

Workforce Q & A's – COVID-19 – 24 December 2021

**This will be up-dated as the COVID-19 situation changes
and Government advice is up-dated (recent changes in red)**

**Please do not print this document
refer to the most recent version on the intranet**

There will be a continuing need to maintain essential service requirements, potentially with an increased workload in a number of areas. Staff who remain clear of the virus and are not required under PHE guidelines to self-isolate should continue to attend their usual place of work.

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Appendix 1 - Recording Covid19 absence on Health Roster and ESR

1. Self-Isolation

If you have symptoms, a close contact has symptoms or you/a household member are coming into hospital as a patient

There are higher levels of isolation required for healthcare workers than the general public. Please refer to this guidance:

1.1 *What should I do if I develop symptoms of Covid-19?*

DO NOT ATTEND WORK

- Inform your manager that you are unwell and advise when you last worked. If you become symptomatic <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/symptoms/> while at work inform your line manager straight away and go home, take your belongings with you and wash your hands.
- You must follow the Stay at home Guidance <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance> and arrange for a Covid-19 swab via the hospital swabbing team as soon as possible, any delay should be escalated to your line manager. Guidance for accessing staff swabbing is below in Section 3.
- You must **NOT** return to work while awaiting your swab result. You should do this even if you have received one or more doses of COVID-19 vaccine. This is because it is still possible to get COVID-19 and spread it to others even if you are vaccinated.
- If you are at home self-isolating due to symptoms of Covid-19, you should be staying at home and not going out.
- Trust staff should be leading by example and following Government guidelines at all times.

1.1.1 *If I have a PCR test (with or without *symptoms), and the result is positive, how long should I isolate for?*

If a staff member receives a positive SARS-CoV-2 PCR test result, they must complete a period of self-isolation. The isolation period includes the day the symptoms started or the day their PCR test was taken if they do not have symptoms, **and the next 10 full days**

Staff **may be able** to end their self-isolation period before the end of the 10 full days by undertaking an LFD test on the sixth day and seventh day of their isolation period (24 hours apart) if free from symptoms. If both these LFD test results are negative, they may return to work from day 8 under the conditions set-out within the [risk assessment and key principles](#):

General Key principles:

The **Risk Assessment** must be completed in every case before any return prior the full 10 days isolation period.

The risk assessment is here:

[https://intranet.rbch.nhs.uk/uploads/covid-19/documents/clinical/RA -
Returning to work on day 8 post Positive PCR guidance and risk assessment V2. 23 12 2021.docx](https://intranet.rbch.nhs.uk/uploads/covid-19/documents/clinical/RA_-_Returning_to_work_on_day_8_post_Positive_PCR_guidance_and_risk_assessment_V2.23_12_2021.docx)

This is a **case by case risk assessment** to cover health and social care staff that may be able to end their self-isolation period before the end of the 10 full days by undertaking an LFD test on the sixth day and seventh day of their isolation period (24 hours apart). If both these LFD test results are negative, they may return to work on day 8 under the following conditions as set-out below. It is expected all infection, prevention and control (IPC) measures remain in place, and...

1. The staff member should not have any COVID-19 symptoms and be medically fit to return.
2. A risk assessment below must be carried out.
3. the staff member **should continue to undertake daily LFD tests on day 8, 9 and 10 from the point symptoms developed or when they were PCR +ve, whichever is the earlier date** (If any of the LFD test results are positive the staff member should re commence self-isolation and wait 24 hours before taking the next LFD test).
4. If the subsequent LFD test is negative the member of staff can return to work and continue to test until day 10.
5. If the LFD test is positive on the 10th day, daily LFD testing should continue every 24 hours until a **negative result is found**, and the staff member should not return to work until a negative LFD test result is received.
6. On days the staff member is working, the LFD test should be taken prior to beginning their shift, as close as possible to the start time.
7. The staff member must continue to comply with all relevant infection control precautions and PPE must be worn properly throughout the day.
8. If the staff member works with staff, patients or residents who are especially vulnerable to COVID-19 (as determined by the organisation), through the risk assessment, consideration should be given to redeployment for the remainder of the 10-day isolation period.
9. The staff member should comply with all relevant infection.
10. Infection control precautions and PPE should be worn properly throughout the day.
11. Robust IPC measures must be in place with effect from the return period
12. There needs to be a record that mitigations have been put in place to protect patients and staff from a potentially harmful exposure (eg, not working with immunocompromised or clinical vulnerable patients as set out within the risk assessment etc.)

