

## COVID–19 Frequently Asked Questions for Line Managers

These questions have been developed to try and provide some answers to questions line managers may be receiving from employees. The answers will be updated in line with any change of Government or Company Advice. Therefore, please ensure you access the document on SharePoint regularly to ensure you have the most up to date information. These answers do not override any advice an individual has received from relevant Public Health agencies for the four nations.

Please note:

Reason	Isolation Period / Testing requirement
Individual has Covid symptoms or has tested positive	10 days
Individual is required to self-isolate as confirmed by Trace, Test and Isolate or If someone in the household has tested positive and they are not fully vaccinated they should self-isolate	10 days
Individual is double vaccinated, but has contact with a positive case or someone in the household has symptoms	Follow country guidance for isolation or testing requirements
Individual is identified as a close contact of someone who has tested positive for “Omicron”	Follow country guidance for isolation
Individual is required to isolate as a result of returning to the UK from abroad from a red country	10 days quarantine in a managed hotel, and two PCR tests on day 2 and 8
Individual is returning from a non-red country and has <b>not</b> been fully vaccinated, via a UK approved vaccination programme	10 days quarantine either at home or in the place you are staying and two PCR tests on day 2 and day 8
Individual is returning from a non-red country and has been fully vaccinated at least 14 days before the date you arrive in the UK	Isolate until PCR test result is received (must be taken within 2 days of arriving in the country)

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## 1. What do I do if I think I may have the virus or have some symptoms?

If you have any of the three main symptoms of Covid-19, you should self-isolate straight away and get a PCR test as soon as possible. The main symptoms of coronavirus are a recent onset, even if they are mild, of the following:

- A high temperature
- New, continuous cough – coughing a lot more for an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)
- Loss of, or change in your normal sense of smell or taste

While you are waiting for your test results you should remain at home and self-isolate.

If your test results are positive, then you should remain at home for at least 10 days from when your symptoms started. You should consult the advice provided by the NHS for information on isolation and the impact on anyone who lives with you.

You can stop self-isolating after 10 days if either:

- You do not have any symptoms
- You just have a cough or changes to your sense of smell or taste.

If you feel unwell after the 10 days, or have a high temperature you should keep self-isolating and seek medical advice.

If you have not had any signs of improvement and have not already sought medical advice, you should contact NHS 111 or online at [111.nhs.uk](https://111.nhs.uk) before returning to work.

If your tests results are negative and you have symptoms, then you may have another virus such as a cold or flu. You should stay at home until you feel well. You can stop isolating as long as:

- You are well
- No-one else in your household has symptoms or has tested positive for Covid-19
- You have not been advised to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace

Please advise your line manager as per your local absence reporting arrangements, they will need to complete the [absence notification form and return to work checklist \(http://ijmhrss.ce.altis.corusgroup.com/Covid19Checklist2\)](http://ijmhrss.ce.altis.corusgroup.com/Covid19Checklist2).

## 2. What should I do if an employee reports to work with minor illness symptoms e.g. a mild cold?

Providing there are no other symptoms that relate to Covid-19, and the employee is fit enough to work, then they should continue to do so. Should the symptoms worsen, or other symptoms develop then they should contact the NHS for further advice, and self-isolate. You could also ask the employee to obtain a Lateral flow test.

### 3. **A colleague has attended work but appears to have a symptom of Covid-19 - what should we do?**

You should advise your colleague to return home, arrange to have a test and start isolating. Please ensure you complete the [absence notification form](#). If they need clinical advice, they should contact the NHS.

**It is important that you contact Health & Safety for further guidance on your work area.** You may be required to complete a “Covid-19 Positive case track and trace questionnaire”, once the test result is known. Colleagues identified as a close contact, who are fully vaccinated will be requested by TTP<sup>1</sup> to book a PCR test on day 2 and day 8 from exposure. In addition, if they are attending site you may wish to request them to undertake daily on-site LFD tests where testing facilities are available, or home-testing LFD tests where there is no on-site facility.

### 4. **I have had the results from my PCR test, what should I do?**

There are three types of result: negative, positive, or unclear

A **negative PCR test** result means you did not have coronavirus when the test was done. You will still need to self-isolate for 10 full days if you get a negative test result and:

- You've been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace because you have been in close contact with someone who tested positive and based on this discussion you are required to isolate (vaccination status will be considered)
- You had a PCR test because you have a positive rapid lateral flow test, and there were more than 2 days between the tests (England only)

A **positive PCR result** means you had coronavirus when the test was done and you must self-isolate straight away. The self-isolation period includes the day from when symptoms started (or the day of the test where you do not have symptoms) and the next 10 full days.

