

Employee Briefing Notes

Covid-19 Update 4

Briefers: Directors / Head of Department

Venue: Teams Calls

Audience: All employees

Date: by Friday 8 January

Guidance notes

- Please conduct these briefings with your whole teams by the end of Friday 8 January
- Please ensure you verbally communicate this briefing to all employees in your team
- If you receive any questions that you cannot answer, please capture them and refer them to the Covid Management Team at covid19@pennon-group.co.uk or 01392 443838

Overall key messages

- As you will be aware, on Monday evening the government announced a new lock-down for England which replaces the tier approach and came into effect on Tuesday and will be in place until at least Monday 15 February. The rapidly rising figures show there's no doubt that the country needs to do all it can to ensure that we can protect the NHS and save lives whilst the vaccine programme is rolled out.
- What doesn't change is that organisations such as ours, who provide critical, national infrastructure continue to have a responsibility to continue to deliver for our customers, whatever the circumstances, whether you work for South West Water, Pennon Water Services or Pennon. So, it is crucial that we do not stop doing anything operationally across our business.
- All our sites, labs, and offices will therefore continue to remain open, and Covid-secure, undertaking the same activities. We are proud that all our operational, front line employees can continue their great work supporting our customers and delivering our essential services. We are grateful to each and every one of you who, day in and day out, have shown their dedication and passion for what they do, and their care for each other.
- We also have a number of teams and individuals who have been able to work effectively from home during this period. The key difference, in line with this latest national lockdown, is that anyone, who can work from home, should now do so, and as a responsible employer, we will make arrangements for you to do so, if not already provided.
- I am aware that some of you may have issues or challenges around childcare during this lockdown period. As a company we want to be as supportive as possible so if you have concerns please speak to your line manager in the first instance. The Employee Relations team can also offer you advice and guidance.
- Please make sure you continue to take every precaution you can, both at work and at home. We are continuing to see cases rise amongst our employees and their families and I want to stress that to make sure our work environments remain Covid-safe, we need your help.
- Please follow the guidance around social distancing, hand washing and face coverings. Follow our seven golden rules to help protect you, your families and your colleagues.

This week's areas of focus are:

1. H&S – our number 1 priority
2. Stay vigilant – don't get complacent
3. Keep our workplaces clean
4. Looking after each other
5. Messaging for specific groups (to be used as relevant)
6. Key Worker Letters
7. Clinically Extremely Vulnerable Employees

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1. Health & Safety – our number 1 priority

- The Health & Safety risk we face from Covid-19 is different to what we normally manage as it does not just impact us at work, but this is one we could easily take home.
- However, one thing the pandemic hasn't changed are the everyday risks that we as employees across the business face, if anything it has made that challenge harder as we try and balance our priorities, changed working patterns and circumstances.
- Unfortunately, we can see this in an increase in lost time injuries across the business during the last year. Behind each number is someone getting hurt, and potentially needing medical help at a time when there are extraordinary pressures on our health care systems.
- For both the everyday risks and Covid threat we must apply the principles set out in HomeSafe: **Assess all risk, Take action, and Follow the Rules** we can significantly reduce the chances of us getting hurt and play our part in protecting ourselves, each other and the NHS.
- Please make sure you keep H&S as your number 1 priority – complete all regular checks as normal, call your H&S rep or the H&S team if you need help and make sure all mandatory training is up to date. Remember, if in doubt... Ask!

2. Stay Vigilant – don't get complacent

- As we have all been hearing in the news, there is a new variant of COVID-19 which is thought to be much easier to catch. This means that more people can become ill in a shorter period of time
- Not only does this mean that more people with COVID-19 may need medical care in hospital, but others who may need hospital care for different reasons may have their treatment delayed due to the lack of hospital beds. This is why it is so important to follow the rules both to protect ourselves, our families and colleagues from COVID-19, and reduce the pressure on the NHS
- About 1 in 3 people who have COVID-19 do not have any symptoms and therefore could be spreading the virus without knowing it. However, if we all follow the COVID-safe rules, of maintaining 2 metres distance from others (or 1 metre when wearing PPE), wearing a face covering and washing our hands regularly for at least 20 seconds, we can all help to do our bit to protect ourselves and others and reduce the spread of the virus

3. Keep our workplaces clean

- Keeping our workplaces clean and frequent handwashing reduces the potential for coronavirus to spread and is a critical part of keeping our workplaces 'Covid-secure'. The cleaning guidance we have issued should be followed closely, with particular attention being paid to frequently touched surfaces and areas where people may congregate such as meeting rooms, kitchen areas, reception areas and welfare facilities
- The general cleaning guidance also includes contact details for Greenham, our preferred supplier of cleaning consumables. Make sure that you have sufficient cleaning supplies in stock locally to support the enhanced cleaning requirements – especially alcohol wipes and hand sanitizer. Please also ensure that general housekeeping is kept under review and offices, desks and work areas are left as tidy and clutter free as possible

