

1. WHAT DOES FURLOUGH MEAN?

Furlough leave has been introduced by the government during the coronavirus pandemic to keep employees in employment when no work is available and to avoid redundancies.

2. WHY AM I BEING FURLOUGHED?

Your role is dependent on our ongoing business activity and given the closure of the majority of our facilities the business is experiencing a temporary shortage in work and there will be no work for you to do during this closure period.

3. CAN I WORK DURING THE FURLOUGH PERIOD?

You will not be required to work for council but, where applicable, we may ask you to attend training. You may work for another organisation but only with permission from your line manager.

4. CAN I VOLUNTEER FOR FURLOUGH?

Furlough is only available to employees who work in income dependent areas/facilities and where the Council cannot provide them with work. If the organisation can provide work you are obliged to carry this out, for example, safely onsite, where home working is possible or if redeployed to another area of the business.

5. HOW LONG WILL THE FURLOUGH PERIOD LAST?

Your Furlough period will start as per the date on your letter. The length of the furlough period will be dependent on a number of factors, including Government restrictions and the continuation of the Furlough Scheme.

The Scheme is open to the end of October, but the Government have indicated that they may vary the terms of the scheme before that date. We will carry out a review in June, taking into account the above factors. We will communicate any changes to your furlough period in a timely manner.

However the Council reserves the right to remove you from furlough leave at any time and reinstate your pay by notice in writing to you. You are, therefore, expected to remain available for work and be contactable by the Council. If your contact details change during this time, please notify the Council as soon as possible by informing the HR Department of your updated details.

6. WHAT WILL I GET PAID?

During furlough we are committed to securing the maximum funding per employee from the government and will pass that on to our employees. However, at this stage we have committed to continuing to pay staff 100% of normal pay. Your pay calculations will be in line with HMRC guidance, as per your letter.

This is a gross amount and is subject to deductions for tax, national insurance and pension, if applicable. Note, no other payments will be made to you during this furlough period.

You will continue to receive your salary/wages on the normal day designated in your contractual terms.

7. WHAT ABOUT MY PENSION?

Employees will continue to receive their employer pension contribution on top of any Furlough payment, as long as they continue to be part of the pension scheme.

Employees can take the opportunity to increase their net income by either reducing their personal pension contribution or by temporarily opting out of the pension scheme.

Please note that if you decide to opt out the employer contribution will also cease as per the rules of the scheme.

Any reduction in pension contributions will impact on how your pension benefits will accrue. However, there will be no change to the level of life cover or ill health benefit.

Should you have any specific queries in relation to your pension at this time, please check out the covid19 related information on the NILGOSC site - <https://www.nilgosc.org.uk/does-covid-19-affect-my-pension-faqs>.

8. HOW WILL HOLIDAYS WORK?

Holidays will accrue during the furlough period and you will still hold the same contractual entitlement.

However it is the councils expectation that you will use your leave at the rate it accrues each month, dependant on your service with the Council. Any pre-booked leave which may fall during this furlough leave will also be honoured and deducted from your annual leave allowance. However if you do not have pre booked leave, it is expected that you will use 50% of your annual leave by 6 November 2020. Approval for leave must be sought in line with the leave policy.

Please note, that despite the furlough period, annual leave will still be appropriately managed and only the agreed number of days can be carried forward into future calendar years. Any Frontline staff who may not be able to use their leave at this time, as a result of Covid, will be allowed to carry over leave for a period of 2 years as per the temporary change made to Working Time legislation to assist with these times. Please note, this is only on an individual basis and with prior agreement with HR.

9. WHAT HAPPENS IF THE GOVT FUNDING STOPS?

The Furlough Scheme is due to expire in October 2020. We will keep the matter under regular review and will communicate with you any changes in a timely manner.


10. WHAT HAPPENS IF A CLIENT OR COLLEAGUE NEEDS TO CONTACT ME DURING THE FURLOUGH PERIOD?

We would ask you to set the following standard 'Out of Office' message on your Outlook.

This will direct callers to the main council switchboard who will have a list of critical staff who can be contacted to deal with the query.

"I am currently not working and have no access to emails. If you need assistance then please contact [number] where your query will be directed to an appropriate person. Your email has not been forwarded."

11. HOW WILL YOU KEEP ME UP TO DATE DURING MY FURLOUGH PERIOD?



Your line manager or HR will continue to be in touch with you during this time.

12. CAN I COME BACK TO WORK BEFORE THE END OF THE FURLOUGH PERIOD?

The Furlough scheme is flexible to allow employees to move between periods of work and furlough. However, each furlough period must last at least 3 weeks.

The council will only take a decision to return an employee to the workplace where there is sufficient productive or essential work available.

In the event that the business needs you to return to work either, to your existing role or another role within the organisation, we will contact you to discuss the process.

13. WHO CAN I TALK TO DURING THE FURLOUGH PERIOD IF I NEED ADVICE/HAVE A QUESTION?

In the first instance all queries should be directed to your line manager.

You can also contact any of the 3 HR offices by phone or email hr@armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk or speak to your Union Representative.

14. HOW WILL I KNOW WHEN MY WORK IS RESUMING?

In the event that the council needs you to return to work duties, your line manager or HR will contact you to discuss the process.

We may initially contact you on the contact phone number you have provided or via letter.

15. WHERE CAN I GET FINANCIAL ADVICE/HELP?

We understand that this is a very difficult time for all employees and their families.

Employees can access confidential counselling and support through our wellbeing partners Inspire on 0800 389 5362. Similarly we have some useful information available on the council website.