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1.0 Purpose

This Policy summarises the arrangements for a serious viral epidemic or pandemic, and the precautions to be observed:

2.0 Policy Details

INTRODUCTION

Some infections such as some strains of influenza, SARs or the Coronavirus are highly infectious viral illnesses that have the capacity to spread rapidly. When a new viral strain emerges, one of the following situations may occur:

A serious epidemic - where a disease infects a significantly greater number of people in the area than is usual, or

A pandemic – which is an epidemic of global proportions

Such an illness will spread rapidly because people will not have any natural resistance to it. It is difficult to predict the scale, severity and impact of a serious epidemic or pandemic, but research suggests that in the case of a pandemic, it could affect the entire country and that up to half the population could develop the illness. There could also be more than one wave of the illness.

During a serious viral epidemic or pandemic, the Company's overall aim will be to encourage our staff to carry on as normal if they are well, while taking additional precautions to protect them from exposure to infection and to lessen the risk of spread to others.

In terms of business continuity, this means that we will seek to sustain our core business and services as far as is practicable and therefore we will continue to operate largely within the existing framework of company policies and procedures. However, the company recognises that during such times some additional provisions will be required to support staff and we would communicate to families and request support if necessary through difficult periods.

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DURING A SERIOUS EPIDEMIC OR PANDEMIC

During a recognised viral epidemic or pandemic, The Organisation will implement the following provisions:

Communications:

During the period of a serious epidemic or pandemic regular guidance and sources of information and support will be made available via Managers / Supervisors, noticeboards, the company's Intranet and website. Staff should monitor these sources closely to stay up to date with what is happening within the workplace and what action is being taken to ensure the company meets its obligations to staff, customers and other stakeholders.

Additional Hygiene Arrangements:

The company will provide antibacterial sanitiser located throughout company premises and staff will be encouraged and reminded to use these regularly.

Staff are encouraged to always use clean tissues to cover their mouth / nose when they cough / sneeze (and not to use cloth handkerchiefs or re-use tissues) and to wash / sanitise their hands regularly and specifically after coughing or sneezing.

Nobilis ensure all staff have gloves, aprons, face masks worn at each visit and shields as required.

Vaccination

The company may identify certain key staff and arrange for those staff to be given a vaccination (if available).

This would be a purely voluntary arrangement and staff may refuse to have this if they wish.

Visitors

Visitors to company premises will largely be discontinued except in exceptional circumstances for the duration of the epidemic / pandemic.

Visitors will be asked if they have any symptoms before being allowed into company premises and if they do they will be refused entry.

Visitors will be asked to sanitise their hands before entering the company premises.

Visitors should be confined to meeting rooms where at all possible.

Face to Face Meetings

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Travel should largely be avoided unless absolutely essential and in particular if it involves the use of public transport.

Face to face meetings should be avoided wherever possible and use of telephone / teleconferencing / email facilities should be encouraged.

Where face to face meetings are unavoidable, the Company's designated meeting rooms should be used which will have sanitiser pumps /tissues / waste bins provided and will be cleaned daily.

Staff Identified as Potentially At-risk

Staff at risk of developing viral-related complications (e.g. pregnant workers and those with compromised immune systems) will be reassigned from high-risk work sites and locations. If this is not possible it may be necessary to ask such staff to remain at home until it is deemed safe to return to the workplace.

Staff with symptoms

The most significant symptoms of a viral illness generally are the sudden onset of: fever, cough or shortness of breath; other symptoms may include: headache, tiredness, chills, aching muscles, sore throat, runny nose, sneezing, loss of appetite. Specific viral infections may produce a different range of symptoms; the Company will ensure that the symptoms of the current illness are clearly identified to staff.

Whilst at Work

If a member of staff feels ill with symptoms consistent with the illness, it is important that they do not simply carry on working. They should report their illness immediately to their line manager and if the symptoms are consistent with the illness, they will be sent home, advised to contact their GP (if appropriate) and told not to return to work until the symptoms have cleared and their GP has confirmed they are no longer infectious.

Whilst not at Work

If they develop symptoms whilst not at work, they should adhere to the following advice:

Inform their line manager that they are ill using the recognised process

Stay at home and rest

Not go to work until they are fully recovered, and their GP has confirmed they are no longer infectious

As part of the reporting procedures, the line manager will seek the permission of the employee to inform their colleagues that they are suffering from the illness. This is really a private matter for the individual, but allowing colleagues to know about it will allow them to look out for early symptoms in themselves, and also allow any who may be at-risk in some way (e.g. pregnant) to seek medical advice.

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Post Epidemic / Pandemic Considerations

After the first wave of such an illness the company acknowledges that staff will need time to completely recover their full fitness and performance levels. Managers will ensure that staff who had been asked to work extended hours, or were denied their planned leave are given annual leave where at all possible. However, the possibility of subsequent waves has to be kept in mind and the company will discuss with staff the lessons learnt from the current epidemic / pandemic and continue with the preparations required to cope with subsequent waves.