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**FROM: Michael Cooke  
NICSHR**

**DATE: 6<sup>th</sup> October 2021**

**To: Colum Boyle**

**Issue: To seek approval to upload the revised temporary  
COVID-19 HR Guidance.**

**Timing: Desk immediate**

**FOI: In the event of a request for disclosure of information contained in this  
submission under the FOI Act, the request would be considered in the  
context of the relevant provisions of the legislation, including any  
relevant exemptions that may be applicable.**

**Recommendation: You are asked to note the revised guidance and approve  
the approach and content.**

## **BACKGROUND**

1. NICSHR has carried out a fundamental overhaul of the temporary COVID-19 FAQs and Guidance to create a single point of information which addresses the key issues for staff and managers. The existing FAQs and Guidance (which

were removed from the NICS Intranet on the 18<sup>th</sup> August 2021 to allow for revision) had become voluminous as a consequence of being developed and updated constantly at pace throughout the pandemic; much of the information is now out of date and key information is difficult to find.

2. The revised Guidance has therefore been designed to be more accessible and concise, bringing together the current relevant advice and support information which reflect where we are at the current time with the pandemic, the changes in restrictions and Public Health Agency (PHA) guidance. See Annex A.
3. The FAQs section has been removed as it no longer serves a useful purpose; the key information is now contained in the revised guidance; NICS HR will provide advice and support to managers, as has been the case, throughout the pandemic.
4. In addition we have also removed information which is no longer relevant, specifically an explanation of covid 19 symptoms, Covid-19 testing information, allocation of alternative work, recording of Covid-19 absence, working from home guidance, performance management.
5. There are a number of key changes.
  - a. The use of paid special leave as the accurate method for recording the first 10 calendar days of the primary covid infection absence, and compliance with the self-isolation requirement as set by the PHA.

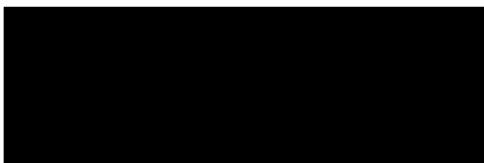
The primary covid infection absence (as evidenced by a positive test) will not impact on pay or lead to inefficiency action. This approach takes into account the practice in other jurisdictions including Cabinet Office, DWP and the Irish Civil Service.

- b. All covid related absences extending beyond the 10 calendar days will be managed in line with NICS Sickness absence policies.

- c. NICS will be no longer extend contractual occupational sick pay for covid related absences.
  - d. Core areas of the guidance have been shortened to include key information on caring responsibilities, annual leave, recording of sick absence, medical evidence and vaccination.
6. Central Trade Union Side (CTUS) has been consulted on the revised guidance and is in agreement with the document in Annex A. Once approved the revised COVID-19 Guidance will be published. This temporary COVID-19 Guidance will remain under review.
7. I have discussed the revised guidance with Jill Minne and note that for previous updates to FAQs and guidance the changes were agreed with CTUS and then published on the Covid-19 Hub, with a comms message advising staff of changes to the information. As this is an overhaul of the FAQs and guidance to streamline, refresh and up to date the information we considered it appropriate to seek your approval to publish, aware it has been developed taking into account other jurisdictions and has been agreed with CTUS.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

8. You are asked to give your approval by DATE.



**Michael Cooke**

Ext: 51735



## **Annex A**

Word document containing the revised COVID-19 HR guidance



Guidance for  
Managers - Revised