

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **Q. There is so much information about the coronavirus, how do I know what to listen to?**

A. We would recommend that you use reliable sources of information. You can find out the Government's latest guidance on [www.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.gov.uk/coronavirus) or health information on [www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/)

### **Q. When am I allowed to leave the house?**

A. The latest government guidance states that everyone must only leave the house for very limited purposes:

- shopping for basic necessities. This includes food and medicine for example, which must be as infrequent as possible.
- one form of exercise a day. This could include a run, a walk or a cycle.
- any medical need including to donate blood, avoid or escape risk of injury or harm, or to provide care or to help a vulnerable person.

### **Q. Have Bell Group stopped all works?**

A. Bell Group ceased works on all but essential jobs with effect from 24 March 2020 following government guidelines. The very limited critical and emergency works that we are carrying out have been approved by the relevant Regional Director and Managing Director who have carefully assessed the risk. All Operatives on these sites have been provided with stringent procedures they must follow to keep themselves and others safe.

### **Q. As an Operative who can no longer work as the sites are closed, how much pay will I receive?**

A. All Operatives who joined us before 28 February 2020 will receive 80% of their basic pay following their designation as a "furloughed worker". This is capped at £2,500 per month. This is subject to Income Tax and National Insurance deductions in the normal way.

This arrangement is in place until 29 May 2020 under the Job Retention Scheme. We are hopeful that our sites will open by then, but if they do not, we will be in touch with you nearer the time to update you on the arrangements regarding pay.

### **Q. What does furlough mean?**

A. Furlough generally means temporary leave of absence from work. This can be due to economic conditions affecting the country as a whole such as coronavirus.

Furlough leave has been introduced by the government during the coronavirus pandemic to mean leave offered which keeps employees on the payroll without them working.

The Job Retention Scheme has been introduced to protect jobs by helping to avoid lay offs and redundancies given the current circumstances.

### **Q. I have been designated a furloughed employee. Do I need to do anything now?**

You must not attend work or undertake work until we advise you that it is safe to return to work.

**Q. Do I need to claim my wages from the government?**

A. Your wages under the Job Retention Scheme will be paid by us in the normal way. We will claim the grant from the government directly.

**Q. I am currently shielding in line with public health guidance, can I be furloughed?**

A. This is permitted under the government guidance. Please ensure that your local branch is aware that you are shielding in line with public health guidance.

**Q. I am currently absent from work on sick leave for a reason not connected to coronavirus. Can I be furloughed?**

A. You will continue to receive sick pay until your period of sick leave comes to an end. You will be furloughed when your period of sickness absence comes to an end.

**Q. I am currently self-isolating, can I be furloughed?**

A. You will continue to receive sick pay until your period of self-isolation comes to an end. You will be furloughed when your self-isolation comes to an end. If you have to self-isolate during your furlough period, please let your branch know.

**Q. When can I return to work?**

A. At the moment, we don't know when this will be. The government restrictions have been put in place for an initial period of 3 weeks and a further government announcement will be made at that stage.

We will try to keep the furlough period to a minimum and hope to return to work as soon as possible.

**Q. I am interested in voluntary work. Does that affect my status as a designated worker?**

A. No, the government guidelines allow a furloughed employee to take part in voluntary work. However, any activities undertaken must be in line with the latest public health guidance.

**Q. The current situation is having a detrimental impact on my wellbeing. What can I do?**

A. We have an Employee Assistance Programme which is provided by an external company called Health Assured. Health Assured are available 24/7 and provide confidential support on the full range of wellbeing issues.

It may be that you feel overwhelmed by current events or that you are experiencing financial difficulties during this time for example. If so, please remember that Health Assured is a professional organisation with professionally trained counsellors available to help 24/7. The helpline number is 0800 030 5182. There is no cost to you for accessing this service.

If you haven't already, we would encourage you to download the Health Assured App, via the App Store or Google Play.

**Q. How can I stay in touch with the Company whilst I am furloughed?**

A. We are regularly posting updates and bulletins on our Bell Together webpage. If you haven't already, please check it out.

At the moment, we are running competitions. Check out our Bell Together webpage for details of the latest competition. We encourage everyone to submit their entries with the winner selected by our CEO.

We would encourage everyone to stay in touch with their colleagues during this difficult time be that via a WhatsApp group or a phone call.