



## **Coronavirus (COVID-19): Temporary changes to workplace policies and procedures**

### **IMPORTANT NOTICE**

*It is important to note that the situation is very fluid and Government guidance is changing daily. We can therefore only provide a general guide that should be used with care. Furthermore, as we are not medical professionals, we cannot provide any medical advice on the virus, its treatment or transmission. This guidance is current for 15 May 2020.*

### **Motor Industry Legal Services**

*Motor Industry Legal Services (MILS Legal Ltd) provides fully comprehensive legal advice and representation to UK motor retailers for one annual fee. It is the only law firm in the UK which specialises in motor law and motor trade law. MILS currently advises over 1,000 individual businesses within the sector as well as the Retail Motor Industry Federation (RMF) and its members.*

## **Coronavirus (COVID-19): Temporary changes to workplace policies and procedures**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 As coronavirus (also known as COVID-19) continues to spread, we recognise that our organisation needs to adapt its ways of working.
- 1.2 We want to help reduce the spread of coronavirus and safeguard the welfare of our staff during the coronavirus outbreak, while continuing our operations as normally as possible.
- 1.3 This policy explains what temporary changes we are making to our usual policies and procedures on sickness absence, flexible working, travel, and annual leave during the global health crisis.
- 1.4 This policy is based on best practice as at 13 March 2020 and we may vary the procedures set out in this policy, including any time limits, as appropriate in any case. This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time.

### **2. INFORMATION ABOUT THE VIRUS**

- 2.1 A coronavirus is a type of virus. As a group, coronaviruses are common across the world. COVID-19 is a new strain of coronavirus first identified in Wuhan City, China in January 2020.
- 2.2 The incubation period of COVID-19 is between 2 to 14 days. This means that if a person remains well 14 days after contact with someone with confirmed coronavirus, they have not been infected.

### **3. PREVENTING SPREAD OF INFECTION**

- 3.1 There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19. The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to the virus.
- 3.2 All employees have a duty to their colleagues and our customers to follow best practice as defined by Public Health England (PHE) from time to time, including
  - (a) cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze. See Catch it, Bin it, Kill it
  - (b) put used tissues in the bin straight away
  - (c) wash your hands with soap and water often – use hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available. See hand washing guidance
  - (d) try to avoid close contact with people who are unwell

- (e) clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces
  - (f) do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean
- 3.3 If you are worried about symptoms, please report your concerns in confidence to your immediate manager and call NHS 111. Do not go directly to your GP or other healthcare environment.
- 3.4 Employees are required to wash their hands thoroughly at regular intervals and clean frequently touched surfaces as appropriate.

**4. RETURNING FROM TRAVEL OVERSEAS TO AFFECTED AREAS**

- 4.1 Employees who have returned in the last 14 days from overseas should report in confidence to your immediate manager before attending work.

**5. SICKNESS ABSENCE- WHAT IS CHANGING TEMPORARILY?**

- 5.1 During the coronavirus situation, it is vital that you do not attend work if you fall ill and experience any common coronavirus symptoms. These are:
- (a) a fever or high temperature;
  - (b) a new, continuous cough; and
- 5.2 If you suffer from [One] of these symptoms you should not attend work and notify your line manager of your absence before you are due to start work, or as soon as possible if that is not practical.
- 5.3 However, we recognise that you may be legitimately absent without having written medical evidence (typically, a fit note from your doctor). If you are given medical advice to self-isolate, we will not ask you to provide written medical evidence after seven calendar days' absence.
- 5.4 This is because public health advice is that, if you show symptoms, you should avoid going to your doctor or a hospital to prevent infection from spreading. You may have been given medical advice via telephone from NHS 111 to self-isolate.
- 5.5 You will still be expected to:
- (a) explain to your line manager what medical advice you have been given and from whom; and
  - (b) keep in regular contact with your line manager

- 5.6 Given the coronavirus situation, you must make sure that [your contact details are up-to-date on [location of contact details] / your line manager has a telephone number and email address where they can reach you if you are in self-isolation].

**6. ACCEPTABLE LEVELS OF ABSENCE- WHAT IS CHANGING TEMPORARILY?**

- 6.1 If you are given medical advice to self-isolate (for example from NHS 111), or we ask you to self-isolate, we will not take this absence into account when determining whether or not we are taking formal action under our absence management procedure.

**7. SICK PAY- WHAT IS CHANGING TEMPORARILY?**

- 7.1 You will be paid [SSP][full pay] if you are self-isolating in response to medical advice from NHS 111, your doctor, or a local health protection team.
- 7.2 You will be paid either full pay or Furloughed (at our discretion) if we have asked you to stay away from the workplace and self-isolate (unless you have already been advised to self-isolate by NHS 111, your doctor or local health protection team in which case you only will be entitled to SSP).