If you were already isolating and had a test because you've been a close contact with someone who tested positive, your self-isolation period restarts if you test positive.

If your result is **unclear, void, borderline or inconclusive** this means it's not possible to say if you had coronavirus when the test was done. You should request another test as soon as possible. You should self-isolate until you get the 2<sup>nd</sup> test result if:

- You had a test because you had symptoms
- You've been told you've been in contact with someone who tested positive and you are required to isolate
- You are in quarantine because you have recently travelled from abroad

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<sup>1</sup> TTP – Test Trace Protect

## 5. I have had the results from my Lateral Flow Device (LFD) test, what should I do?

There are three types of result: negative, positive, or unclear

A **negative LFD test** result means you did not have coronavirus when the test was done. You will still need to self-isolate for 10 full days if you get a negative test result and:

- You've been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace because you have been in close contact with someone who tested positive and based on this discussion you are required to isolate (vaccination status will be considered)

If you have a **positive LFD result** you should self-isolate and arrange for a PCR test to confirm your result as soon as possible. You should continue to self-isolate until you get the result of the PCR test and then follow the advice that you are given when you get the result.

**NB** in England, if you do not get a PCR test within 2 days of a positive LFD, you will need to self-isolate for 10 days even if you get a negative PCR result.

In Wales, if your PCR test was negative but was taken more than 24 hours after the LFD test then you should remain in self-isolation for the full 10 days from the original LFD result.

Any individuals receiving a negative PCR test result following a positive LFD test are asked to discuss the circumstances etc. with their line manager before returning to work.

If your result is **void** you should do another test as soon as possible.

## 6. Someone in my household has symptoms of COVID-19, what should I do?

The household member should arrange and take a PCR test.

If you are:

- fully vaccinated i.e. 14 days have passed since your final dose of a Covid-19 vaccine given by the NHS),
- under 18 years, 6 months,
- have taken part in a vaccine trial
- In **England you do not** have to isolate whilst waiting for your test results
- In **Wales**, you **must** isolate whilst waiting for your test results. If your results are negative, then you are able to stop isolating.

However, should your household member receive a positive PCR test, you should arrange to have a PCR test on day 2 and day 8. Only if your PCR test is positive, or you develop symptoms, should you start isolation.

**England:**

- take an LFD test every day for 7 days, or until the household member who has COVID-19 reaches the end of their self-isolation period if this is earlier

- take this daily LFD test before you leave your home for the first time that day

**Wales:**

- Arrange for a PCR test and isolate until the results are received
- If you are fully vaccinated, and your PCR result is negative, you do not need to isolate any further, unless the person in your household has Omicron and then you need to isolate for the full 10 days regardless of vaccination status
- If you are unvaccinated, then you need to isolate for 10 days regardless of the PCR result

**Scotland:**

- You should isolate for 10 days regardless of vaccination status

**Northern Ireland**

- If you are fully vaccinated you should arrange to take a PCR test on day 2 and 8. Provided you have no symptoms and your tests are negative there is no requirement to isolate
- If you are unvaccinated, then you need to isolate for 10 days
- Close contacts of Omicron will be advised individually by Public Health

Where sites have on site testing facilities you should arrange to take daily tests, or obtain home testing kits.

**7. Can I collect information from my team with regards to their vaccine status?**

Whilst you are entitled to ask an individual for their vaccine status they are not obligated to provide this information. If information is provided you **cannot** record this data for future use

**8. What does contact tracing involve?**

Contact tracing is an essential part of the Test, Trace, Protect strategy. The contact tracing process is described below and includes important information on what constitutes a 'close recent contact'. The information requested as part of the contact tracing process aims to identify how quickly the virus is spreading and whether there are hotspots of infection.

Examples of a close recent contact means someone they may or may not live or work with, and with whom they have been in close proximity on any occasion within or outside of the workplace since they have been experiencing symptoms including:

- someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 anytime from 2 days before the person was symptomatic up to 10 days from onset of symptoms (this is when they're infectious to others).
- someone within 1 metre of them with whom they have had a face-to-face-conversation, had skin-to-skin physical contact, have coughed on, or been in other forms of contact within 1 metre or 1 minute or longer

- someone within 2 metres of them for more than 15 minutes
- someone they have travelled in a vehicle with - or has been seated near them on public transport.

