Guidance for Managers
Supporting your team adapting to new ways of working

This guidance is to be used alongside the existing Staff COVID19 FAQ’s, the “Guidance for controlling the risks from Covid-19” and your local school/department plans.

It can also be used alongside the more detailed guidance on home working due to be published at the end of June

Introduction

Context: This guidance is for managers who will be leading their teams through new ways of working over the coming months, whether it be returning to campus, continued working from home or a hybrid of the two.

The current Government guidance (as at 24th June 2020) is that if your team’s work can be done from home then they should continue to work from home. You should therefore only ask staff to return to campus if you have been notified that it is safe for them to do so and their work has to take place on campus.

Equality Diversity & Inclusion: In applying this guidance please continue to uphold the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion, being alert and responsive to the differential impacts of the pandemic and the new ways of working on different groups of staff. As a manager it is important to continue to promote a fair and positive culture. There is more support available on this topic at www.ed.ac.uk/equality-diversity

Contents

1. Understanding the needs and circumstances of your team members.
2. Planning a return to campus:
   2.1 Selecting staff for a return to campus
   2.2 Supporting staff who fall within vulnerable health groups
   2.3 Considering new temporary working patterns
   2.4 Re-induction & training
   2.5 Concerns & Compliance with new Health & Safety measures.
3. Remote or hybrid working:
   3.1 Managing remotely
   3.2 Remote induction
4. General support
   4.1 Mental Health & Wellbeing
   4.2 Managing workload and changes to responsibilities
   4.3 Supporting your staff through change reminder
1: Understanding the needs and circumstances of your team members.

It is your responsibility as a manager to reassure staff that their health, safety and wellbeing is paramount. You should understand the individual circumstances and needs of your staff when planning any changes. Individual situations may have changed since lockdown began and may continue to do so in the coming weeks and months so frequent communication is critical.

Individual 121 conversations are the most effective way for you to understand each individual’s personal circumstances and needs. It may be useful to have a team conversation to provide the context before following up with individual meetings. Take a sensitive approach in your 121 conversations:

- Discuss any continuing caring responsibilities
- Discuss their own health and wellbeing including whether they (or someone they live with) are vulnerable or shielding. Explore any factors which could affect their ability to return to campus or work from home.
- Understand how they will travel to work if returning to campus.
- Take time to address anxieties or concerns about returning to campus or a further period of working from home. Focus on the personal experiences of your team from a work and life perspective.
- For those returning to campus it’s important they feel that they are returning to a supportive and caring environment.
- Explain clearly to your staff the arrangements being put in place for a return to campus or continued working from home. In particular address how these will apply to them.
- Reassure colleagues that any personal information they disclose will be treated sensitively with due confidentiality and in line with the published Privacy Information Notice for staff. Information may be requested where relevant from staff to ensure that an appropriate assessment of their health and safety can be made.
- Acknowledge any team members that have been attending the workplace throughout this time and remember to check in with them too.

2: Planning a return to campus

2.1 Selecting staff for a return to campus

Take a pragmatic and fair approach (informed by your work priorities and workplace capacity plans and any relevant information gathered during your 121 conversations etc) when advising team members about a return to campus. You should, wherever possible, involve your team in your planning. This should include conversations regarding any change in working patterns that you need to implement.

Document and clearly articulate the local guidelines you’ve used to prioritise people and work areas and to assign work patterns. It’s also advisable to document your decision making. Remember to maintain employee confidentiality, but be honest about why decisions are/were made. Don’t make assumptions that are based on people’s characteristics and make sure that equality issues are taken into account. Be aware in documenting your decisions that staff can access information held about them via a subject access request.

Provide your team with reasonable notice of both their return date and any changes to working patterns.
If you are bringing people back from Furlough please ensure you follow the correct process which can be found in the existing Covid-19 Staff FAQs.