The Risk Assessment is completed, the with staff member by the directorate senior matron or senior nominated healthcare professional, or in the case of Corporate Functions an appropriate line manager. Once the risk assessment is completed and appropriate LFD tests are completed at day 6 and 7 and are negative, the staff member has no Covid-19 symptoms then this needs to be discussed with the Care Group Director of Nursing or nominated senior healthcare professional, or in the case of Corporate Functions, with the Director or Deputy of the function, to ensure the colleague returning is in the most suitable environment and mitigations are in place. Staff members can now

return to work **as long as the criteria within the risk assessment can be met.**

*Symptoms include:

- a high temperature or feeling hot and shivery
- a runny nose or sneezing
- loss of taste / smell
- feeling or being sick
- diarrhoea
- loss of appetite

There are several other symptoms linked with COVID-19. If you are concerned about your symptoms, seek medical advice. Only stop self-isolating when these symptoms have gone and you are medically fit to return to work. If you need to self-isolate for longer than 10 days please contact your line manager who will advise you regarding medical certification. Please see section 8.

1.1.2 How do I record the Risk Assessment for returning to work from day 8?

A log of the Individual risk assessment carried out needs to be recorded via ESR Manager Self Service this is available on the Intranet under Risk Assessment Toolkit – How to log a completed risk assessment on ESR – see link here: (<https://intranet.rbch.nhs.uk/index.php/covid-19/hr>) The logging of this as soon as possible is very important as it gives the Trust real time information on staff unavailability. The completed form should be scanned and sent to HR.filing@uhd.nhs.uk so it can be held in the individual's personal file. Any local copy should be held securely or disposed of in confidential waste once scanned and sent.

1.1.3 If I feel well, can I come into work during a period of self-isolation?

You **MUST NOT** come into work if you should be self-isolating in accordance with Government guidelines.

Your manager also has a responsibility to prevent anyone who is required to be self-isolating from attending the workplace (except where they work from home).

Failure to comply is a criminal offence punishable by a fine of £1,000 for a first offence, rising to £10,000 for repeated infringements. The same fines apply to those preventing others from self-isolating.

1.1.4 I have symptoms / I have a positive lateral flow result but my PCR has been confirmed as negative, what should I do?

Staff who receive a negative PCR test result can usually return to work providing they are medically fit to do so.

1.2 I am a CONTACT (including household members) of someone confirmed as COVID-19 positive, what should I do?

- You must stay at home and self-isolate for 10 days if not fully vaccinated.
- If fully vaccinated (i.e. have received two vaccine doses and you are 14 days post second vaccination) you should arrange a PCR test and you can return to work if:
 - 1) your PCR test is negative (if positive, isolate for 10 days)
AND
 - 2) a risk assessment is carried out and it is deemed appropriate by your line manager, for you to return to work. Please note that it is essential that a risk assessment is carried out and this is fully documented.

UHD's Risk Assessment for Covid-19 confirmed CONTACT is here:

https://intranet.rbch.nhs.uk/uploads/covid-19/documents/clinical/RA_Staff_exemption_from_isolation_guidance_and_risk_assessment_V1.8_23_12_21.docx

The Government's return to work flowchart is here: [20200731_COVID-19_Management_staff_exposed_patients_Symptomatic_worker_flow_chart.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-management-staff-exposed-patients-symptomatic-worker-flow-chart) ([publishing.service.gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-management-staff-exposed-patients-symptomatic-worker-flow-chart))

- If negative, you should complete daily lateral flow tests before attending work each day for 10 days and should seek a repeat PCR in the event of any positive lateral flow test and report these on <https://mytest.uhd.nhs.uk/>. If not in work you should still complete the daily lateral flow tests.
- (It should be noted that the definition of 'fully vaccinated' may change in due course to include having had a booster vaccine).

1.2.1 How do I record the Risk Assessment for returning to work following CONTACT with a Covid-19 confirmed case?

A log of the Individual risk assessment carried out needs to be recorded via ESR Manager Self Service this is available on the Intranet under Risk Assessment Toolkit – How to log a completed risk assessment on ESR – see link here: (<https://intranet.rbch.nhs.uk/index.php/covid-19/hr>) The logging of this as soon as possible is very important as it gives the Trust real time information on staff unavailability. The completed form should be scanned and sent to HR.filing@uhd.nhs.uk so it can be held in the individual's personal file. Any local copy should be held securely or disposed of in confidential waste once scanned and sent.