NHS Test and Trace will advise you what you need to do, if you are identified as a close recent contact. If you do not need to isolate, and your site operates a warn and inform process, then you are encouraged to have on site LFD tests each day for an 8 day period.

You should inform your line manager if you have been identified as a close recent contact and confirm the advice provided by the NHS

**9. As a Line Manager, do I need to do anything while an employee is in isolation / off sick due to COVID-19?**

You should continue to keep in regular contact with any employees from your team who may be in isolation or off sick due to COVID-19 just as you would for any other instance of sickness. It is paramount that you keep up to date with the latest guidance and complete the absence notification.

Individuals who remain off sick over the long term, should be referred to Occupational Health in line with your sites usual referral process.

Please ensure that you discuss the return to work with the Employee **PRIOR** to their return. It may be necessary to take more actions than would normally be required to ensure a smooth transition back to work, for instance other team members may be concerned about ongoing risks of infection. You should also complete the [absence notification form and return to work checklist](#).

**10. I am unable to get a fit note from my Doctor for my period of isolation due to a positive Covid test, what should I do?**

You are able to request an isolation note online via <https://111.nhs.uk/isolation-note> if you are off work because of Covid-19.

You can also provide the business with a copy of your confirmation email or text which confirms your test results and the date your isolation should end. If you are unable to return to work once your isolation ends, you must then provide a fit note to the business to cover the period of absence.

**11. What is the Company Process for returning to work where an employee has been in isolation / suspected or confirmed COVID-19?**

Employees who are returning to work from a period of isolation, must contact their line manager via telephone before they are due to return to work and ideally at least 12 hours before.

You should complete the checklist:

<http://ijmhrss.ce.altis.corusgroup.com/Covid19Checklist2>

The checklist will help determine if the employee is able to return to work. If there is any concern as to whether the employee should return, then please contact Occupational Health for advice.

The Line Manager is also expected to complete the [absence notification form](#) & select the 'Return to work' option.

**12. Do I need to do anything whilst I am off on Sickness Absence?**

You should continue to keep in regular contact with your line manager as you would for any other instance of sickness. Please ensure that you contact your line manager **PRIOR** to returning to work.

**13. I have received an appointment for my vaccination, am I able to go during working hours?**

As the COVID vaccination programme continues to be rolled out across the country it is recognised that it is in everyone's best interest for employees to be vaccinated as soon as possible. Employees should notify their line manager of their appointment date and time as soon as they receive it.

Individual working situations and scenarios will differ and therefore it is recognised that a degree of management discretion and flexibility may be beneficial dependent on the specific situation to enable individuals to attend their appointments. Experience to date suggests that appointments can be re-arranged and so if an appointment time falls within working hours and where this is likely to cause operational issues, employees are requested to re-arrange their appointment to a more suitable time, or arrange a shift-swap with one of their colleagues. Where a re-arrangement or shift swap has not been possible, individuals may wish to explore utilising a holiday, TOIL or unpaid leave in order to attend their appointment, but this should be discussed with their line manager beforehand

## **WORKING ARRANGEMENTS**

**14. When my children return to school, if breakfast and after-school clubs do not restart, what are my options?**

The Company recognises that school and childcare arrangements may not have yet returned to pre-COVID offerings. Flexibility in working arrangements and patterns will continue during the interim period, with employees able to continue to work from home, whilst continuing to care for children. However, where pre-COVID childcare arrangements are available, employees are expected to make suitable arrangements accordingly.

As a result, employees are encouraged to discuss such arrangements with their line manager on a regular basis.

**15. When should employees be returning to the office / workplace?**

Line managers will review the current working arrangements with employees who are continuing to work remotely. If for any reason, employees are not able to work from home safely and effectively, then it is possible for them to return to the workplace.

Wherever possible and until further notice, employees who are able to work from home are able to do so.

Before any employee returns to an office environment, line managers will discuss with their teams the protocols and arrangements which will need to be followed to ensure that any return enables safe social distancing to be maintained.

**16. My child has been sent home from school and been asked to have a Covid-19 test?**

You should follow the isolation rules as outlined in question 6.

However, should your child receive a positive PCR test, you should arrange to have a PCR test on day 2 and day 8. Only if your PCR test is positive, or you develop symptoms, should you start isolation.

However, in instances whereby you are required to look after your child, you should discuss with your manager whether you are able to work effectively from home, whilst your child is waiting for their test results, or has to complete an isolation period. If this is not possible, then you should either request holidays, unpaid parental leave, or time off for dependants (unpaid).