Some of your team may be unable to return to work on-campus in the immediate future. For example, they may:

- Be Vulnerable & shielding (for more detailed guidance see section 2.2 below)
- Have caring responsibilities which require them to be at home
- Have symptoms or are self-isolating
- Have problems with public transport
- Have disabilities that need additional support

Please refer to the flowchart in appendix 1 to help you prepare for your 121 and team conversations and to support your staff selection processes.

If an employee is reluctant to return to the workplace, ensure that you have fully explored their reasons and take time to try to address any specific concerns they have, providing reassurance and taking their individual circumstances into account.

If an agreed resolution cannot be found and an employee advises they are unable to agree to the changes or to attend work without good cause, please speak to your local HR Advisor.

2.2 Supporting staff who fall within vulnerable health groups.

Covid-19 is more likely to cause severe symptoms in people with weakened immune systems including older people, pregnant women and those with long-term conditions like diabetes, cancer and chronic lung disease. As a manager you have a responsibility to protect the health of any member of staff who has declared a medical condition of this nature, and which places them at increased risk were they to contract Covid-19.

This section aims to support you in the assessment of staff who are at increased risk and fall within the vulnerable groups. Further information on these groups is available from NHS Inform, at: https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-covid-19-general-advice

2.2.1 Vulnerable groups

The UK Government has identified two distinct groups who are more vulnerable to the effects of Covid-19 and there are different issues to be considered for each of these groups. These groups are:

A. Those at higher risk of severe illness from coronavirus, and
B. Those at extremely high risk of severe illness from coronavirus (* Shielding group).

* Shielding describes the additional measures those at extremely high risk of severe illness should take to protect themselves. Further information on shielding is available at: https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-covid-19-shielding

A. Higher risk group

Staff who are considered to be at a higher risk of severe illness from coronavirus (but are not in the shielding category) are advised to strictly adhere to physical distancing and hygiene measures.
This includes those who are:

- aged 70 or older (regardless of their medical condition)
- under 70 and are instructed to get a flu jab each year on medical grounds
- pregnant.

It also includes those with:

- chronic (long-term) respiratory diseases, such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), emphysema or bronchitis
- chronic heart disease, such as heart failure
- chronic kidney disease
- chronic liver disease, such as hepatitis
- chronic neurological conditions, such as Parkinson’s disease, motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis (MS), a learning disability or cerebral palsy
- diabetes
- problems with their spleen – for example, sickle cell disease or those who have had their spleen removed
- a weakened immune system as the result of conditions such as HIV and AIDS, or medicines such as steroid tablets or chemotherapy
- a BMI of 40 or above who are seriously overweight.

B. Extremely high risk (shielding) group

Staff who are considered to be at extremely high risk of severe illness from Covid-19 are advised to strictly adhere to shielding measures, and should have received a letter from NHS Scotland or their GP advising them of this.

Staff who have been advised to take shielding measures must **not** attend the workplace.

They include those who:

- have had solid organ transplants
- have cancer and are receiving active chemotherapy
- have lung cancer and are either receiving or previously received radical radiotherapy
- have cancers of the blood or bone marrow, such as leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma who are at any stage of treatment
- are receiving immunotherapy or other continuing antibody treatments for cancer
- are receiving other targeted cancer treatments which can affect the immune system, such as protein kinase inhibitors or PARP inhibitors
- have had bone marrow or stem cell transplants in the last 6 months, or who are still taking immunosuppression drugs
- have severe chest conditions such as cystic fibrosis or severe asthma and severe COPD
- have rare diseases, including all forms of interstitial lung disease/sarcoidosis, and inborn errors of metabolism (such as SCID and homozygous sickle cell) that significantly increase the risk of infections
- are receiving immunosuppression therapies that significantly increase risk of infection
- are pregnant with significant heart disease (congenital or acquired).

Staff who share a house with someone who has been given a ‘shielding letter’ do not need to take shielding measures themselves.
2.2.2. Manager responsibilities

When planning for the return to work on campus for staff, you must consider those who fall into these vulnerable groups, and the steps which need to be taken to minimise, as far as reasonably practicable, their exposure to Covid-19.

