



Serious viral Epidemic or Pandemic policy

1. Introduction

Some infections such as some strains of influenza, SARs or the Coronavirus are highly infectious viral illnesses that have the capacity to spread rapidly. When a new viral strain emerges, one of the following situations may occur:

- A serious epidemic - where a disease infects a significantly greater number of people in the area than is usual, or
- A pandemic - which is an epidemic of global proportions

Such an illness will spread rapidly because people will not have any natural resistance to it. It is difficult to predict the scale, severity and impact of a serious epidemic or pandemic, but research suggests that in the case of a pandemic, it could affect the entire country and that up to half the population could develop the illness. There could also be more than one wave of the illness.

During a serious viral epidemic or pandemic, Stretton Preschool's overall aim will be to encourage staff [and volunteers] to carry on as normal if they are well, while taking additional precautions to protect them from exposure to infection and to lessen the risk of spread to others.

In terms of business continuity, this means that we will seek to sustain our core business and services as far as is practicable and therefore we will continue to operate largely within the existing framework of policies and procedures. However, we recognise that during such times some additional provisions will be required to support staff and volunteers.

2. during a Serious Epidemic or Pandemic

During a recognised viral epidemic or pandemic, Stretton Preschool will implement the following provisions:

2.1 Communications:

Regular communications, guidance, information and support will be made available via the Chief Executive, Head of HR, other members of the SMT, the Communications Manager, line managers, noticeboards, newsletters and website. Staff should monitor these sources closely to stay up to date with what is happening within the workplace, what action is being taken to ensure Stretton Preschool meets its obligations to staff, volunteers, service users and other stakeholders and what action staff themselves should be taking.

2.2 Additional Hygiene Arrangements:

In line with Government and Department of Health guidelines Stretton Preschool will provide, handwashing facilities, antibacterial sanitiser and tissues located throughout its premises and staff will be encouraged and reminded to use these regularly.

All surfaces, door handles, banister rails, telephones, computer keyboards etc. will be cleaned frequently and staff are encouraged to undertake this in their own work area on a daily basis.

All waste bins will be emptied daily.

Staff [and volunteers] will be encouraged and reminded to always use clean tissues or the crook of their elbow to cover their mouth / nose when they cough / sneeze (not to use their hands, a cloth handkerchief or to re-use tissues) and to wash / sanitise their hands regularly and specifically after coughing or sneezing.

2.3 Vaccination

Stretton Preschool may identify certain key staff and arrange for those staff to be given a vaccination (if available) at name of organisation's expense.

This would be a purely voluntary arrangement and staff may refuse to have this if they wish.

2.4 Clients, [Volunteers] and other Visitors

In public-facing areas Stretton Preschool will provide antibacterial sanitiser, disposable tissues and covered bins for public use, and notices will be posted to encourage the public to use these items.

Where possible some separation between staff and the public will be encouraged for example by use of physical barriers. Please note that it is not Stretton Preschool policy to issue or allow the use of face masks; this will however remain under review and will be dependent on medical advice and availability.

It may become necessary for visiting at Stretton Preschool premises to be discontinued except in exceptional circumstances for the duration of the epidemic / pandemic. In these exceptional circumstances:

- Visitors will be asked if they have any symptoms before being allowed into Stretton Preschool premises and if they do they will be refused entry.
- Visitors will be asked to sanitise their hands before entering name of organisation's premises.
- Visitors will be confined to meeting rooms where at all possible.

2.5 Face to Face Meetings

Travel should be avoided unless absolutely essential and especially if the journey requires the use of public transport.

Face to face meetings should be avoided wherever possible and use of telephone / teleconferencing / email facilities will be encouraged.

Where face to face meetings are unavoidable, Stretton Preschool' meeting rooms should be used which will have sanitiser pumps /tissues / waste bins provided and will be cleaned daily.

2.6 Staff Identified as Potentially At-risk

Staff at risk of developing viral-related complications (e.g. pregnant workers and those with compromised immune systems) will be reassigned from high-risk work sites and locations. If this is not possible it may be necessary to ask such staff to work from home, or remain at home until it is deemed safe for them to return to the workplace.

3. Staff with Symptoms

The most significant symptoms of a viral illness generally are the sudden onset of: fever, cough or shortness of breath; other symptoms may include: headache, tiredness, chills, aching muscles, sore throat, runny nose, sneezing, loss of appetite.

