



NHS Wales Welsh Partnership Forum

Joint statement on the importance of booking and taking annual leave during the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic – updated February 2021

We thank those employees who, due to the pandemic, delayed or cancelled annual leave to support the service.

We recognise that taking annual leave is an important contributor to an individual's physical and mental health and their ability to undertake their duties in a safe and effective manner.

Given the current environment since the summer with further lockdowns combined with the pressure on staffing levels across the service, the ability to take annual leave has been significantly challenged during the 2020/21 leave year¹.

It is important to ensure that employees are not working for too protracted a period of time without a meaningful break and therefore employees are encouraged, and will be supported by their managers to continue to take leave at regular intervals throughout the leave year.

Whilst employees will always be encouraged to plan their leave at regular intervals throughout the year, there do continue to be challenges with the approval of leave, due to service constraints which is resulting in individuals building up annual leave which they will not be able to use before the end of their leave year.

Individuals may have significant leave outstanding as a consequence of having been prevented from taking leave or through having continued to make themselves available to work during the pandemic response. Where employees are unable to take their current annual leave allocation within the current 2020/21 leave year then employees and managers should discuss and agree what leave can be taken in the foreseeable future, balancing service delivery requirements with the need for employees to rest and recuperate and in so doing identify where there may be any requirement to carry over any unused leave.

It is recognized that it may not always be possible for all outstanding leave to be taken during the remainder of the 2020/21 leave year and therefore, unless more favourable agreements are already in place, up to 20 days outstanding leave (pro rata for part time staff) can be carried forward into the next (2021/22) annual leave year

Managing and using carried over annual leave may still be challenging during 2021/22 and managers may continue to have difficulties in approving leave. To manage this going forwards there must be a plan agreed with the employee's line manager to use the carried over leave during the 2021/22 and 2022/23 leave years. To support this, unless more favourable agreements are already in place, up to 50% of the carried over

¹ Some staff have annual leave years which commence on the anniversary month of their appointment. For the purposes of this document, the leave years for these staff will relate to their specific leave year rather than the April – March cycle.



leave may be further carried over into the 2022/23 annual leave year but must be used by the end of that leave year after which the normal carry-over of annual leave arrangements will apply.

Unless there are extenuating circumstances any new requests for annual leave should be approved, wherever possible. If an individual wishes to reschedule a period of annual leave, this should be discussed with the individual's manager and agreed wherever possible.

In addition to this document, a [joint statement outlining the principles](#) in relation to the application of annual leave, study leave and public holiday arrangements for doctors and dentists in training during the Covid-19 pandemic has also been agreed.

It is important for fairness and equity that all employees follow the principles set out in this statement for their own health and wellbeing as well as to avoid any significant accumulation of annual leave. Therefore, employees who are clinically extremely vulnerable at home and/or who have caring responsibilities and are not working should continue to schedule regular periods of annual leave, as noted above, through discussions with their line manager.

This statement is endorsed by the joint Chairs of the Welsh Partnership Forum:

Andrew Goodall, Director General Health and Social Services/ NHS Wales Chief Executive on behalf of Welsh Government

Steve Moore, Chief Executive, Hywel Dda UHB on behalf of Health Boards, Trusts and HEIW

Paul Summers, Unison on behalf of Trade Union partners

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