



# **CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) & SOCIAL DISTANCING AT WORK POLICY**

**FCG-BCMS-POL-004**

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## Policy brief & purpose

This policy sets out our approach to certain aspects of work during Covid-19, as well as our steps for maintaining safety and social distancing at work. It describes the measures we're taking to help prevent the spread of coronavirus and considers applicable government guidance.

It's important that you read this policy, follow its contents diligently and act responsibly and transparently in order to uphold the health precautions set out. We each have a responsibility to ourselves, colleagues and visitors in the current environment, which will involve us having to adjust to new working practices.

It's vitally important that the measures in this policy are strictly followed in order to maintain the health and safety of us all and sustain the successful operation of the business. Failure to adhere to this policy therefore could lead to disciplinary action and in cases of serious breach could lead to sanctions up to and including dismissal.

This policy will be reviewed regularly alongside government guidelines as they continue to develop.

## Scope

This policy applies to all colleagues and contractors.

## General

Whether you are required (or permitted) to attend your usual place of work, the measures in place will be determined in accordance with current government guidance, the Covid Alert Level or Local Tiers. There are 5 Covid Alert Levels, where Level One means the disease is no longer present in the UK and Level Five is the most critical. The lower the Covid Alert Level the less strict the measures, the higher the level the stricter the restrictions will be. There are three tiers that will also be applied to local areas, which are Tier 1 – Medium, Tier 2 – High and Tier 3 – Very High.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> July the Government announced that it is now the discretion of office employers regarding how they return to offices in a safe way.

## Sickness

In addition to our usual absence reporting and sick leave provisions you must note and adhere to the following:

- For those Colleagues due to work on site, if you or anyone you live or bubble with has Covid-19 symptoms, which are, high temperature, new continuous cough or loss or change to your sense of taste or smell, you should not come into the office but work from home instead.
- If you are feeling too unwell to work due to other reasons, the normal absence procedure should be followed. If you were due to be working in the office you must inform Business Continuity if you will not be in that day.
- If you have a positive Covid-19 diagnosis and have been working in the office, you can only return to your usual workplace after 14 days of self-isolation.
- Inform your line manager if you have previously had and recovered from Covid-19.

## Holidays

For 2020, the business has agreed to provide Colleagues with the opportunity to sell up to a week of your holiday entitlement before the end of the year. Full details regarding this have been provided by HR, which include the following options:

- **Option 1** - instead of rolling over up to 1 week into 2021, you have the opportunity to sell those days (i.e. if you have 5 days left you can sell 5 days)
- **Option 2** – sell some days and carry over some days, up to a maximum of 1 working week in total (i.e. if you have 5 days left you can as an example sell 3 days and carry over 2 days)

- **Option 3** – carry over up to 1 week into 2021 (to be taken by the end of April 2021) (i.e. if you have 5 days left you can carry over these 5 days)
- **Option 4** – take all your holiday entitlement by 1st January 2021

### **Parental Leave**

Colleagues with dependents will be entitled to a provision of two weeks full pay (inclusive of the normal dependents leave of 3 days) to allow them time off to care for them. This should support those who are unable to send their children to school or nursery. This will be in place from 17<sup>th</sup> March 2020 until year end, all leave must be recorded through SelectHR.

Colleagues may also amend their shift pattern to allow them time to care for their dependent, this must be agreed with the Line Manager. This could include starting earlier, finishing later or splitting the shift throughout the day.

### **Furlough**

As the organisation still requires and is able to provide roles to all Colleagues, a business decision has been made to not utilise the Governments Furlough Scheme.

### **Working from home**

Whether you are required or permitted to attend the workplace will be determined by the applicable Covid Alert Level in place. We will keep you updated but if you are unsure whether you are required to attend your usual place of work, you should check with your line manager prior to returning to the office.

If you are feeling unwell and are unable to work, you should take this time as sick leave and report it accordingly.

There are several circumstances in which you may need to continue working at home or alter your shift pattern, including:

- If you have been in close contact or live/bubble with someone infected by or displaying Covid-19 symptoms. You should immediately inform your line manager. It is likely under government guidelines that you will need to self-isolate (currently for 14 days).
- If you are a parent and your child's school is closed. You should raise this with your line manager.
- If you need to provide care to a family member. This might involve caring for an unwell family member, a child or providing support to a vulnerable person not in your household. You should raise this with your line manager.
- If you have been in close contact with someone with Covid-19 and been contacted by an NHS Clinical Contact Caseworker (Track and Trace). It is likely under government guidelines that you will need to self-isolate (currently for 14 days). You should raise this with your line manager.

In each of the above cases, arrangements will be made for you to work from home. This may involve reduced hours if, for example, you will have caring responsibilities. Each circumstance will be considered on a case-by-case basis. In all cases where you are in contact with someone infected by or displaying Covid-19 symptoms you must not come into contact with your colleagues and you will not be permitted to return to your usual place of work until 14 days after that person's full recovery (assuming you remain symptom free).

It is advisable for all colleagues that are working from home to fill in a DSE homeworking questionnaire. Facilities will attempt to resolve any issues between 24-48 hour.