It is the responsibility of members of staff to inform you that they do or may fall within one of the two vulnerable groups. They are not required to disclose medical information, but should indicate whether they are in a more vulnerable group, in order that appropriate consideration can be given to any suitable and reasonable adjustments necessary to protect their health. Staff can find more information on these health conditions on the Covid-19 webpages at https://www.ed.ac.uk/news/covid-19/health-safety-travel.

If, you become aware that a member of your team falls within the vulnerable category, you should follow the steps outlined in Flowchart 2 in Appendix 1, and noted below.

We have prepared a Covid-19 staff assessment form which staff can use to let their manager know that they fall within one of the vulnerable health groups. This form is not mandatory but is available for those who wish to use it.

The Covid-19 Staff assessment form is found in appendix 2 of this document.

To explain further:

A member of staff who has received a ‘shielding letter’ must remain at home (working from home where they can, on paid temporary leave / furloughed). The University does not require members of staff to provide evidence of their ‘shielding letter’, and you are not required to request this information.

A member of staff who falls within the higher risk group, but has not received a ‘shielding letter’, should be asked to contact their own GP for advice on any additional specific measures which may need to be implemented to protect their health.

The GP may:

- Decide to issue a ‘shielding letter’, confirming they must remain at home.
- Provide general advice, and confirm they may return to the workplace, as long as physical distancing measures are strictly followed,
- Provide specific advice on measures which need to be considered by the University to enable them to return to the workplace, in addition to physical distancing measures being followed,
- Not provide any advice to the individual.

Thereafter, you should discuss with your staff member any additional specific measures and/or adjustments, advised by their GP, which need to be implemented to protect their health and enable them to safely return to campus. Discuss with them how to implement these where it is reasonable and appropriate to do so. They may include changes to work activities, practises or working patterns.

As a manager you must seek advice from Occupational Health (OH) in the following circumstances:

- the GP is unable to provide advice
- the staff member is unable to discuss their concerns with you
- you and/or the staff member require additional advice regarding the staff member’s vulnerability and health.
Advice should be sought from OH via the management referral process - https://www.ed.ac.uk/health-safety/occupational-health/managers/referral

If you are unable to make the necessary adjustments to enable the staff member to work on campus AND they are unable to do their work from home then the staff member will remain on a period of temporary paid leave or continue on Furlough (if Furloughed). You should, however, keep this situation under regular review.

Please seek advice from your local HR Advisor where necessary.

2.2.3 Staff caring for others who fall into the vulnerable groups
If a staff member has caring responsibilities for someone who falls into one of the vulnerable groups, they need to consider the advice from the vulnerable person’s GP, and how this impacts on their ability to work. The member of staff is advised to discuss this with their line manager. If they are unable to work on campus AND they are unable to do their work from home they will remain on a period of temporary paid leave.

2.3 Considering new temporary working patterns
In order to maintain safe working practices it may be necessary for you to consider temporary amendments to working patterns (e.g. working in different time blocks). If this is the case you should, engage and involve your staff in developing the best solutions if possible. Consider the following:

- Aim to secure effective working patterns to optimise capacity voluntarily wherever possible.
- If asking employees to work out of normal working hours you must have their safety at the forefront of your planning. In many cases this is being considered as part of a general building review particularly where laboratory hours are being extended. There should be sufficient staff available to ensure safe working and where necessary a buddying system used to support this.
- Consider any potential Equality, Diversity and Inclusion impacts of any potential changes. For example it may be necessary to balance the phasing of work across a team to take into account caring responsibilities and personal needs. These should be considered as part of the overall Equality Impact Assessment required to re-open the building(s) you work in.
- Make sure, as far as possible, that individual working patterns are consistent to minimise the risk of cross infection between cohorts of working groups.
- Our current staff T&C’s include ‘Premium Band Payments’ if you are contracted to work hours between 10pm and 6am, or to work hours that vary from week to week. Consideration should be given to this when planning new staff working arrangements. Unless absolutely necessary it is recommended that you do not introduce new working patterns that include these.

