

## **Guidelines for working from home: social distancing and shielding the vulnerable**

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 These guidelines are based upon and should be read in conjunction the advice provided from Public Health England, Public Health Wales and Health Protection Scotland, which provides the most up to date advice from the UK Government on what everyone should do following the outbreak of the Coronavirus (COVID-19).
- 1.2 The Company is working in close coordination with our rail industry and supply chain partners to share best practice and will adopt all measures on protective equipment, health advice and working practices as these are developed during the course of the health emergency.
- 1.3 The Company expects all employees to follow the advice from the UK Government on social distancing and to support the national effort to protect citizens and employees.

### **2. Scope**

- 2.1 These guidelines are for all employees during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

### **3. Social Distancing**

- 3.1 Social distancing is a key measure that will reduce the transmission of Coronavirus (COVID-19) and entails reducing social interaction between people. These are government directions on what is social distancing.
  - Always maintain two metres distance between yourself and other people.
  - Avoid contact with someone who is displaying symptoms of Coronavirus (COVID-19). These symptoms include high temperature and/or new and continuous cough.
  - Stay at home and only go out to exercise once per day
  - Avoid non-essential use of public transport when possible.
  - Avoid gatherings with two or more people in public spaces
  - Avoid gatherings with friends and family. Keep in touch using remote technology such as phone, internet, and social networks (such as Yammer).
  - Use telephone or online services to contact your GP or other essential services.

- 3.2 All employees whether they are continuing to attend work to keep the network running or working from home will be expected to practice social distancing where ever possible.

#### **4. Social Distancing whilst working at home**

- 4.1 Employees working from home should follow social distancing advice at all times. Practical guidance on working from home is available on [MyConnect](#).
- 4.2 The arrangements for employees working from home should be agreed with the employee's line manager. These should include;
- when employees will be contactable and
  - the circumstances and times when a non-critical employee can access the Company's servers and online facilities via Network Rails VPN.

Managers may agree work to be completed offline (without accessing Network Rails VPN).

- 4.3 Any working from home arrangements will be temporary, and employees' terms and conditions, including their location of work will remain unchanged.
- 4.4 Employees will be paid as normal whilst working from home.
- 4.5 Extra expenses or allowances will not be paid for WiFi, electricity and heating working for employees who work from home on a temporary basis in response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.
- 4.6 Employees will be expected to be flexible, as far as practicable, about when and how they work from home to ensure critical workers can access the network when required, and the internet and other systems are not overloaded.
- 4.7 Managers and colleagues will be expected to maintain regular two-way communication. The Company is keen to ensure that employees working from home are supported and do not feel isolated. Route Services IT have provided access to Microsoft Teams and Links to Microsoft Office (outside of the remote VPN). The Company actively encourages employees to use internal social networks such as Yammer and Microsoft Teams to keep in contact with each other. Employees can take items of Network Rail property for home working on the understanding that they will be returned.
- 4.8 Team meetings are encouraged and can occur using teleconferencing, Microsoft Teams or Skype.
- 4.9 When working from home, employees will be expected to review their own working arrangements and work in a safe way at all times. Should employees

have any concerns about the health and safety of their home working arrangements they should speak to their line manager as soon as possible.

- 4.10 Whilst working from home, employees are actively encouraged to continue talking to each other and to read the wellbeing resources available on MyConnect.

## **5. Visitors whilst working at home**

- 5.1 It is important to minimise physical contact with other people, and therefore employees should minimise visitors to their home to essential people only, for example; carers, doctors, food, pharmaceutical and essential item delivery drivers.
- 5.2 Employees should not leave home to visit other employees or for any other reason unless it is for one of the limited reasons permitted under the government instructions.

## **6. Caring for someone**

- 6.1 If an employee's dependant such as a partner, child or relative in the same household gets Coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, the employee should self-isolate and work from home. If that's not possible and they need to self-isolate (symptom free) but cannot work from home, then this will be recorded as paid special leave.  
Individuals will be paid their full pay. For those working to a roster, this will include their base published roster plus their contractual allowances.
- 6.2 Self-isolation should be for 14 days from the onset of symptoms of the first person who displays them in the household. If the employee is a critical worker and cannot work from home, they can return to the workplace.
- 6.3 We are in the process of securing tests to provide some reassurance for those who care for the vulnerable

## **7. Shielding Vulnerable Employees**

- 7.1 There are some clinical conditions which put people at a high risk from Coronavirus (COVID-19). These employees will be informed by letter from the NHS that they are vulnerable and must not attend work and self-isolate for a minimum of 12 weeks from week (commencing from 17 March 2020.)

- 7.2 Self-isolation means staying in your home thereby removing yourself as much as possible from risk of infection.
- 7.3 Employees in this high-risk category should inform their line manager that they have received a letter from the NHS informing them that they are in a high-risk category. Line managers will be expected to maintain contact with these employees, irrespective of whether they are able to work from home or not.
- 7.4 For employees who are vulnerable and advised to self-isolate for 12 weeks, but have not yet received an NHS letter, then managers can call a dedicated Optima Helpline on 0330 008 5972. Occupational clinicians will conduct assessments to determine vulnerable employees and the need to self-isolate. They can provide a temporary certificate to endorse the recommendation for self-isolation based on a clinical risk assessment

## **8. Hand Washing**

- 8.1 All employees, whether at home or in the workplace are reminded of the need to wash their hands with soap and water regularly for at least 20 seconds.

## **9. Staying healthy whilst Social Distancing**

- 9.1 At times like these, it can be easy to fall into unhealthy patterns of behaviour which in turn can make you feel worse. There are simple things you can do that may help, to stay mentally and physically active during this time. For ideas on exercises you can do at home visit the [NHS website](#).
- 9.2 Employees are encouraged to maintain contact with their line manager and members of the team, and to look after their own and their colleagues mental and physical wellbeing.

## **10. Latest Advice**

- 10.1 The advice from the UK Government has been changing on a daily basis, and therefore this guidance may be superseded by new guidance. For the latest advice line managers should contact HR Direct or review the advice on [MyConnect](#).
- 10.2 During the course of this health emergency, we will adopt all best practice measures on protective equipment, health advice and working practices as these are developed.