### **Travelling/commuting measures**

- Meetings should be held virtually, especially with those outside of the organisation (e.g. candidate interviews and partners).
- Visits to client's premises and travel for business is prohibited at this time. Public transport can be used to travel into the office, where there are no other options. If public transport is the only option possible and

colleagues would prefer to work a staggered shift to avoid peak travel they should contact Business Continuity. There may be a requirement to wear face coverings in public areas and transport, colleagues will need to provide their own masks/coverings for this. We do have a supply of basic level masks we can provide if colleagues are struggling to get hold of them.

- Where possible you should carry hand sanitiser gel containing at least 60% alcohol and use as required. Handwashing should still be undertaken whenever practical.
- It is preferable that colleagues travel alone when using their vehicle. Periodic cleaning of hand contact surfaces of the vehicle is recommended.

### General hygiene rules

- Wash your hands on arriving to your workplace, regularly throughout the day, after using the toilet, before eating and if you cough/sneeze into your hands. Follow the 20-second hand-washing rule. Hand sanitiser stations will be available on each floor.
- Cough/sneeze into your sleeve, preferably into your elbow. If you use a tissue, discard it properly and clean/sanitize your hands immediately.
- Open windows regularly where possible. Where windows do not open, there is a 100% fresh air supply from the mechanical units.
- Avoid touching your face, particularly eyes, nose, and mouth with your hands to help prevent infection.
- If you cough/sneeze regularly (and it is **not** a new persistent cough but a pre-existing issue, for example an allergy) please ensure that you follow the guidance above on coughing/sneezing and, as a courtesy, inform those working with you.
- If you start to exhibit symptoms such as a new persistent cough requiring you, under government guidelines, to self-isolate you should do so promptly and inform your line manager.
- Hand sanitiser stations in all premises are to be used when entering and leaving the building.
- In Capital House the small break out areas are to be used by a maximum of two persons at a time and should always be kept clean. Combined anti-bacterial and anti-viral spray will be available and should be used before and after making use of the facilities. Larger communal areas will be closed until further notice. All other locations you must use your desk to consume your food and drink.
- Measures will be put in place to ensure that the toilet facilities can be used by only one person at a time. You must respect these measures to ensure only one person at a time uses the toilet area.

### Social distancing

- Social distancing at local government guidelines is always maintained.
- You must be vigilant and adhere to all visible measures in place to help maintain social distancing e.g. floor markers and signage.
- There will be a requirement to wear face coverings on site during peak times in the Pandemic, for example during lockdown. This requirement will be for Colleagues to wear a face covering while moving around the premises and Colleagues are only permitted to remove their face covering while sat at their desk. Colleagues exempt from wearing a face covering should notify their Line Manager and HR. Due to an ever-changing situation and restrictions in place, Colleagues will be notified when face coverings are required.
- During periods when face coverings are not mandatory within the office, First Central continues to be supportive of colleagues who choose to wear a face covering while moving around the office.
- While there is a requirement for a one-way route, this will be in effect at Capital House and Exchange Quay, with location specific guidelines provided during inductions to those returning on site.

- Office layout will be reviewed, and changes made to allow for social distancing to be maintained. This will be kept under periodic review and adjusted as appropriate.

All floors will be open to colleagues in both Capital House and Exchange Quay, but colleagues working on site should only visit the floor they have a desk allocated on. All floors will be open at Park Court and colleagues are free to move around the office.

### **Desk space**

- Seating plans will be provided for all locations, with seats allocated to enable adherence to social distancing measures in place at the time. These will be updated and communicated to all colleagues when necessary.
- No personal items, disposable cups or documents are to be left on the desk when you leave it. It is essential that each desk is left completely clear to enable effective cleaning and due to colleagues sharing via the booking approach.
- Colleagues will not be allocated a locker at this stage, but if needed should contact Facilities to arrange this.

### **General arrangements**

There will be clear guidelines in place for those returning to premises in relation to several measures, which will include:

- Food deliveries to First Central premises;
- Kitchen equipment and supplies;
- The use of meeting rooms;
- Visitors and colleagues permitted on site and how to arrange access when required;
- The use of lifts and stairwells;
- Frequency of Facilities colleagues on site at each location;
- The use of paper towels and sanitisers; and
- The handling of post in each location.

Full details of the specific guidelines in place for these measures can be found in the 'Return to Work Guides', which can be obtained from the Business Continuity Team.

### **Support for colleagues**

- Mental Health First Aiders (MHFAs) are contactable on Microsoft Teams and email for colleagues to contact if you are experiencing emotional distress or a mental health issue
- Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) is a free service available to all colleagues to help you deal with personal problems that are impacting you, this is a telephone-based service
- Employee Consultative Committee (ECC) are a point of contact for colleagues to raise any suggestions or recommendations

### **Communication**

We are encouraging managers to conduct regular 1 to 1s – with a key focus being on health, safety and well-being, discussing adjustments, what support might be required to facilitate work, changes in services or procedures and changes to work duties, tasks or patterns.

Whilst some colleagues may return to the workplace, others may be working from home. Regular communications should be maintained by appropriate methods, e.g. Microsoft Teams, email and telephone.

**Raising concerns**

Should you have any concerns relating to your personal circumstances or require clarification on any specific points in this policy please discuss this with your line manager in the first instance.