



To: Chief Executive Officer
Each National Director
Director, National Ambulance Service
Each Assistant National Director of HR
Each Hospital Group CEO
Each Hospital Group Director of HR
Each Chief Officer CHO
Each Head of HR CHO
Head of HR, PCRS
Each CEO Section 38 Agencies
Each HR Manager Section 38 Agencies
Each Employee Relations Manager
Each Group Director of Nursing & Midwifery

Re: HSE Guideline relating to HR Circular 033/2020

Ref: CERS 24/2020

Date: 05th May 2020

Dear Colleagues,

The arrangements for caring for the children of essential health care workers is clearly a very important issue in terms of continuity of service during COVID19.

In terms of context and measures taken to address this challenge a new policy was introduced (DPER FAQ 28th April at 5.2) as a first step which asks public sector employers to ensure they allow the partners of essential health care workers to stay at home to care for children when needed so that the essential health care worker can attend work.

It is clearly very important that essential health care workers should be facilitated in coming to work where they have caring responsibilities. The new DPER FAQ 28th April at 5.2 referred to above highlights that the public sector is endeavouring to prioritise the attendance of essential health care workers, with an initial measure to facilitate attendance at work by providing, where they have partners and caring responsibilities, that the partner is enabled to stay at home.

It has been acknowledged that the above measure does not address the majority of situations, therefore specifically, in relation to how the DPER FAQ 28th April at 5.1 applies to essential health care workers I can confirm the following:

The DOH / DPER position clearly sets out that Employers should be very flexible where employees have caring responsibilities during this stage of COVID19. It states that all forms of flexible working must be considered. The types of flexible working to be considered by the employer include different hours / shifts / remote working / new duties, etc., that can facilitate the employee and their caring responsibilities while also balancing these responsibilities with the need to meeting the needs of providing health care services.

Furthermore, the HSE has been engaging with staff regarding work pattern flexibilities to enable the essential health care worker to attend work, including but not limited to:

- Opposite shift rotation (where both parents are front line workers)
- Longer work days / shifts, which allows for more days at home
- Combination of shorter days during the week, with longer days at weekends, where other support may be available
- Shift patterns, cognisant of risk mitigation, to assist not only with care but allowing for physical distancing
- Swapping of days, where job sharing arrangements are in place
- Providing expertise to new services and teams, e.g. those set up to support nursing homes, assessment hubs, etc.
- Staggered start and finishing times, including consideration of day on day off arrangements
- Switching to days and/or nights, where possible
- Virtual clinics

Where all of the above options have been explored and none of these options are found to be feasible, the essential health care worker may have to stay at home to care for children. In this scenario, as with the rest of the public service, the essential health care worker is classified as being available to work from home and can be allocated different work or roles that can be carried out remotely.

Where management believe they have put forward reasonable options, however the employee does not feel this meets their need, the facts (as set out on the attached form) will be reviewed on a case by case basis.

This position may be reviewed in light of any further child care measures for essential health care workers that are introduced in the future.

Queries from individual employees or managers regarding this matter should be referred to their local HR / Employee Relations Department or the HR Helpdesk (1850 444 925 or ask.hr@hse.ie)

HR / Employee Relations Managers may contact Corporate Employee Relations Services for further advice, 01-6626966, or info.t@hse.ie

Yours sincerely

John Delamere
Corporate Employee Relations