Please note that changes to an individual’s contractual terms and conditions needs to be achieved by agreement. If the changes apply to a wide group of staff they may require collective consultation and agreement, i.e. with our recognised trade unions. Please seek advice from your HR Advisor on anything that you think may be related to an employee’s terms and conditions of employment.

2.4 Re-induction and training
It is your responsibility to ensure that all staff who are returning to campus are aware of the changes to the workplace. Consider the relevant re-induction updates or training needed before colleagues return and on
their first day on campus. The local school/department safety manager is available in your area to support and co-ordinate this.

Further guidance on this can be found in the Communications, Support & Training section of the ‘Guidance for controlling Covid19’ document.

Please also ensure that you review any reasonable adjustments for disabled staff to ensure these continue to be appropriate and effective, and consider any new adjustments that might be needed for staff working in new on-site environments.

2.5 Concerns & compliance with new health & safety measures

It’s important that staff are aware of all new measures and their individual responsibility towards complying with these measures.

As a manager it is important that if your staff have concerns or complaints about any safety measures that they feel able to raise them with you, and that these concerns or complaints will be fully considered and addressed in the normal / appropriate way.

All employees have a legal obligation to co-operate with their employer on matters relating to health & safety.

It is expected that staff follow the information, instruction and training provided with regard to new ways of working. Measures should be in place with teams and within Schools and Departments to monitor the effectiveness of the control measures. It is important to regularly review and remind staff of these measures. As normal any concerns regarding staff choosing not to implement health & safety measures will be treated proportionately and seriously. As per the existing university arrangements, any serious breach of a health and safety measure could result in disciplinary action as per the University’s Disciplinary Policy. Please liaise with your local safety manager to report any concerns.

3: Remote or Hybrid Working

It remains important that we continue to support and equip those staff working from home well.

New, detailed guidance for Managers on home & remote working will be available at the end of June. There is also some support already in existence on the existing staff Covid 19 FAQ’s.  

As a reminder, as a manager please take time to reflect on any ‘reasonable adjustments’ that were in place on campus for your staff and review these with those working from home. The Disabled Staff Support webpages provide guidance for managers supporting staff with a range of disabilities. https://www.ed.ac.uk/equality-diversity/disabled-staff-support

3.1 Managing remotely.

The university has produced a useful Managing Remotely toolkit to support managers with team members who continue to work from home. This can be found at: www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/managing_remotely_2020_0.pdf
3.2 Remote Induction

If you have new members of staff joining your team whilst working remotely, there is guidance available on how to support the ‘remote’ induction of a team member here: www.ed.ac.uk/human-resources/learning-development/induction/remote-induction-support

4: General Support

4.1 Mental Health & Wellbeing.

As a manager it’s important to be mindful of how colleagues are adapting to changes and that many people do not feel comfortable in talking about their mental health.

Some of the typical signs and symptoms of poor or declining mental health may be more difficult to spot in colleagues working from home or more flexibly.

The University has extensive materials available to all staff on this topic at the Health and Wellbeing pages https://www.ed.ac.uk/staff/health-wellbeing

There is also some mental health advice and links in the existing Covid19 Staff FAQ’s, which provides:

- Simple advice for us all to help manage fears and anxieties.
- Links to WHO and government advice on mental health & wellbeing during Covid19.
- An outline of other external resources available to us all (e.g. Big White Wall, Feeling Good App, SilverCloud).
- Some hints and tips on how to look after your wellbeing if you are continuing to work from home.

The Disabled Staff Support webpages provide guidance for managers to support staff who develop or have pre-existing mental health difficulties. Guidance includes examples of reasonable adjustments that could be made for staff with specific mental health conditions, including anxiety.

If you feel more specialist advice is required, Occupational Health (https://www.ed.ac.uk/health-safety/occupational-health) and the Staff Counselling services (https://www.ed.ac.uk/counselling-services/staff) are available.