Specific viral infections may produce a different range of symptoms; Stretton Preschool will ensure that the symptoms of the current illness are clearly identified to staff.

3.1 Whilst at Work - Coronavirus situation

If an employee feels ill with symptoms consistent with the illness, it is important that they do not simply carry on working. They should:

- Get at least 2 metres (7 feet) away from other people.
- Go to a room or area behind a closed door.
- Avoid touching anything.

- Cough or sneeze into a tissue and put it in a bin, or, cough and sneeze into the crook of their elbow.
- Using their own mobile call either 111 for NHS advice or 999 if they're seriously ill and their life is at risk.
- Tell the operator their symptoms, and if applicable what country they have returned from in the last 14 days.
- Follow the advice given.
- Using their own mobile, phone 01733 746521/ 01733 248048 or 07939488990 to say that they are ill and currently self-isolating at work. If the reception team cannot be contacted then they should phone their line manager.
- Update Reception / Line Manager on NHS advice given and follow this advice.

3.2 Whilst not at Work - Coronavirus Situation

If an employee develops symptoms whilst not at work, they should adhere to the following advice:

- Phone NHS 111 and follow advice.
- 01733 746521/ 01733 248048 or 07939488990 and their line manager that they are ill using the recognised process.
- Stay at home and until they are fully recovered and their GP has confirmed they are no longer infectious.

As part of the reporting procedure, Reception / Line Manager will seek the permission of the employee to inform their colleagues that they are suffering from the illness. This is really a private matter for the individual, but allowing colleagues to know about it will allow them to look out for early symptoms in themselves, and also allow any who may be at-risk in some way (e.g. pregnant) to seek medical advice.

3.3 Volunteers with symptoms – Coronavirus Situation

If a Volunteer develops symptoms whilst volunteering they should:

- Get at least 2 metres (7 feet) away from other people.
- Go to a room or area behind a closed door.
- Avoid touching anything.
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue and put it in a bin, or, cough and sneeze into the crook of their elbow.
- Using their own mobile call either 111 for NHS advice or 999 if they're seriously ill and their life is at risk.
- Tell the operator their symptoms, and if applicable what country they have returned from in the last 14 days.
- Follow the advice given.
- Using their own mobile, phone their Volunteer Champion and/or Volunteer Coordinator to say that they are ill and currently self-isolating at work and tell them the advice given by the NHS advice.
- The Volunteer Champion or Volunteer Coordinator will implement local action to facilitate the self-isolation of the volunteer at home and any other local action that may be required.

If a Volunteer develops symptoms whilst not volunteering, they should adhere to the following advice:

- Phone NHS 111 and follow advice.
- Contact their Volunteer Champion and/or Volunteer Coordinator to say that they are ill and currently self-isolating at work and tell them the advice given by the NHS advice.

- Stay at home and until they are fully recovered and their GP has confirmed they are no longer infectious.

As part of the reporting procedure, the Volunteer Coordinator will seek the permission of the volunteer to inform their colleagues that they are suffering from the illness. This is really a private matter for the individual, but allowing colleagues to know about it will allow them to look out for early symptoms in themselves, and also allow any who may be at-risk in some way (e.g. pregnant) to seek medical advice.

4. Entitlement to Sick Pay - During Coronavirus Outbreak

If an employee has been told by a medical professional, NHS 111 to self-isolate or is confirmed to having Coronavirus.

The current advice from the Government is that if NHS 111 or a doctor advises you to self-isolate, you are entitled to Statutory Sick Pay. This will be paid in line with current Government guidance. This includes individuals who may be a carrier of COVID-19 who may not have symptoms. Stretton Preschool will use its discretion around the need for medical evidence for a period of absence where an employee is advised to self-isolate in the current exceptional circumstances. Employees can self-certify for the first 7 days as per normal. Stretton Preschool contractual sick pay will operate as normal and as detailed in your contract of employment.