4. Look after each other

- The pandemic has impacted all of us in different ways and we need to stick together and look out for each other. A recent report showed that over **16% of adults are showing signs of depression** – and as many as 30% in people under the age of 40.
- So look out for you friends and colleagues – you can learn more about recognising the signs and symptoms of depression or mental health issues by looking at the MIND website at www.mind.org.uk.
- **Remember you all have free access to our Employee Assistance Helpline where you can get help, support and advice from trained counsellors**
- We also have a Homesafe online module all about mental health – and I would encourage you all to complete it to learn more about spotting the signs that you, or someone you know, might be struggling

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5. Messaging for specific groups

There is different messaging to be used for different groups or areas of the business – these are outlined below and should be used as relevant with your teams

Operational Teams

Operations / Field Based Employees:

- Our Operational and field-based teams are the lifeblood of our business and are out and about every day in our region working tirelessly to deliver for our customers. We are all incredibly grateful for the hard work and dedication you all continue to show. Keeping you safe is our number 1 priority, so please do make sure you follow all the rules, and especially: maintain social distancing, wear the right PPE and wash your hands regularly

Operational Management:

- It's also never been more important for operational leaders and managers to continue to be out and about, leading and supporting teams and individuals to deliver. You should be spending the majority of your working week (3+ days) in the field with your teams helping them deliver for our customers. You should make sure employees are following the rules and guidelines and answering any question your teams may have.

Labs:

- Our Lab based teams are crucial for the success of our business and the safety of our customers. We are all incredibly grateful for the hard work and dedication you all continue to show.
- The great work you do can only be done with you being physically in our labs, and keeping you safe is our number 1 priority, so please do make sure you follow all the rules, and especially: maintain social distancing, wear the right PPE and wash your hands regularly

Meter readers:

- Our meter readers should continue their roles as they have been doing in recent months – including not completing any internal household meter readings until further notice.
- The great work you do can only be done with you being physically out and about in our region, and keeping you safe is our number 1 priority, so please do make sure you follow all the rules, and especially: maintain social distancing, wear the right PPE and wash your hands regularly

Contractors:

- Our external contractor partners are crucial to the delivery of many of our essential services and should continue their roles as they have been doing in recent months. We would like to reassure you that all our sites remain open and Covid-safe. All necessary controls and precautions are in place to keep you safe.
- The great work you do can only be done with you being physically out and about in our region, and keeping you safe is our number 1 priority, so please do make sure you follow all the rules, and especially: maintain social distancing, wear the right PPE and wash your hands regularly

Office Based Employees

Firstly, I want to thank you all, whether you have been coming into the office / contact centre etc, working from home or a mixture of the two. Your flexibility and adaptability is hugely appreciated and has ensured we have been able to keep delivering for our customers.

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Now that the new lockdown has started, In general, anyone who can work from home, should now do so, and as a responsible employer, we will make arrangements for you to do so, if not already provided. This includes employees based in our call centres, area offices, head office in Exeter, PWS head office etc

There are two scenarios where employees can come into the office during the lockdown:

1. Business Need:

- a. Where it is essential the employee physically needs to come into the office to complete the work (i.e. control centre)
- b. If an employee is unable to work from home due to IT equipment / connectivity requirements (i.e. no internet at home)

2. Personal Circumstances:

- a. Where an employee cannot work from home due to their personal circumstances (i.e. shared flat, no home office)

If any employee who can work from home wants to come into the workplace, we will of course consider the request and they will need to get Director approval. This can be for either a **business** or **personal** reason and can be on a **temporary, part time** or **permanent** basis. To gain approval you will need to complete a short form that I will send out after this call. Any of you who want to come into the workplace should complete it and send it back to me for approval. It will be logged by our HR team to make sure we have an auditable authorisation trail.

Ultimately, we want to make sure we are balancing personal /business need and the latest lockdown guidelines.

6. Key Worker Letters:

These are not a requirement during this lockdown, however if any of you do require key worker letters, please let me know and I can send a letter to you.

7. Clinically Extremely Vulnerable Employees:

Government advice states that if you are clinically extremely vulnerable you should not leave home for work purposes, even if you are unable to work from home. If you are in this group, you will previously have received a letter from the NHS or from your GP telling you this. The government will be issuing letters with advice over the coming days, but in the meantime please speak to your manager.

8. AOB / Q&A

Please be careful, follow the rules and as always, stay safe and we'll get through this together.