**Office Notice 8/2020**

**An Phriomh-Oifig Staidrimh**

**Central Statistics Office**

**Protocol if a staff member is ill in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic**

*Updated 28 September 2021 in line with revised CSO COVID-19 response procedures based on case experience, updated public health advice and the current Work Safely Protocol*

The following protocol is in place should a staff member be infected (or suspected of infection) with the COVID-19 virus. The successful uptake and progress of the COVID-19 vaccination programme has greatly reduced this risk. However, this document applies to all staff, those working onsite, in the field and from home. This protocol is under constant review and may be amended based on experience or updated medical advice as the situation continues to evolve.

At the outset, it is important to say that we will respect the staff member’s confidentiality in any such incident as far as possible. However, this requires everyone - the individual, their manager and their colleagues, to actively respect this confidentiality too. We do not want to stigmatise, blame, create fear or cause additional stress to anyone involved. What is needed is understanding, support and empathy. You should read this document from two perspectives – if a colleague was affected and if it was you who was affected.

All appropriate measures will be taken in relation to the health and safety of other staff. Where required, CSO will issue relevant communications to staff. As described below, the HSE will contact all of those that need to be contacted and will give them appropriate advice.

It is not possible to prepare a protocol for every eventuality in every CSO location. This protocol can be adapted to the actual circumstances with the overriding priority being the dignity and safety of everyone involved. Each Head of Division (HOD) should ensure that managers within their division take time to ‘walk through’ this protocol with their respective staff so that everyone is aware of the necessary procedures and any local arrangements that may have to apply. For instance, if the Head of Division (HOD) was absent (or was the affected person) another staff member would need to take over some of the functions set out in this document.

Please also remember that although this protocol is being put in place by the CSO for the good of all staff, individuals bear a personal responsibility in making sure their colleagues are kept safe. The importance of staff exercising their own judgement and taking personal responsibility cannot be overstated. Good hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette, physical distancing, knowing the symptoms of COVID-19, and knowing what to do immediately when experiencing symptoms, is how every staff member can help suppress COVID-19 in the workplace.

**COVID-19 Incident Team**

A COVID-19 Incident Team has been formed to implement the CSO response to COVID-19 cases and suspected cases. The team is made up of staff from HR and Facilities Management.

Staff reporting a COVID-19 case should do so using **alerthr@cso.ie**

The team will advise and support managers in ensuring an appropriate approach is taken for each case. The team will carry out a risk assessment to ensure any required follow up actions are identified and implemented.

For each specific case an after-action review will be carried out by a group made up of the Incident Team, the relevant Heads of Division and a Lead Worker Representative.

The ongoing COVID-19 situation remains a time of uncertainty which can result in feelings of anxiety and stress. The Civil Service Employee Assistance Service (CSEAS) is available to provide support to all staff at this time. Tel: 0761 00 00 30 or log onto www.cseas.per.gov.ie to contact an Employee Assistance Officer in confidence.

**Staff who have** [**symptoms of COVID-19**](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/covid19/symptoms/overview/) **or have been advised to restrict their movements, should not attend the office or conduct fieldwork. Staff who have symptoms should contact the HSE/their GP to arrange a test.**

**COVID-19 Scenarios**

Three scenarios covered in this protocol. There can of course be other scenarios, but these guidelines will serve as the basis of the CSO response. The three scenarios are:

1. a staff member contacts their manager from home to let them know that they *have symptoms* of COVID-19
2. a staff member advises from home that they are a *confirmed case* of COVID-19
3. a staff member/visitor shows symptoms of COVID-19 *while at work*

**Scenario 1**

**A staff member contacts their manager from home to let them know that they have symptoms of COVID-19**

The manager should advise the staff member that they should not attend the office and that they should seek medical advice.

Managers should also ask the member of staff to maintain communication with them requesting to be kept informed if, ultimately, they are diagnosed with COVID-19. The manager should ask the staff member to give the manager’s contact details as a contact point should the HSE decide that the case requires contact tracing through the employer. As necessary, if subsequently contacted by the HSE, the manager should liaise with HR.