**17. I am required to continue to provide care for my parents, as the full care provision is not yet available, what are my options?**

The Company recognises that care arrangements may not have yet returned to pre-COVID offerings. Flexibility in working arrangements and patterns will continue during the interim period, with employees able to continue to work from home, whilst continuing to provide support. As a result, employees are encouraged to discuss such arrangements with their line manager on a regular basis.

**18. I have childcare vouchers, am I able to reduce my amount?**

Yes, you can reduce your childcare vouchers to a £1. To do this please access all aspects of your account online through the Sodexo Portal, including amending your monthly payroll deduction. It is important to note that if you wish to remain in the scheme, please **do not** cancel your vouchers completely as you will not be able to re-enter the scheme.

**19. Can I work from home?**

The company is supportive of employees who are able to work from home.

It is possible to access your emails and other documents stored on SharePoint for example from non-work devices. Guidance has been provided by IT:

<https://tsx.sharepoint.com/sites/intranet/news/1612-Most-frequently-asked-questions--working-from-home>

Where a role is suitable to be carried out from home, employees are requested to ensure that there is a suitable and safe working environment. In addition, employees should take into consideration the ability to maintain confidential information (Data Privacy) if another member of their household is also at home.

Should you or your line manager find that you are unable to perform your role whilst at home, you should proactively discuss the situation and return to the office, considering any requirements to maintain social distancing.

If you are working from home then please review the Homeworking Health, Safety and Wellbeing Guidance along with the Health & Safety Assessment Form. We appreciate we are in unprecedented times, but these documents may provide you with some useful information.

<https://tsx.sharepoint.com/sites/intranet/HR-UK-Services/serviceoverview/95-Flexible-Working>

It is very important that employees who are working from home maintain regular contact with their teams and line managers. You need to have open conversations with your manager about your level of activity and discuss any issues you may have. If you find that accessing the network remains to be a problem; then you may need to consider returning to your site. Please agree these arrangements with your line manager first.

## **20. My team are struggling to access the IT systems or are unable to work from home?**

If your team are struggling to access the IT systems, then you can discuss with them alternative patterns of work, for example, are they able to log on in the evenings to transmit information and documents? If you do consider this, then you do need to take into consideration whether this will be an effective way to ensure work is done.

If your team need to return to the office or are unable to work from home, then please consider the following to support social distancing and maintaining a clean workplace:

- Consider splitting your team into two sub teams so that they are in the office on different days
- Consider spacing desks in the office
- Encourage all employees to contact team members by skype or teams and only visit other departments if essential
- Ensure a good cleaning regime in your department – wipe down surfaces between shifts, different people touching equipment – can you use gloves?
- Wash hands regularly and every time you enter a new building / office

Discuss all options with your line managers.

## **SHIELDING**

### **21. Who would be classed as a clinically extremely vulnerable employee?**

There are 3 ways you may be identified as clinically extremely vulnerable:

- You have one or more of the conditions listed below, or
- Your clinician or GP has added you to the Shielded Patient List because, based on their clinical judgement, they deem to you be at higher risk of serious illness if you catch the virus.
- You have been identified through the population risk assessment as potentially being at high risk of serious illness if you catch the virus

People with the following conditions are automatically deemed clinically extremely vulnerable:

- solid organ transplant recipients
- people with specific cancers:
  - people with cancer who are undergoing active chemotherapy
  - people with lung cancer who are undergoing radical radiotherapy
  - people with cancers of the blood or bone marrow such as leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma who are at any stage of treatment
  - people having immunotherapy or other continuing antibody treatments for cancer
  - people having other targeted cancer treatments that can affect the immune system, such as protein kinase inhibitors or PARP inhibitors
  - people who have had bone marrow or stem cell transplants in the last 6 months or who are still taking immunosuppression drugs
  - people with severe respiratory conditions including all cystic fibrosis, severe asthma and severe chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
- people with rare diseases that significantly increase the risk of infections (such as severe combined immunodeficiency (SCID), homozygous sickle cell disease)
- people on immunosuppression therapies sufficient to significantly increase risk of infection
- problems with your spleen, for example splenectomy (having your spleen removed)
- adults with Down's syndrome
- adults on dialysis or with chronic kidney disease (stage 5)
- women who are pregnant with significant heart disease, congenital or acquired
- other people who have also been classed as clinically extremely vulnerable, based on clinical judgement and an assessment of their needs. GPs and hospital clinicians have been provided with guidance to support these decisions

Employees who are identified as being clinically extremely vulnerable, should as a minimum, follow the same guidance as everyone else, for example, maintaining social distancing, wearing face covering and regular sanitisation of hands and work spaces. An individual who is at a higher risk of becoming seriously ill, may want to think about additional precautions and prefer to limit the number of people they come into contact with.