4.2 Managing workloads and changes to responsibilities

The University has asked all staff to manage their work as best they can throughout this period, while our environment remains in flux. Therefore please continue to discuss and agree with your team what is achievable for them, so that you can continue to support them and provide clarity on expectations. This may mean that you need to adjust your expectations of staff and in turn, adjust the expectations of customers and stakeholders. It is vital that all staff have a manageable workload, which means that the priorities and workload of the team will need constant and regular review during the pandemic.

Look out for team members who may be finding it difficult to strike a balance between their Covid-induced obligations at home and their work obligations. It may be a good time to re-visit/establish ground rules with your team so that everyone is clear on deadlines, scope of work and the behaviours that you all expect to see.
If you think that there will be significant changes to a post on a temporary or ongoing basis then please reach out to your local HR Advisor who will be able to talk you through how this should be handled.

Please note you should not expect your staff to take on new or different activities in addition to their normal role such that they become overloaded. Consider how you reprioritise activity in order to mitigate this.

4.3 Supporting your staff through Change

Change has become a constant of working life and different members of your team will react and respond differently to change. There are three steps you can take to support individuals through change; 

**Communication**, which should be frequent, repeated, honest, relevant and most importantly, two-way.

- **Signposting** your staff to the [Change Toolkit](#) to help them understand how they can support themselves.
- **Understanding** how to support your staff’s response to change.

The [Bridges Model](#) focuses on how people transition through a change, not the change itself. The difference between these is subtle but important. Change can be something that happens to people, even if they don't agree with it. Transition, on the other hand, is internal: it's what happens in people's minds as they go through change.

Familiarise yourself with how people respond in times of crisis by equipping your team to move through these three phases; emergency to regression to recovery. [Harvard Business Review - If You Feel Like You’re Regressing, You’re Not Alone.](#)
Appendix 1: Flowchart to support returning to campus conversations

Can your team member do their work from home?

Yes:
- Advise them to continue to work from home. Read through 'Guidance for Home, remote & hybrid Working' to help you consider their Health, Safety & Well-being at home.

No:
- Is your team member content to return to work?
  - Yes:
    - Your team member can return to work. Ensure they are made aware of all new guidelines for their workplace & expectations on them to ensure their health and safety.
  - No:
    - Is your team member content to return to work?
      - Yes:
        - If an agreed resolution cannot be found and you team member refuses to return please contact your HR.
      - No:
        - Discuss with your team member what might fit around their commitments? Consider things such as amended hours, duties, priorities or working patterns. If none of this proves possible and they cannot work at all they will remain on paid temporary leave, with a mutually agreed review date.

Is your team member content to return to work?

Yes:
- Discuss with your team member any concerns they have about returning. If necessary conduct an individual risk assessment to minimise their risk of infection. This could also include changes to tasks, duties or other ways of working.

No:
- Is it because they live with someone who is shielding/shielded/vulnerable/pregnant?
  - Yes:
    - Discuss concerns. Explain steps put in place by University to ensure health, safety and wellbeing. Explore ways of reducing concerns.
  - No:
    - Is it because of travel concerns?
      - Yes:
        - Discuss with your team member amended hours, patterns, days to fit with public transport timetables and quiet commuting times. Advise use of soft face covering while on public transport.
      - No:
        - Is it because they have other anxieties or concerns?
          - Yes:
            - Discuss concerns. Explain steps put in place by University to ensure health, safety and wellbeing. Explore ways of reducing concerns.
          - No:
            - Is this because your team member has caring commitments?
              - Yes:
                - Discuss with your team member what might fit around their commitments? Consider things such as amended hours, duties, priorities or working patterns. If none of this proves possible and they cannot work at all they will remain on paid temporary leave, with a mutually agreed review date.
              - No:
                - Is it because they have other anxieties or concerns?
                  - Yes:
                    - Discuss concerns. Explain steps put in place by University to ensure health, safety and wellbeing. Explore ways of reducing concerns.
                  - No:
                    - Go to Flowchart 2: Supporting vulnerable groups.