5. Staff Who Have Difficulty Attending Work (where they don't have symptoms) - due to Coronavirus

In general staff have no right to refuse to attend work during an epidemic / pandemic unless there is a clear health and safety risk. Their employment contract will oblige them to carry out their normal duties and refusal to do so may put them in breach of their contract. However name of organisation is aware that certain situations can occur and these will be dealt with on a case by case basis:

5.1 Public transport is shut down

Where an employee has difficulty getting to work because of a failure in the public transport system due to the epidemic / pandemic, they will be encouraged to seek other methods of getting to work. In exceptional circumstances it may be possible for some staff to work from home during this period of difficulty, to vary their start and end times, or to take annual or unpaid leave. Employees will not be paid if they fail to turn up for work and should discuss options with the Manager and their line manager as soon as possible.

5.2 The employee reports that a member of their household has been diagnosed with the illness but that they themselves are OK and would be willing to attend work

Stretton Preschool recognises it has a duty of care to its workforce and the individual will be advised to remain at home until the ill relative/themselves are no longer infectious. However name of organisation may wish to discuss the possibility of the employee working from home. Under these circumstances the employee will receive their full pay as if they had been working normally. If the employee is unable to work from home, then they may be encouraged to take annual or unpaid leave.

5.3 The employee reports that their child or other dependant has the illness and they are unable to arrange care at short-notice:

Under these circumstances Stretton Preschool recognises that the employee has a statutory right to a reasonable period of unpaid time off to care for these dependants. This is limited to sufficient time off to deal with the immediate issue and to sort-out short-term caring arrangements; the individual should discuss their situation with the Head of HR and their line manager. In these circumstances, Stretton Preschool will allow a reasonable amount of unpaid time off to be taken. However if the sick individual is a member of the employee's household then the provisions of 5.2 above would apply. See Stretton Preschool 'Time off for Dependents Policy'.

5.4 The employee asks not to attend work because of fear of contracting illness:

The employee is contractually bound to attend work, and not doing so in these circumstances may be dealt with through Stretton Preschool disciplinary procedures. However, it should be understood that this is an exceptional event and Stretton Preschool will take reasonable action dependent on the degree of risk. If Stretton Preschool is convinced that the individual has psychological or physical reasons whereby they should not attend, then it may decide to agree to a period of annual / unpaid leave, or working from home arrangements with the employee concerned.

5.5 The employee has school-age children and the school is closed due to the epidemic / pandemic:

The provisions of 5.3 above would apply

5.6 If an employee is not sick but Stretton Preschool tells them not to come to work as a precaution

If an employee is not sick but Stretton Preschool tells them not to come to work, they may be asked to work from home, but in all cases will be paid their normal pay.

6. Working flexibly

The impact of any epidemic / pandemic will normally mean an increased workload due to a reduction in the actual staff available for work. It will therefore be essential that we maximise the capacity of our available workforce by asking staff to work more flexibly and /or differently. Therefore Stretton Preschool reserves the right to ask staff to undertake one or more of the following options:

- work additional hours to cover for sick colleagues
- work more flexibly as required
- work in a different job role for a period (with appropriate training)
- work from an alternative location, or even from home if appropriate
- cancel planned annual leave

The use of these flexible work practices will vary depending on the seriousness of the staff shortages and the needs of the business at that time. Staff will be paid based on the additional hours and responsibilities they undertake.

7.0 Using annual leave

Stretton Preschool's annual leave policy applies.

If staff have annual leave authorised for a holiday but are unable to travel either because their destination is a restricted area as identified by the Government or through personal choice, then they can request to work over the proposed leave period and that their leave be reinstated. Approval of this request is at the discretion of the line manager.

Both line managers and staff are reminded of the restrictions that apply at the end of year to the number of annual leave days that can be carried to the following year i.e. 5 days for full-time staff and normal weekly working hours for part time staff. Any annual leave remaining untaken above these limits at year end will be lost.

8.0 Post Epidemic/Pandemic Considerations

After the first wave of such an illness Stretton Preschool acknowledges that staff will need time to completely recover their full fitness and performance levels. Managers will ensure that staff who had been asked to work extended hours, or were denied their planned leave are given annual leave or TOIL where at all possible. However, the possibility of subsequent waves has to be kept in mind and Stretton Preschool will discuss with staff the lessons learnt from the current epidemic / pandemic and continue with preparations required to cope with subsequent waves.

This policy was adopted by

Stretton Pre-School

On

01 November 2022

Date to be reviewed

Annually

Signed on behalf of the provider

Name of signatory

e.greenfield
Emily Greenfield

Role of signatory

Chair person