Employees who are concerned should always discuss their concerns with their line manager, occupational health, Trade Unions, H&S or HR to ensure that any precautions can be implemented.

**22. One of my employees has been shielding, or is at a higher risk from Covid-19 can they now return to the workplace?**

From the 1 April, shielding has been paused. You should discuss with your employee their requirements and the requirements of the role. If they are able to work from home, then they are able to do so.

All employees who have been shielded, should contact Occupational health for a review before they are able to return to work. Prior to attending the meeting, the employee must also complete the individual risk assessment for review. The outcome of the meeting will be provided to the line manager and HR and discussed with the employee.

If your employee is concerned about returning to work, then following the review with Occupational Health you should contact them and discuss the changes to the workplace that have been implemented to ensure all reasonable measures have been taken to minimise the risk of exposure in the workplace.

**23. What should I advise any employee who is pregnant?**

Pregnant employees should speak to their HR Advisor so that we can understand the particular circumstances regarding their work environment. As a minimum, pregnant employees should follow the same guidance as everyone else. If they are more than 27 weeks pregnant, or have an underlying medical condition, then as part of the maternity risk assessment you should consider if any further precautions can be put in place such as limiting close contact with people they do not normally meet.

## **HOLIDAYS**

**24. I am planning to book an overseas holiday or travel abroad to see family; can I do this?**

You must ensure that you seek permission from your line manager before making any arrangements to travel overseas whether for a holiday or to visit family to ensure that you have the required amount of annual leave to incorporate the holiday and any isolation period that may be required.

If whilst on holiday, the Government amends the list of exempt countries from quarantine and you are required to isolate on your return to the UK then you will either be required to take additional holidays, TOIL or unpaid leave.

**25. Can I carry over holidays to a future leave year?**

It is the business intention to manage holidays to ensure appropriate balances are maintained.

However, if this is not possible, the government has allowed for extra flexibility to carry over up to four weeks holiday for a period of two years which the company will honour in exceptional circumstances.

**Useful Links:**

## Gov.UK

<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection</a>
<a href="https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-restriction-tiers-what-you-need-to-know?priority-taxon=774cee22-d896-44c1-a611-e3109cce8eae">https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-restriction-tiers-what-you-need-to-know?priority-taxon=774cee22-d896-44c1-a611-e3109cce8eae</a>
<a href="https://www.gov.uk/guidance/making-a-support-bubble-with-another-household?priority-taxon=774cee22-d896-44c1-a611-e3109cce8eae">https://www.gov.uk/guidance/making-a-support-bubble-with-another-household?priority-taxon=774cee22-d896-44c1-a611-e3109cce8eae</a>
<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19?priority-taxon=774cee22-d896-44c1-a611-e3109cce8eae">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19?priority-taxon=774cee22-d896-44c1-a611-e3109cce8eae</a>
<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19</a>

## NHS

<a href="https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-and-tracing/">https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-and-tracing/</a>
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## Wales

<a href="https://gov.wales/getting-tested-coronavirus-covid-19">https://gov.wales/getting-tested-coronavirus-covid-19</a>
<a href="https://gov.wales/self-isolation-stay-home-guidance-households-possible-coronavirus">https://gov.wales/self-isolation-stay-home-guidance-households-possible-coronavirus</a>
<a href="https://gov.wales/coronavirus-regulations-guidance">https://gov.wales/coronavirus-regulations-guidance</a>
<a href="https://gov.wales/protecting-people-defined-medical-grounds-extremely-vulnerable-coronavirus-covid-19-previously">https://gov.wales/protecting-people-defined-medical-grounds-extremely-vulnerable-coronavirus-covid-19-previously</a>
<a href="https://gov.wales/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-people-defined-on-medical-grounds-as-extremely-vulnerable-from-coronavirus-covid-19.html">https://gov.wales/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-people-defined-on-medical-grounds-as-extremely-vulnerable-from-coronavirus-covid-19.html</a>

## Scotland

<a href="https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/test-and-protect/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-infection">https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/test-and-protect/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-infection</a>
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## Northern Ireland

<a href="https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-self-isolating-and-close-contacts">https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-self-isolating-and-close-contacts</a>
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