**Covid-19 Paid Special Leave Arrangements: Colleagues with Caring Responsibilities**

1. As part of our ongoing response to Covid-19, we are committed to supporting colleagues to ensure they can balance their personal and work commitments and adapt to changes as they emerge. This guidance sets out the continued provision for support to staff with caring responsibilities. It will be updated in line with any change to Scottish Government route map for moving out of lockdown.

**Who is this guidance for?**

1. It is for all colleagues, SPS staff and MSPs’ staff, with caring responsibilities.

**Why is this guidance important?**

1. We appreciate that the reopening of schools and caring facilities has greatly reduced the challenges associated with simultaneously working from home and caring for children or other vulnerable or elderly dependants. However, we know that as infections rates fluctuate, local restrictions will be put in place to help control the spread of the infection.
2. We recognise the impact this can have on colleagues and we are committed to supporting them to balance their personal and work commitments. If a school or caring facility is directly impacted by Covid-19, for example, if a school requires to close for a deep clean, or your child or dependant is required to self-isolate, this may present ongoing concerns for colleagues with managing their caring responsibilities.

**How will this be achieved?**

1. We understand there is no one size that fits all. That is why we have taken the appropriate steps to support you to have a conversation with your manager or employing MSP should you be affected by Covid-19.
2. If you are unable to carry out your normal contracted hours because your caring responsibilities have been affected by Covid-19, you should discuss this with your manager or employing MSP and agree how and when your duties will be carried out. This could mean spreading your hours over different times or days of the week or adapting your workload to fit around your caring responsibilities.
3. Wellbeing guidance for [SPS staff](https://www.parliament.scot/StaffAndManagementResources/Guidance_for_managers_to_support_the_health_safety_and_wellbeing_of_their_staff.docx) and [MSPs’ staff](https://coronavirus-msp.info/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Guidance-to-support-the-health-safety-and-wellbeing-of-staff_MSP-Staff.docx) is in place to help facilitate these ongoing conversations.

**What should I do?**

1. Where it is not possible for you to fulfil your contracted hours/duties because your caring responsibilities have been affected by Covid-19, you can request up 10 days paid special leave to your manager or employing MSP. This is broken down into hours and is pro-rated for part time staff. If you require a longer period to help you manage your caring responsibilities, you should raise this with your Group Head or employing MSP so that all reasonable steps can be taken to manage your circumstances. This is separate to our normal paid special leave arrangements.
2. It’s important that you continue to keep your manager or employing MSP informed of any changes so that the appropriate support can be provided. We are aware that the situation can change rapidly, and this reflects the need to have ongoing conversations through your wellbeing plan. Managers and MSPs are encouraged to adopt a flexible approach towards supporting your needs if your circumstances change.
3. During this time, you should also continue to exercise judgement, and balance this with personal wellbeing by using your annual leave and flexi leave as normal.

**How will the policy be applied?**

1. To ensure consistency of application of the support available to colleagues with caring responsibilities, details of the arrangements that are available are captured below:

**Scenario 1 – you can maintain the same working arrangements**.

This would likely be the case where:

* No dependents require any more care than they would ordinarily need.
* Child/ren is likely to require less direct care and supervision due to age and needs.
* There is a partner/co parent/other with whom to share the caring responsibility.

Action **-** no action required

**Scenario 2 – you can undertake work and same number of hours with some working pattern** **adjustments**

This would likely be the case where:

* Dependent(s) need additional care, but it is minimal and can be managed using an adjusted working pattern.
* Child/ren may require some direct care and supervision for some of the day, however it is possible to undertake work at key intervals or periods throughout the day, that are different to the existing working pattern.

Action - you should discuss the situation with your manager or employing MSP to see if there are any changes you might need to make to your existing arrangements to enable you to work, such as working at times of the day, week, evening, or in short blocks of time.

**Scenario 3 – you can undertake work but over fewer hours than your normal contracted hours.**

This would likely be the case where:

* Dependent(s) need significant additional care.
* Child/ren may require direct supervision or care.
* There is a partner/co-parent/other who can share responsibilities but is also working from home.

Action – you should discuss the situation with your manager or employing MSP to identify if there are any changes you might need to make to your existing arrangements to enable you to work, such as working at times of the day, week, evening, or in short blocks of time. You should also apply for hours not worked.

**Scenario 4 – you are unable to undertake any work due to full time caring responsibilities**

This would likely be the case where:

* Dependent needs constant care.
* Child/ren needs constant supervision.
* There are no alternatives for care provision available.

Action – you should discuss the situation with your manager or employing MSP and apply for days not worked up to a maximum of 10 days, pro rata. If you have exhausted your entitlement to 10 days paid special leave, your manager should raise this with your Group Head or employing MSP. All reasonable steps will be taken to enable you to manage your personal circumstances.

**How do I update TRS if I work outwith my standard days/times (for SPS staff only)?**

1. You should continue to record the hours you work on TRS. Changes have been made to TRS to ensure you can clock hours outwith your standard working times and days (other than weekends and public/privilege holidays) as required. For example, if you normally work 22 hours over Tuesday to Thursday but want to work the same hours over Monday to Friday, this will not generate an exception/unauthorised overtime.

**How will paid special leave be recorded (for SPS staff only)?**

1. Any paid special absence under this policy will be noted as ‘Covid-19 Paid Special Leave’ within TRS by your manager.

**What support is available?**

1. Your Group Head or employing MSP will seek advice from HR to ensure the policy is being applied fairly and consistently and that decisions made comply with legal requirements. HR can also provide advice to you and your manager or employing MSP in relation to paid special leave on a case by case basis.

**What further information and support is available?**

1. You may find the following policies helpful:
* [Paid Special Leave Policy (for SPS staff)](https://www.spstaffhandbook.com/special-leave)
* [Family Care Leave Policy](https://www.spstaffhandbook.com/being-a-parent)
* [Remote Working: Guidance for Staff](https://www.spstaffhandbook.com/probation)