**CORONAVIRUS (COVID- 19) GUIDANCE FOR EMPLOYERS**

A number of Practices have been in touch with the LMC HR team over the last few days seeking specific guidance on the impact of coronavirus on sickness absence and sick pay in the workplace.

In providing advice on these matters the HR team are relying significantly on the following sources of guidance which are now attached for the benefit of Practices: -

* Guidance provided via the [ACAS website](https://www.acas.org.uk/coronavirus)
* Freeths Employment Law [bulletin](https://www.freeths.co.uk/2020/03/06/employment-law-review-march-2020/#a) March 2020
* Freeths [Q and A](https://www.freeths.co.uk/2020/03/16/coronavirus-qa-for-employers/)
* HR advice on self-isolation – ***see following page***

All the above reflect the basic legal position and continuing updated guidance and clarification. The guidance applies to all staff under a contract of service including salaried GPs, although actual salaried GP entitlement may be different in line with the provisions of the Model BMA Handbook. For Locum GP staff, where they are self-employed, entitlements will be defined in their individual contracts for services, although in most cases there may not be any entitlement contractually to sick pay if the doctor falls ill, has unfulfilled sessions, or takes leave. Where Locums are accessed via agencies, the contract with the agency will normally define Practice obligations in terms of payment, if any, where locum doctors are unable to fulfil commitments.

Given the changing and developing circumstances in the present situation that we are facing, it is highly likely there will be need for judgements to be made on a case by case basis, and the HR team are available to provide advice and support in determining individual responses consistent with the available guidance on a case by case basis.

**HR interpretation of latest SSP and Coronavirus (COVID-19)**

**Self-isolation**

* Anybody instructed to self-isolate by a medical professional or NHS 111 will receive pay during the period of self-isolation; this will last as long as there is a medical recommendation for self-isolation and/or subsequent sickness absence.
* For someone with initial symptoms of coronavirus, who sees a need for voluntary self-isolation, this should last initially for 7 days for someone living alone, or 14 days in a family situation. According to guidance in many cases 7 days will be sufficient to allow symptoms to pass for a single person, or 14 days in the family scenario.
* If symptoms extend beyond 7/14 days, the individual should make contact with NHS 111 for further advice and/or clinical testing and intervention.
* Therefore, those individuals who enter voluntary self-isolation are entitled to SSP for either the 7- or 14-day period. Fit notes/ letter requests/ forms for investigation etc. to cover this time, or longer, if told to do so, can be obtained electronically or through the post via the NHS 111 service, GP or waived by the employer. Practice’s need to exercise flexibility if they require evidence from the employee/ worker who are self-isolating in terms of providing fit notes for coronavirus related sickness absences. Where appropriate, staff members can obtain an isolation note from: <https://111.nhs.uk/isolation-note> and a checking service for employers is due to be introduced online here: <https://111.nhs.uk/isolation-note/check>
* Where an individual is not sick, but where the employer deems it appropriate for that individual not to work in the circumstances then the individual will receive their usual pay.
* General practices are advised to consider the SSP relief package which is being introduced by the government.