION FROM THE MANAGING DIRECTOR - COVID-19, NO 49 11 JUNE 2021

I must start this briefing by saying how deeply grateful I and the Corporate Leadership Team are to everyone in Tayside Contracts for everything you've done to keep our vital public services operating, and supporting each other, during these long, long months of the pandemic. I hope you and your family are well.

I wanted to write to you all to remind you of the importance of following the protective measures that have been put in place and to remind you to be cautious if you have any travel booked over the summer holiday period. You may have seen from the local media that COVID cases seem to be on the increase again, and we all have to pull together to beat this virus. The last thing that any of us want is to return to lockdown, or see people we care about becoming ill.

I am quite sure we are all frustrated with the ongoing restrictions, but as I said in my last communication it is vital that we all continue to follow the control measures in place at work and in general, in order to protect ourselves, our colleagues, our families and the wider public.

### Travel

As we move into the summer period, where a large proportion of our workforce have fixed leave periods, I wanted to remind you to be cautious if you have any travel booked over the summer holiday period.

Guidance and restrictions on travel are changing all the time. At present, while travel between a Level 3 or 4 area in Scotland and anywhere else in the world is not allowed (unless it is for a 'permitted reason') the rules on travel internationally from areas not in Level 3 or 4 have been relaxed. However, the Scottish Government continue to advise against it.

You are no doubt aware that countries have been classified as being on red, amber or green lists for travel and each of these lists has different rules about what you must do on arrival in Scotland from the countries on the lists.

Travel to Scotland from countries on any of the lists will involve some form of COVID-19 test that you are required to pay for and travel from countries on the red and amber lists requires self-isolation, or quarantine, on arrival in Scotland, which (if you've travelled from a red list country) is required to be in a hotel, which the traveller must pay for. Full and up to date details of the isolation and testing requirements can be found on the Scottish Government website, [here](#).

As you are no doubt aware, and will probably have seen in the press recently after Portugal was moved to the amber list, the red, amber and green lists are not fixed, and countries can be moved from one list to another at any time and with short notice. Please remember that you will be required to use annual or unpaid leave for any isolation period that is required as a result of travel abroad, as you have made the decision to travel in the knowledge that you may be required to quarantine on your return.

While we are doing our best to keep our FAQs up to date it is your responsibility to make yourself aware of the requirements on what you need to do on your return, which may well include quarantining on your return – even if the country you travelled to was on the green list when you booked or set off.

## **FACTS**

As I said at the beginning of this briefing – and in previous briefings – our protective measures are of crucial importance. Please remember that these measures are in place to protect others as well as you. For this reason, it remains essential that you continue to wear face coverings where required (unless you are exempt for a medical reason) and that you maintain a physical distance from others. These measures continue to be essential, even after you have had one or both doses of the coronavirus vaccine.

You must remember that not everyone can get the vaccine and that many younger people are not yet eligible. While younger people are less likely to suffer serious illness or be hospitalised as a result of COVID-19 they can still suffer from long covid.

I know how difficult it can be to remember to follow the control measures at times, especially as time has gone on. However, we cannot risk complacency setting in. Just because you have not been infected does not mean you are immune and – as can clearly be seen by the rising case numbers – the virus is still out there.

We've had an increasing number of reports over the last few weeks of employees not wearing face coverings while sharing vehicle and groups of employees gathering during breaks without sufficient distance between them and other examples of slips in the control measures being followed.

So please, whatever activity you are doing, remember to follow the control measures in place at work and the general FACTS guidance. If you see colleagues who appear to be forgetting the guidance, give them a gentle reminder. We're all in this together and sticking with the protective measures is one of the best ways to keep everyone safe.

## **Lateral Flow Testing for School/ELC Based Employees**

### **School Holiday Testing Arrangements**

If you are not scheduled to work during the entire summer school holidays, you do not need to test during the holidays until the day you are due to return to work. However, if you are attending work during the school holidays, you will need to continue testing twice per week prior to attending your shift.

If you will be attending work during the school holidays, you should ensure that you have enough of a supply of testing kits prior to the beginning of the school holidays.

All employees participating in the testing programme should ensure that they have enough of a supply to test before returning to work after the school holidays as school staff will be unavailable to issue more kits during the holiday period.

## Homeworking

To those of you who have been working from home, I would like to extend my thanks to you. I know it is not easy to maintain a good work/home-life balance when your work is suddenly in your home and many of you have struggled with space, or technical issues.

Home working where possible remains important, as it allows those who cannot work from home to properly distance whilst at work. I know some of you may be enjoying working from home, while others may have had enough, but for now our position is that you should continue to work from home wherever possible.

A number of people have recently been returning to their office base for various different reasons, but I must ask you not to do this at this time. We are working on a 'Transitional Homeworking Policy' to reflect the lifting of the Scottish Government restrictions on office working, which is anticipated to be relaxed from the end of June. This transitional policy will see us through the next phase of recovery and towards our 'new normal' which may, for some employees be a form of hybrid home/office working if they wish and their manager agrees. I hope to be in a position to share more on this soon.

## Looking after your Wellbeing

The coronavirus pandemic has been difficult for everyone to deal with and we have all struggled with the impact it has had on us, whether it's not being able to see friends and family, having to work from home, having to deal with restrictions in society and control measures at work, or even just not being able to go to our favourite places.

Now, as things begin to open up again, you may be feeling really excited, or you may be one of the many people who are feeling nervous about the changes and perhaps you feel like you are not quite ready to go back to the activities that you enjoyed before.

It's important that we all remember there is no 'right' way to feel just now and it's okay to go at our own pace – we don't have to be ready to dash to the pub just because our friends are!

Often when we're feeling anxious in our home lives it spills over into our work lives, sometimes making us irritable, or withdrawn. Support is available from Tayside Contracts to help you with any anxiety you may be experiencing, so please discuss this with your line manager.

Looking after your mental and physical wellbeing is really important, especially so during COVID-19 and while things are changing so much. Key areas to focus on are mental and physical wellbeing, eating well and staying hydrated, sleeping well and seeking appropriate support for you and those you care for.

Guidance on improving and maintaining your wellbeing, whilst at home and at work, as well as further mental health and wellbeing resources can be accessed through our Mental Health and Wellbeing Resource Contact list, can be found here:

<https://www.tayside-contracts.co.uk/covid-19/wellbeing>

## Summary

I hope that you have found this briefing helpful, it is not my intention to 'lecture' you, but as the pandemic has dragged on, and as we hit 16 months from the first national lockdown with no definitive end in sight, it is so easy for pandemic fatigue to set in and for us to forget to look after ourselves, or to forget the importance of following the control measures. But – as has been proved many times – the control measures do work and are worth it for the protections they extend to us and others.

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](http://www.tayside-contracts.co.uk) on a regular basis.

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.

Thank you so much for all you are doing to protect and support yourself, your families and your communities during these difficult times.

**Keith McNamara, Managing Director, 11 June 2021**

