John McLoughlin

From: John McLoughlin
Sent: 28 May 2020 17:03
To: Amanda Harcus
Cc: Paul Ward; Kate Jenkins; Kerie Anne
Subject: Trade Union view on re to workplace and risk assessments

Dear Amanda,

I thought it might be helpful to set out some of the concerns we discussed today in writing.

Trade Unions wrote on 6th May setting out our general concerns about any wider return to work.

There has clearly been a particular focus on schools given the government announcement of 10 May 2020.

Until this week the impression we had been given that was that there were no imminent plans to change the working arrangements more widely within the Council that have been in place since lockdown.

Trade Unions believed that any discussions about configuration of buildings were early initial discussions about the changes that might be required at the point at which it was safe to bring more staff back into workplaces.

Trade Unions have been clear that any return to work plan and associated risk assessments must take account of all factors we set out in our letter of 6 May.

A number of Trade Union comments on the initial corporate risk assessment incorporated some of these comments. I am listing some of the issues we have raised again below.

It is also the Trade Union view that before there can be a final workable risk assessment for any particular building there need to be risk assessments by team and function as these will inform critical issues such as expected numbers working in buildings fully or partially; patterns of work and physical flow of staff in workplaces; contact with public; provision of and safe use and storage of PPE; means of travelling to and from work and to carry out work.

It now appears that there are in fact plans to bring back various teams from as early as 1 June, with little or no consultation, and in many cases it seems risk assessments produced at the last minute when we have not yet even completed consultation on the draft corporate template.

You agreed to bring these concerns to the attention of the senior leadership and that the Trade Unions would receive a response to our letter of 6 May and to the various comments we have provided on the draft Corporate template for Covid 19 risk assessments.

The Trade Unions will not be in a position to sign off any risk assessment for any particular building function as “Covid Secure” until we can be sure that the wider issues we have raised about what is required to enable a safe return to workplaces are satisfactorily dealt with.

Just to refresh some of the key issues are:

Who returns to workplaces?

1) There should be no automatic return to work for any employee that can continue to provide/deliver services while working from home.

2) No employee that is at present following NHS guidance to shelter for a 12 week period should be asked to return to a physical workplace.

3) Employees that share a household with a vulnerable person that would be at risk from their return to work should not be asked to do so, with alternative working arrangements explored.

4) The necessity for an individual or team to physically be present in a workplace should form part of any risk assessment supporting a return to office based working. (This process should involve managers, team members & trades unions).

5) The Council will have in place a comprehensive and functioning trace track and test procedure as we have outlined

How we return to workplaces

1) The means of transport to and from physical workplaces is an integral part of maintaining a safe workplace during this period of the workforce returning to office based working. All measures taken to safeguard residents and staff will be compromised by staff using unsafe/overcrowded public transport to travel.

2) How staff as individuals travel must be taken into account regarding an individual's and the teams return to the workplace.

3) Extra provision will be made for parking where appropriate, and for use of bicycles

Covid Secure workplaces: starting point,

1) Workplaces should incorporate and display a clear plan displaying how travel around/physical alterations of the workplace have been now designed to minimise.

a) Contraflow foot traffic.

b) Door handles/surface contact.

c) Contact with airborne particles. (Screens/Distancing).

d) Avoid shared workspaces/screens.

e) No closed air circulation, maximum ventilation of fresh air

Cleaning

A plan for enhanced cleaning will be in place and will be communicated to all staff with details of how any problems with cleaning or incidents requiring extra cleaning will be dealt with

P.P.E.

1) Clear Guidelines/Principles outlining protocols that support the use of PPE for all staff areas where appropriate, with managers, staff and unions all consulted/participants in the process prior to return and mechanisms for informing and involving staff in decision making. (perhaps use of Photos/Zoom tours, building plans of altered workspaces sent to staff as part of the return process). Full provision of and safe storage and disposal of appropriate PPE

Hygiene

Provision of hand sanitiser for staff whose work involves external visits

Council to provide face coverings for staff who will be in situations where social distancing cannot be guaranteed during the working day, including travelling to and from work or at work.

The above list is not exhaustive and may be added/amended as need be.