

Guidance on the potential impacts of COVID-19 - pay step reviews

The pandemic may have multiple and significant impacts on the extent to which staff are able to meet the pay progression standards.

The principle that pay step progression should not be delayed due to factors beyond the staff member's control should be applied consistently. Paragraph 23, Annex 23 (England) of the NHS TCS Handbook states:

“Where factors beyond the individual's control, such as organisational or operational issues, have prevented compliance with any of the requirements in paragraph 19, these should not prevent the employee from progressing. Managers should ensure that they take full account of such factors and staff should bring these to the attention of their line manager as soon as possible (not waiting until the pay step review) so that these can be addressed and remedied.”

If pay step meetings are to take place, staff members must be given the opportunity to raise these impacts. It must be recognised that they may not have had the usual opportunities to raise them during their regular one-to-one line management / supervision meetings. Below are examples of how the five pay progression standards might have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic conditions.

Pay progression standards	Impact by COVID-19
The appraisal process has been completed within the last 12 months.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appraisal within the last 12 months may not have taken place. - Progress on agreed objectives may have been disrupted. - There may not have been sufficient opportunity for remedial actions to have been completed in time for the pay step review due to service pressures, absence, redeployment to a different role or workplace etc.
There is no formal capability process in place.	- Staff may not have had sufficient time and support to implement their improvement plan.
There is no formal disciplinary sanction live on the staff member's record.	- Staff may have an appeal pending which has been delayed. In the event that this eventually overturns the sanction employers will need to backdate the pay step in line with para 22 (Annex 23).
Statutory and/or mandatory training has been completed.	- Statutory and mandatory training may not have been completed as a result of COVID-19.
For line managers only – appraisals have been completed for all their staff as required.	- Managers may not have had sufficient capacity to complete appraisals due to COVID-19.

Staff absent from work – due to COVID-19

In instances where staff are absent from work when their pay step meeting is due, for example because of shielding or long term COVID-19 sickness absence, then the principle of equal and fair treatment should apply to ensure staff do not face a detrimental impact.

Where a period of shielding or COVID-19 sickness absence coincides with a staff member's pay step meeting employers should consider automatically opening the pay step point in the individual's

absence - applying the same principles as for maternity and other absences as set out in paragraphs 46 and 47 of Annex 23 (England):

“If an individual is on long-term paid absence such as maternity, adoption and shared parental leave and a pay step review cannot be conducted prior to the pay step date, the pay step point should be automatically applied in the individual’s absence, subject to paragraph 44.”

“If there was a live disciplinary sanction in place at the point the individual went on leave, the pay step point should be applied in their absence if appropriate, effective the day after the sanction expires.”

In exceptional circumstances, progression for those shielding or off sick with COVID19 may be delayed pending the resolution of any pre-existing issues in line with paragraph 48 of Annex 23 (England):

“If there was an active formal capability process underway at the point they went on leave, the pay step point can be delayed. The improvement process should be resumed immediately upon their return. On satisfactory completion, the period of their absence should be set aside, and the pay step point backdated to an agreed date as if they had completed the improvement process without being absent. Employers will need to take particular care to avoid any discrimination or detriment on the grounds of maternity, sex or disability that could arise in relation to staff on maternity/adoption/parental leave or sick leave.”

As above, adjustments will need to be made to the improvement plan or to the backdating if it will take the employee longer to complete the process because of the pandemic circumstances.