**8. FLEXIBLE WORKING- WHAT IS CHANGING TEMPORARILY?**

- 8.1 As long as the organisation's operational needs continue to be met, you will be able to:
- (a) adapt your working patterns, for example to allow you to travel on public transport at less crowded times; or
  - (b) work from home if your role allows for this,
- 8.2 for an extended period without having to follow our formal procedure. You can agree informally with your line manager to these changes.
- 8.3 You should speak to your line manager if you wish to take advantage of either of these options, or any other flexible working options that may help you at this time. However, the decision as to whether or not to agree to your request for flexible working remains with your line manager.
- 8.4 Once agreed, the temporary flexible working arrangement will continue until further notice. If circumstances change, your manager will discuss with you any adaptations to, or the withdrawal of, the flexible working arrangement, with the final decision remaining with your manager.

## **9. REQUIREMENT TO WORK REMOTELY- WHAT IS CHANGING TEMPORARILY?**

- 9.1 Given the current global health situation, you may be asked to work remotely at short notice. This could be the case if our workplace closes unexpectedly as a precaution or public health measures, such as an area-wide lockdown, are introduced.
- 9.2 This could mean working from home, although you may have the option to work remotely from one of our other work sites if it remains open.
- 9.3 If it is not possible for you to work from home, you should discuss your options with your line manager.
- 9.4 You should ensure that, where possible, you take your laptop home with you after work each day and familiarise yourself with [describe remote-working system], which is explained at [link to guidance, for example on intranet].
- 9.5 If you use a desktop, you can access your emails remotely from most devices and computers via [describe email-access system], which is explained at [link to guidance, for example on intranet].
- 9.6 You should contact the IT department if you have any queries about the remote-working system.

## **10. WORK-RELATED TRAVEL- WHAT IS CHANGING TEMPORARILY?**

- 10.1 Work-related travel to any area proscribed by the UK Government's guidance on specified countries and areas and World Health Organisation's daily situation reports the following areas has been suspended until further notice:
- 10.2 We encourage you, where possible, to maintain contact with [colleagues/customers/suppliers], even if you cannot visit them face to face. Where possible, meetings with [colleagues/customers/suppliers] located in a restricted area can be conducted over the telephone or via [video conferencing/Skype/Teams].
- 10.3 Work-related travel to non-restricted areas can continue as usual. However, you should think about whether or not you really need to travel - it may be that meetings with [colleagues/customers/suppliers] can be conducted over the telephone or via [video conferencing/Skype/Teams].

## **11. NON-WORK-RELATED TRAVEL- WHAT IS CHANGING TEMPORARILY?**

- 11.1 If you have travelled outside of the UK in the last 14 days, you must inform your immediate manager immediately.
- 11.2 If you plan to travel outside of the UK in your own time, for example on a holiday or for family reasons, you must inform [your line manager/the HR department] before you depart of where you are going.
- 11.3 You must not come to work on your return. Even if you have no symptoms, we will ask you to self-isolate for 14 days after your return from the restricted area.
- 11.4 On your return from a restricted area, your first step should be to visit the 111.nhs.uk website, where you can get further medical advice via telephone. You should do this even if you do not have any symptoms.
- 11.5 If possible, you should avoid going to your doctor or a hospital to prevent infection from spreading.

## **12. ANNUAL LEAVE- WHAT IS CHANGING TEMPORARILY?**

### 12.1 Changing your holiday plans-

- (a) During the coronavirus situation, you may change your mind about travelling, or be unable to travel to your planned destination, and may wish to cancel or change annual leave that you have already booked.
- (b) If you would like to cancel or change planned leave, please speak to your line manager. We may allow you to change or cancel booked holiday, taking into account the coronavirus situation. However, this will continue to be a decision for your line manager, depending on the circumstances.
- (c) For example, if we have arranged cover for you, or arranged shift patterns on the basis that you will be on leave, we may require you to take the leave as booked.

### 12.2 Unused annual leave

- (a) We recognise that you may be unable to take your remaining annual leave before the end of the leave year. For example, you could have an increased workload because of the coronavirus situation, or you may have cancelled or changed planned annual leave.
- (b) We are suspending our usual rule that [you lose any unused annual leave you have not taken by [31 March] / you can carry over no more than [five days'] annual leave into the following leave year and it must be taken by the end of the first month of the following leave year].

- (c) While you should endeavour to take your holiday entitlement in the relevant holiday year, you should speak to your line manager if you think that you will be unable to do so.
- (d) As long as your line manager agrees, the annual leave can be taken later. The timing is a matter for discussion between you and your line manager.