The manager should refer the staff member to the most recent [DPER FAQs](https://www.gov.ie/en/news/092fff-update-on-working-arrangements-and-leave-associated-with-covid-19-fo/) which outline working arrangements and leave associated with COVID-19. The general principles applying to the management of sick leave, for example the requirement of staff to contact managers and for ongoing contact with staff who are on special leave for this purpose, will apply. If the staff member is capable of doing so, the staff member may carry out duties from home.

The line manager should alert HR to the situation using alerthr@cso.ie

If the staff member is subsequently diagnosed with COVID-19, see Scenario 2.

**Scenario 2**

**A staff member contacts their manager from home and advises that they are a confirmed case of COVID-19 infection**

The staff member should inform their manager of any instructions they have received from the HSE. In such a case, the staff member should follow all advice and should not attend for work until cleared to do so per medical advice.

The manager should ask the staff member to give the manager’s contact details as a contact point should the HSE decide that the case requires contact tracing through the employer. As necessary, if subsequently contacted by the HSE, the manager should liaise with HR.

The line manager should alert HR to the situation (using the email AlertHR@cso.ie) who in turn will update the COVID-19 Incident Team and the Management Board.

The manager should refer the staff member to the most recent DPER FAQs relating to working arrangements and leave associated with COVID-19. The staff member should maintain communication with their manager throughout their absence.

Follow-up actions in the workplace:

If the staff member with confirmed COVID-19 was not at a CSO location in the 14 days prior to their positive diagnosis, then no further actions are required in the workplace.

**Onsite actions**

If the person was at work in the 14 days prior to COVID-19 being confirmed, then the following actions need to be taken.

1. HR will run a contact log report for any staff member who advises that they have been diagnosed with COVID-19 and have been in a CSO location in the last 14 days. In line with public health advice, HR will identify any potential close contacts for the period 48 hrs prior to symptom onset and provide this information to the HSE to assist with contact tracing. In line with HSE advice, close contacts who are fully vaccinated and do not have symptoms are not required to restrict their movements. Staff should follow [HSE guidance for close contacts](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/covid19/contact-tracing/close-contact/). Staff should be told that if they develop symptoms they are to self-isolate and seek medical advice.
2. Public Health officials will also follow up with the staff member concerned in order to identify and trace known contacts. This may include requesting access to the Daily Contact Logs of the person concerned. Colleagues identified as close contacts will be contacted individually by Public Health and advised of the appropriate follow-up actions to be taken by them. The manager and colleagues should treat this process sensitively as it is a very worrying time for people. As much flexibility and support as possible should be given to staff. Throughout this process everyone should respect confidentiality to avoid causing unnecessary worry. Managers should in turn ask these members of staff to maintain communication with them on a regular basis.
3. The COVID-19 Incident Team will also complete a risk assessment as quickly as possible and ensure all required follow up actions are implemented.
4. The Line Manager should complete a questionnaire with the staff member that will provide information to assist with the implementation of control measures within the office. The questionnaire is available in the [Manager’s Responsibilities section](https://www.cso.ie/en/aboutus/covid-19staffinformation/managersguide/managerresponsibilties/) of the COVID-19 Staff Information page. The completed questionnaire should be sent to alerthr@cso.ie as soon as possible.
5. Facilities Management will organise the appropriate cleaning/disinfection of the workspace and any common workplace areas (e.g. lift, toilets, canteen etc.) in line with [HSPC guidelines](https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/guidance/cleaningguidance/). Staff may need to stay at home until this is complete and the area fully ventilated. They will be notified by HR that they can then return to work when this process is complete.
6. The Line Manager should stay in regular contact with the staff member who is a confirmed case.
7. HODs should put in place alternative work arrangements for staff who are asked to stay at home (i.e. working from home arrangements).
8. HR will issue general communication to all relevant staff informing them of the control measures implemented on the foot of the case.
9. Post hoc the COVID-19 Incident Team will review all actions taken during the case and update procedure if necessary.

