

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 07 September 2021 14:32
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: FW: URGENT, OFFICIAL AND SENSITIVE: HR matters relating to coronavirus within the NICS.

Sensitivity: Confidential

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 03 March 2020 10:48
To: Minne, Jil [REDACTED]
Cc: Cooke, Michael (HR) [REDACTED]; Brennan, Mike [REDACTED]; Browne, Mark (Deputy Secretary) [REDACTED]; Stewart, Chris (TEO) [REDACTED]; Baker, Derek [REDACTED]; DfE Permanent Secretary Support [REDACTED]; Godfrey, Katrina (DfI – Perm Sec) [REDACTED]; Gray, Sue (DoF) [REDACTED]; King, Brenda [REDACTED]; May, Peter [REDACTED]; McMahon, Denis [REDACTED]; Meharg, Tracy [REDACTED]; Pengelly, Richard [REDACTED]; Widdis, Hugh [REDACTED]; Sterling, David [REDACTED]; McNabb, Chris [REDACTED]; NICS HR Director [REDACTED]; McLaughlin, Mark (DOF) [REDACTED]; Rooney, Bernie [REDACTED]

Subject: RE: URGENT, OFFICIAL AND SENSITIVE: HR matters relating to coronavirus within the NICS.
Sensitivity: Confidential

Jill,

Many thanks for this. I've also discussed with Chris Stewart who shares my concern.

For copy recipients, the point of concern is only about the exclusion of Covid-19 related absences from calculation of normal sickness absence pay entitlements, such that there will be no impact on absence trigger points. If the illness in a large proportion (or the majority) of cases is self-limiting and not particularly severe, I can't see why in principle it should lead to specially favourable treatment by comparison with more severe and longer lasting illnesses. Is there not, as Chris has pointed out to me, the risk of creating grounds for grievance? Also, there are many conditions where self-isolation is appropriate.

I appreciate that it's hard to take a different line from other large civil service employers, but if the Board confirms this decision, it should be conscious of this anomaly – I don't think the same argument applies to the other proposals. I don't actually see why it is essential to secure an appropriate response to Covid-19.

From: Minne, Jill
Sent: 03 March 2020 09:25
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: Cooke, Michael (HR) [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: URGENT, OFFICIAL AND SENSITIVE: HR matters relating to coronavirus within the NICS.
Sensitivity: Confidential

[REDACTED]

The overarching principle in our thinking is if an employee is advised on medical advice (PHA, 111, GP) to self-isolate then we as the employer must create the situation where the individual will do so, thereby not attending work. The steps we are taking in relation to sick absence pay being discounted against contractual entitlements, and the use of special leave are designed to ensure an employee does not attend work for fear of not being paid having been told to self-isolate on medical advice.

There are other (lesser) considerations such as it would be hard to do something different to other employers (while we have quoted DWP and Scottish Govt our understanding is that this approach is widespread); TUS' views; and this being out of the 'norm' with specific 'blanket' advice, but the main issue is as set out above.

Happy to discuss.

Jill Minne
Strategic HR Director, NI Civil Service
3rd Floor | 2-4 Bruce Street | Belfast | BT2 7JD
Contact: [REDACTED]



From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 02 March 2020 18:13
To: Minne, Jill [REDACTED]
Cc: Cooke, Michael (HR) [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: URGENT, OFFICIAL AND SENSITIVE: HR matters relating to coronavirus within the NICS.
Sensitivity: Confidential

Jill,

Before responding to the full cc list, can I just query the first decision sought. Other than to follow the precedents set by DWP and the Scottish Government, why would we offer exceptional favourable terms for this illness as distinct from any other virus, or, say cancer? The expert opinion seems to be that in most cases, healthy people would be affected for a few weeks. If they face a severe illness, and hence longer off work, why is that distinct from other severe illnesses? Is the rationale to remove a perverse incentive to attend work while carrying the virus?

Happy to discuss.

Many thanks,

From: Minne, Jill

Sent: 02 March 2020 17:07

To: [redacted] Brennan, Mike [redacted]
Browne, Mark (Deputy Secretary) [redacted]; [redacted]
[redacted]; Stewart, Chris (TEO) [redacted]
[redacted] Baker, Derek [redacted]; DfE Permanent Secretary Support
[redacted] Godfrey, Katrina (DfI – Perm Sec) [redacted]
[redacted] <[redacted]uk>; Gray, Sue (DoF) [redacted]; [redacted]
King, Brenda [redacted]; [redacted]
[redacted]; May, Peter [redacted]
[redacted] McMahon, Denis [redacted]
[redacted] Meharg, Tracy <[redacted]>
[redacted]; Pengelly, Richard [redacted]
[redacted] Widdis, Hugh [redacted]; Sterling, David
>
Cc: Cooke, Michael (HR) [redacted]; McNabb, Chris [redacted]
[redacted]; NICSHR HR Director [redacted]; McLaughlin, Mark (DOF) [redacted]
[redacted]; Rooney, Bernie [redacted]

Subject: URGENT, OFFICIAL AND SENSITIVE: HR matters relating to coronavirus within the NICS.

Importance: High

Sensitivity: Confidential

Dear NICS Board colleagues

As discussed at our meeting on Friday please find attached a paper setting out decisions required from the NICS Board on how absence relating to coronavirus will be managed within the NICS.

Following agreement on these matters NICSHR and communications colleagues will issue detailed guidance to managers and staff (agency staff will be covered in the guidance) and advise TUS.

Given the urgency of this issue I should be very grateful for a response on these particular matters by 2.00 pm tomorrow if possible.

Should you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Jill Minne

Strategic HR Director, NI Civil Service

3rd Floor | 2-4 Bruce Street | Belfast | BT2 7JD

Contact: [redacted]

