



**Oifig an Stiúrthóra Náisiúnta, Acmhainní Daonna**

Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhísí Sláinte  
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**To:** Chief Executive Officer  
Each National Director  
Each Assistant National Director HR  
Each Hospital Group CEO  
Each Hospital Group Director of HR  
Each Chief Officer CHO  
Each CHO Heads of HR  
Each CEO Section 38 Agencies  
Each HR Manager Section 38 Agencies  
Each Employee Relations Manager  
Each Group Director of Nursing & Midwifery  
Each Group Director of Midwifery  
Each Clinical Director

**From:** Anne Marie Hoey, National Director Human Resources

**Date:** 29<sup>th</sup> April 2020

**Re:** HR Circular 033/2020: Working arrangements for those with caring arrangements during COVID-19

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Dear Colleagues

I write further to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) revised Guidance and FAQs for Public Service Employers during COVID-19 in relation to working arrangements and temporary assignments across the Public Service, including updates to 28<sup>th</sup> April 2020.

## **Employees with caring arrangements**

In circumstances where one parent/guardian/partner is an essential healthcare worker, the other parent/guardian/partner will be supported by their public sector employer to remain at home to care for the child(ren) so as to ensure that the essential healthcare worker is able to go to work. Managers should engage with relevant employees in this regard so that appropriate arrangements can be put in place. In the first instance, flexible working arrangements will be put in place for the other parent/ guardian/partner such as working from home or working adjusted hours/ shifts. Though not anticipated, in the event that flexible arrangements do not allow the essential healthcare worker to attend work it will be dealt with on a case by case basis.

There is no special paid leave available for COVID-19 caring arrangements during this time. All forms of flexible working must be considered including working from home where possible and/or working adjusted hours to facilitate employees to balance work and caring responsibilities. If employees are not set up for remote working at present, they need to continue to remain available to work, and their employer/manager should identify work that can be given to them.

Employers/managers are required to identify and engage with employees on alternative arrangements e.g. staggering hours, wider opening hours including weekend work, and temporary assignment to another role.

If employees cannot work outside the home and cannot perform their current role remotely, the employee is still to be considered as actively on duty and available to work<sup>1</sup>. Employers/managers are required to be flexible and innovative in terms of ensuring that employees remain as productive as possible during this time and this may include assigning work outside the employee's usual core duties, ie potentially a new role. This should be continuously reviewed by management to ensure that employees are placed where they are most needed to deliver critical services. There will be temporary assignments in the public sector under the principle of one Public Service to deal with this crisis. What this means is that any employee can be assigned work outside their usual core duties/a new role as required by the Public Service.

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<sup>1</sup> As employees in this situation may be assigned alternative duties at any stage during COVID-19, they will continue to be paid their normal basic salary and fixed allowances (where applicable) pending such assignment. Employees in this situation are considered to be available for duty and therefore should **not** be treated as being on special leave with pay for COVID-19, sick leave, annual leave or any other type of leave (unless such leave was already pre-booked/confirmed in the normal manner).



Any employee who wishes to avail of existing leave allowances during this time should submit their request to their manager in the normal manner. This includes annual leave, parental leave and other leave schemes to which the employee may be entitled. Managers should consider such requests in light of service requirements and the employee's particular circumstances.

It is acknowledged that staff and managers have worked collaboratively in recent weeks and remain committed to doing so. This means being as flexible as possible across our service delivery system to ensure that issues relating to supporting child care arrangements are balanced with our responsibilities to provide critical health services during this pandemic.

Yours sincerely



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**Anne Marie Hoey**  
National Director Human Resources



Need information and advice on COVID-19 Go to [www.hse.ie/coronavirus](http://www.hse.ie/coronavirus)