**Scenario 3**

**A staff member becomes ill while in work**

**REMEMBER - If a staff member were to become incapacitated in the workplace, an ambulance should be called immediately - whatever the cause.**

If a staff member becomes ill at work with symptoms of COVID-19, the following procedure should be followed. The staff member should immediately report their health concerns to their Line Manager. The Line Manager should contact one of the following members of the COVID-19 Assessment team who will advise the Line Manager on the protocol to be followed.

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| CONTACT | EMAIL | PHONE NUMBER |
| Catherine Desmond | catherine.desmond@cso.ie | 087 2848986 |
| Deirdre Harte | deirdre.harte@cso.ie | 086 1672611 |
| Eily Fitzpatrick | eily.fitzpatrick@cso.ie | 085 8718970 |

If the Line Manager is unavailable, the person should contact one of the above listed staff who will advise on the protocol and will appoint another person in the vicinity to take the role of the Line Manager.

**Isolate staff member to minimise possibility of transmission**

The staff member should isolate themselves from colleagues in the first instance. In most circumstances this will mean going home. However, where this is not immediately possible then the person should move to a designated space away from colleagues until transport home can be arranged. If the staff member occupies a single occupancy office, they should remain in the office. If the person is working in an open plan area the Line Manager should isolate the employee by accompanying the individual to the designated isolation room. The individual should be provided with a mask to be worn when in common areas and while exiting the premises. The Line Manager should contact Facilities Management if there are no masks readily available to them.

**Arrange transport**

The Line Manager should keep at least 2 metres away from the symptomatic person and ensure that others maintain a distance of at least 2 metres from the symptomatic person at all times. The Line Manager should initially assess whether the unwell individual can immediately be directed to go home, call their doctor and continue self-isolation at home. They should avoid touching people, surfaces and objects. Advice should be given to the unwell individual to cover their mouth and nose with the disposable tissue provided when they cough or sneeze and put the tissue in the waste bag provided. If advised to go home, the Line Manager should, where possible, arrange for someone in their household to collect them. Public transport of any kind should not be used. If it is not possible to contact someone in the staff member’s household, the line manager should contact HR to arrange transport.

**COVID-19 Isolation Rooms**

The CSO has designated specific rooms as COVID-19 Isolation Rooms (CIR) in each of the Offices which are to be used for the isolation of employees, suspected of displaying COVID-19 symptoms. Their purpose is to aid in preventing the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace. Each CIR is equipped with PPE including face masks, gloves, tissues and hand sanitiser.

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| LOCATION | COVID-19 ISOLATION ROOM |
| CORK | First Aid Room - First Floor South Wing |
| ARDEE ROAD | First Aid Room - First Floor  |
| SWORDS | First Aid Room |

(Note: The CSO has back up first aid rooms available in each building which can be used for other first aid cases if necessary. These rooms are stocked with a first aid box and anti-viral/anti-bacterial wipes. These serve as additional CIRs if required for contingencies).

Once the staff member and workplace are deemed safe and secure, all actions from Scenario 2 should be followed. This includes providing information to staff member and line manager, as well as onsite actions.

**Field staff**

If a member of field staff develops the symptoms of COVID-19 while working in the field, they should isolate themselves from other people in the first instance. In most cases this will mean going home. However, if this is not immediately possible, then the person should remain in their car until alternative transport home arrangements can be arranged by the Line Manager if necessary.

Once the staff member is deemed safe and secure, all relevant actions from scenario 2 should be followed.

**Visitor/Contractor**

If a member visitor or contractor develops the symptoms of COVID-19 while working in a CSO location, they should follow the procedure outlined in scenario 3. The role of Line Manager will be taken by their CSO contact as identified in the Visitor/Contractor COVID-19 questionnaire that they completed on arrival. Facilities management retain these questionnaires. The CSO contact should also inform the visitor’s employer of the situation.

**Managers, please bring this Office Notice to the attention of all eligible officers without delay, including eligible officers not currently on Lotus Notes, and staff on annual leave or sick leave**.

Marie Creedon

HR Manager

28 September 2021