



Direct Payment Fact sheet: Advice & Guidance for people during the Coronavirus crisis.

As a direct payment recipient we recommend that you keep yourself updated about the latest Government information and guidance regarding the Coronavirus (COVID-19).

Whilst we do not expect a worst case scenario, the council are making plans to ensure we are as prepared as possible, should that be needed.

The delay phase is both the national and local priority at the moment and the purpose of this fact sheet is to let you know what you can do to keep yourself, and others who support you, safe.

What you need to know as an employer.

Our general advice is that it is good practice for everyone to:

- keep everyone updated on actions being taken to reduce risks of exposure within the household.
- make sure everyone's contact numbers and emergency contact details are up to date
- consider extra precautions for PAs who might be more vulnerable, for example if someone is pregnant, aged 70 or over, or has a pre-existing health condition

- make sure everyone knows how to spot symptoms of coronavirus and are clear on any relevant processes, for example sickness reporting and sick pay, and procedures in case your PA shows symptoms of the virus
- make sure there are clean places to wash hands with hot water and soap, and encourage everyone to wash their hands regularly
- if possible provide hand sanitiser and tissues for your PA and encourage them to use them
- keep up to date with the [latest government coronavirus advice on GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/coronavirus)

Q1 What happens if my PA needs to self-isolate? Will they be paid and how much do I pay them?

All PAs must receive any Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) they are entitled to from day one if they need to self-isolate, as a result of:

- having coronavirus
- having coronavirus symptoms, for example a high temperature or new continuous cough

- coming into close contact with anybody who has coronavirus symptoms
- having been told to self-isolate by a doctor or NHS 111

Remember that if someone has symptoms, everyone in their household must self-isolate for 14 days.

If a PA cannot work, for whatever reason, they must tell their employer as soon as possible giving a clear reason and how long they're likely to be off work.

The employer will need to be flexible if they require evidence from their PA. For example, someone might not be able to provide a sick note (fit note) if they've been told to self-isolate for more than 7 days.

Use this link to find out: [More information about statutory sick pay for those affected by coronavirus](#)

Q2 What happens if the employer chooses to go into self-isolation? Will the PA be paid?

An employer may decide to go into self-isolation to protect themselves or a vulnerable family member. The PA will still be paid their contracted hours as they are remaining in employment. If the PA works variable hours, the payroll service will calculate their average hours over the past 12 weeks to calculate payments.

Consideration should be given to alternative tasks that the PA can undertake, for example, going shopping, posting mail and they should keep in regular contact by phone, text or email. It is important to make sure that PAs can keep in touch with each other and communicate with the employer. A good idea is to set up a WhatsApp Group.

If it is appropriate for the PA to work from home, this should be agreed with the employer and the PA will get their usual pay.

A practical, alternative is for PAs to take some annual leave from their allowance. Employers have the right to tell PAs when to take annual leave if they need to, providing reasonable notice is given. This could affect holiday PA's have already booked or planned. So employers should:

- Explain clearly why they need the PA to take the annual leave. This will hopefully be clear if the employer needs to self-isolate or there is a case of coronavirus in the household.
- try and resolve anyone's worries about how it will affect their holiday entitlement or plans

Q3 What happens if my PA needs time off work to look after a family member who is self-isolating or has coronavirus?

PAs are entitled to time off work to help someone who depends on them (a dependant) in an unexpected event or emergency. This would apply to situations to do with coronavirus. For example:

- if they have children they need to look after or arrange childcare for because their school has closed
- to help their child or another dependant if they're sick, or need to go into isolation or hospital

There's no statutory requirement to pay for this time off, but some employers might offer pay depending on the contract.

The amount of time off a PA takes to look after someone must be reasonable for the situation. For example, they might take 2 days off to start with, and if more time is needed, they can book holiday.

Q4 What happens if my PA becomes unwell at work?

If someone becomes unwell in the workplace with coronavirus symptoms, they should:

- If possible, 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 if they do not have tissues, cough and sneeze into the crook of their elbow
- use a separate bathroom from others, if possible

The unwell person should either:

- [use the NHS 111 online coronavirus service](#)
- call 111, for NHS advice
- call 999, if they're seriously ill or injured or their life is at risk

It's best for the unwell person to use their own mobile phone to access these services if possible.

Q5 What happens if my PA has recently visited an affected area in Europe for example Spain, France, and Italy?

Anyone returning from any affected area, for example China or Italy, should self-isolate and either:

- [use the NHS 111 online coronavirus service](#)
- call 111, for NHS advice

Their employer must pay them Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) or contractual sick pay while they're in self-isolation and cannot work.

Q6 What happens if my PA does not want to go to work?

Some people might feel they do not want to go to work if they're afraid of catching coronavirus. An employer should listen to any concerns the PA may have. If there are genuine concerns, the employer must try to

resolve them to protect the health and safety of their staff, for example, if possible, the offer of flexible working.

If a PA still does not want to go in, they may be able to arrange with their employer to take the time off as holiday or unpaid leave. The employer does not have to agree to this.

[Find out more about absence from work.](#)
From the ACAS website

What you need to know if you use an agency.

If you use your direct payment to pay an agency, be aware that North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC), has issued specific guidance for social care providers.

It is the primary responsibility of the agency to ensure to the best of their ability, that workers supplied to clients are suitably vetted and capable of providing their services safely.

It is advisable for you to share information with agency workers about coronavirus in the same way as you would with your own personal assistants.

More about coronavirus

- [coronavirus on NHS.UK](#)
- [latest coronavirus information and advice on GOV.UK](#)

Should you require any further information on direct payments or require this factsheet in another format please contact the Direct Payments Support Service on 01609 780780.