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Go to Flowchart 2: Supporting vulnerable groups.

Read 'Supporting vulnerable staff' guidance section & if necessary guide your team member to the staff FAQ’s on this topic. Has your team member indicated that they may fall into one of the vulnerable groups (including pregnancy)?

Yes:
- Is your team member content to return to work?
  - Yes:
    - Your team member can return to work. Ensure they are made aware of all new guidelines for their workplace & expectations on them to ensure their health and safety.
  - No:
    - Discuss with your team member any concerns they have about returning. If necessary conduct an individual risk assessment to minimise their risk of infection. This could also include changes to tasks, duties or other ways of working.

No:
- Is there an agreement resolution cannot be found and you team member refuses to return please contact your HR.

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If an agreed resolution cannot be found and you team member refuses to return please contact your HR.
Flowchart 2: Supporting vulnerable groups

Has your team member indicated that they are in one of the vulnerable health groups?

- **YES**
  - Does your team member have a NHS/GP shielding letter?
    - **YES**
      - Your team member **MUST stay at home**. If appropriate discuss with them any other duties/ work that they may be able to do from home. Remember to stay in regular touch.
    - **NO**
      - Ask your team member to seek advice from their GP about returning to work. Agree how/when to get back in touch
  - **NO**

- **NO**
  - Ask your team member to seek advice from their GP about returning to work. Agree how/when to get back in touch

Did the GP issue a shielding letter?

- **YES**
  - Seek additional support from Occupational Health (OH) using Management Referral. OH provide advice on health vulnerability/ obtain medical advice from GP. Staff member remains at home until advice received. Does the advice require shielding?
- **NO**

Is the GP advice clear?

- **YES**
  - Discuss the advice with your team member. Consider specific individual adjustments. If adjustments are made and team member OK, then they **can return to work** – refer to Guidance about returning
- **NO**
Appendix 2

Covid-19 Staff Assessment form

The purpose of this form is to establish whether you fall within one of the vulnerable health groups, whether you require to remain ‘shielded’ at home, or whether you can attend work on campus. If you can attend work on campus these questions will assist your manager in the consideration of any additional adjustments which may need to be discussed with you prior to your arrival on campus. Responses will be treated confidentially and sensitively. You do not need to provide details of any medical condition.

**Name:**

**Area of Work:**

**Job Title:**

**Contact Telephone:**

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1. Have you received a ‘shielding letter’ and/or advice from your GP to remain shielded? Y/N
   If you answer Yes to this question, you must remain at home.

2. Are you in the higher risk group but have not received an NHS or GP ‘shielding letter’? Y/N
   Higher risk group includes individuals who are,
   - Pregnant
   - Over 70 years of age
   - Advised to receive a yearly flu vaccine for medical reasons
   - It also includes people with:
     - chronic (long-term) respiratory diseases, such as asthma (that requires an inhaled or tablet steroid treatment, or which has led to hospital admission in the past)
     - chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), emphysema or bronchitis
     - chronic heart disease e.g. heart failure
     - chronic kidney disease
     - chronic liver disease e.g. hepatitis
     - chronic neurological conditions e.g. Parkinson’s disease, motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis (MS), a learning disability or cerebral palsy
     - diabetes
     - problems with your spleen – e.g. sickle cell disease or if you have had your spleen removed
     - a weakened immune system as the result of a health condition (e.g. HIV and AIDS), prescription medicines (e.g. steroid tablets) or chemotherapy treatment
     - a BMI of 40 or above who are seriously overweight.

3. Please confirm that you have discussed any health concerns with your GP Y/N
   If you answer No to this question, please contact your GP for specific advice relating to your health.

4. Has your GP advised you of any specific adjustments / alterations which need to be considered to enable your return to the workplace? Y/N

5. You consider that you are able to return to work. Y/N

**Signature:**

**Date:**

Please complete, and return this form to your line manager who will contact you to discuss the above.