



Dear Colleague

SCHOOL CLOSURES AND CARER'S LEAVE

1. The following has been agreed in partnership between NHS Employers and Staff Side and should be read in conjunction with [DL\(2020\)5](#), issued on 13 March 2020, which offers guidance to NHS Scotland around its workforce response to COVID-19.
2. Schools and nurseries across Scotland closed on the afternoon of Friday 20 March until further notice to assist in delaying the spread of COVID-19.
3. Local authorities will put appropriate arrangements in place to support parents and carers defined as key workers. All NHS staff are considered either Category 1 or 2 key workers and will be eligible for such provisions.
4. The arrangements for key workers may include their children continuing to attend school or local authority childcare. Local authorities are also being encouraged to work with childcare providers in the private and third sectors to allow key workers to remain at work.
5. As key workers, NHS staff are expected to do all that they can to make childcare arrangements following the closure of schools, to allow them to come to work during the outbreak. We know this is a most challenging time for staff with parental and carer responsibilities for children. These staff should discuss and consider their working arrangements with their line managers immediately.
6. The support arrangements for key workers that are introduced should be used, unless the child has been advised to self-isolate or is unwell. This will help optimise the number of staff at the most challenging time in the history of our health service.
7. NHS employers will need to be flexible, as there will be situations where both parents and carers are NHS staff, or they are single parents. If one parent is a key worker and the other is not, the non-key worker should normally be expected to provide childcare. There will also be cases where childcare could have been provided by grandparents, over 70, or other carers that are now unable to, as they are social distancing or self-isolating.

DL (2020) 7

3 April 2020

Addresses

For action

Chief Executives, NHS
Boards and Special Health
Boards and NHS National
Services Scotland (Common
Services Agency)
Directors of Human
Resources, NHS Boards and
Special Health Boards and
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8. Where there is no alternative childcare available, paid carer's leave will be given to staff and they will be paid as if at work, for the duration of each absence. Absences for this should be recorded as Special Leave Coronavirus. Where there is pre-booked annual leave or parental leave this will be granted, wherever possible, and will be deducted from entitlements.

9. The section in [DL\(2020\)5](#) on Use of Special /Carer Leave Provisions states that "It is important to note that NHS staff are key workers and should make alternative arrangements for caring responsibilities, where possible." Further guidance related to school closures intimated that staff could take parental leave on a paid as if at work basis if provision was not available.

10. Education services across Scotland have been working to finalise arrangements for key workers childcare. If provision has been made we ask that this offer of support is accepted to enable you to come to work to support our services. If the offer is not accepted staff can make their own personal arrangements. If staff do not come to work despite arrangements being available and have used their 4 weeks paid parental leave, the remainder will be unpaid as per the extant Parental Leave Policy.

11. This guidance will be reviewed regularly over the course of the COVID-19 crisis.

Action

12. NHS Boards and Special Health Boards should ensure that this policy is widely publicised to staff and managers.

Yours sincerely



Stephen Lea-Ross
Deputy Director of Health Workforce