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Dear HR colleague

Firstly, thank you for your continued commitment and work to support our people through this unprecedented time.

In the last few days I have shared with you a number of communications to ensure that you are fully sighted and kept informed of any new developments in our response to COVID-19 and I am sincerely grateful for your ongoing support in this unprecedented situation.

The health and wellbeing of our local communities and all colleagues working across health and care is at the very centre of our collective efforts and attention and I know we will continue to stand alongside our frontline colleagues and do everything in our power to support them.

I appreciate that many of you are already resolving issues together locally and with your ICS/STP leads and Regional Directors of Workforce & OD. I have heard of some fantastic examples of local businesses reaching out directly to the NHS to offer support and facilities, as well as joined up solutions with local authorities to support childcare issues.

As we continue to work at pace with NHS Employers and our other partners, I wanted to share with you some immediate updates:

Access to schools and childcare for children of 'Key Workers'

The following **definition** has been provided by the Government for health and social care:

This includes but is not limited to doctors, nurses, midwives, paramedics, social workers, care workers, and other frontline health and social care staff including volunteers; the support and specialist staff required to maintain the UK's health and social care sector; those working as part of the health and social care supply chain, including producers and distributors of medicines and medical and personal protective equipment.

This definition therefore includes all NHS staff and our colleagues in the partner organisations who support the delivery of healthcare services. Both parents do not have to be key workers to qualify for this support. We must remember that the decision to close schools and nurseries has been made to limit the spread of COVID-19, which means that if it is at all possible for children to be at home, then



they should be. The key worker exemption is designed to enable our NHS people to be able to work and know that their children are being cared for.

We encourage members of staff with dependent children to contact their school or childcare provider to establish what arrangements they and the local authority are planning to have in place from Monday.

This is the **link to the Department for Education's website** for full information and please remember to regularly check as it is likely to be updated:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers>

Key Worker – identification template letter

To help with NHS staff identification for the purposes of childcare and access to supermarkets etc, we are expecting local valid photo security passes to be used. In addition, we've attached at Annex 1 a template letter which may also support your staff to confirm their status as a Key Worker. Many of you will already have instigated this but the template is intended to be helpful if not done already.

Pay, terms and conditions for people returning to the NHS

In collaboration with the Department of Health and Social Care, Public Health England, Health Education England and NHS Employers, and with input from the NHS Staff Council Executive, latest pay, terms and conditions advice is being collated into one central resource for workforce leaders in the NHS. The guidance I hope will be issued early next week, once approved by Ministers.

ESR and recording absence

This is an urgent ask for your help and support so we can track and model workforce data and make corresponding clinical and operational capacity decisions about people needing urgent care.

It is vital that we are able to monitor all COVID-19 related absence and appreciate the EPRR SitRep is an additional ask on top of normal absence-reporting procedures, but currently, too little absence data is recorded if we are to stand this element of the SitRep down. To enable all COVID-19 absence via ESR the following is underway:

- **Non-rostered staff:** ESR has issued guidance (User Notices 2864 and 2868) on this topic. Any type of absence can be recorded as 'related' to COVID-19, whether that be special leave, self-isolation (recorded as Medical suspension with pay) or actual sickness. You may have more detailed local arrangements but we

ask that any absence recorded for non-rostered staff has the 'related reason' set as COVID-19 for consistency.

- **Rostered staff:** we are working with a major e-rostering provider to have a national COVID-19 code which will flow back into the appropriate field in ESR. Please look for further communication from your e-rostering supplier about this.

Vulnerable staff groups

Attached at Annex 2 is a detailed note updating you on the definition of vulnerable staff groups and the action that will be taken the week commencing 23 March. In addition, there are specific actions every employer is being asked to take to support their staff in high and at risk groups.

The NHS Employers website continues to be updated and I encourage you to keep reviewing it: <https://www.nhsemployers.org/covid19>

Looking after staff right across the NHS remains a top priority, and that includes you. Please keep sharing your insights and experiences with each other and with me. There is an incredible wealth of experience and expertise in our professional community and together we can make a difference for all our NHS staff at this critical time.

Best wishes

Prerana Issar