1.3 I have developed further symptoms after already having had Covid-19, what should I do?

Any member of staff who previously tested positive for Covid-19 and develops symptoms again should self-isolate again and have a further test.

1.4 *I am coming into hospital for surgery and have been advised to self-isolate prior to my operation. Will I be paid?*

If the hospital has advised you to self-isolate it is important to follow this instruction and not to leave your home for the period of time specified by your medical team. You will continue to receive your usual pay from the Trust.

It may be possible to continue to work from home during this period of self-isolation, including completing mandatory training and on-line development.

1.5 *A member of my household is coming into hospital for surgery and we have all been advised to self-isolate prior to their surgery. Will I be paid?*

If the hospital has advised the whole household to self-isolate prior to one person's surgery, you should all follow this advice and not leave the home for the period of time specified by the medical team. If you work for the Trust you will continue to receive your usual pay. Anyone who does not work for the Trust should discuss this with their employer.

It may be possible to continue to work from home during this period of self-isolation, including completing mandatory training and on-line development.

Alternatively, the person who will be undergoing surgery may choose to shield by distancing themselves from the rest of their household for the recommended period of time.

1.6 *If a member of staff is self-isolating prior to coming into hospital for an operation how should this be recorded?*

You should record this absence in the usual way, under 'other leave' – infection precaution.

1.7 *What are the arrangements for staff that have travelled to England from another Country?*

Staff are required to adhere to National entry and self-isolation requirements. There are specific instructions for those entering from countries on the [Red list](#). Essentially the requirement is to book a quarantine hotel for 10 days and take a COVID-19 PCR Test on days 2 and 8 of quarantine. The link included in this paragraph should be followed as changes may be made to the actions and countries deemed to be within the RED list.

Health and social care staff entering from any country not on the red list are required to take a PCR test on or before day 2 after their return. They must self-isolate until they receive a negative PCR test result. If the PCR test result is positive, they must start 10 full days isolation from the day of their test and follow the [Stay at home guidance](#) and as per para 1.1.1. If the PCR test result is negative they can return to work but they are also required to take a daily LFD Ag test until day 10 after return from travel.

2. Shielding

2.1 *Has shielding been paused?*

From week commencing 15 March 2021 members of staff assessed as Clinically Extremely Vulnerable received a communication from the Department of Health and Social Care advising them that from 01 April 2021 they could stop shielding and begin to follow the same national restrictions alongside the rest of the population.

This decision was taken in recognition that a combination of vaccinations and/or the lower rates of COVID-19 were likely to reduce the risk level allowing shielding staff to be invited back into the workplace with relevant and adequate safety measures in place. It is anticipated that this group of staff are likely to have received their first, second and booster vaccines. Any staff raising health related concerns regarding their return to work should be asked to liaise with their GP or Consultant for further advice. Should there be a medical decision for them not to return to work a fit note (medical certificate) will be required. This should then be recorded on ESR in the usual way.

It is important that all staff follow the rules to:

- minimise contact with others
- continue to wash hands carefully and more frequently than usual
- maintain thorough cleaning of frequently touched areas in your home and/or workspace
- consider how to get to and from work. If you need to use public transport, you must wear a [face covering](#) unless you are exempt. Where possible, consider travelling outside peak hours to reduce the number of people with whom you come into contact.

Further detail can be found at [staying alert and safe](#) guidance

3. Staff swabbing/contact tracing

3.1 *If I have symptoms, can I be swabbed?*

In accordance with NHS advice, staff who Covid-19 symptoms should arrange to be swabbed by the swabbing team. This should be as soon as possible after developing symptoms. You will need to email the following details to staff.swabbingrbch@uhd.nhs.uk
Staff.SwabbingPoole@uhd.nhs.uk

Your name, date of birth, your contact number, your job role, symptoms and date they started.

Covid-19 swabs are available for symptomatic staff and their household members via the hospital drive-through facility. We are unable to offer this

service to friends of staff. We know the national swabbing service is under tremendous pressure but unfortunately cannot accommodate more testing for non-staff members.

3.2 *I have symptoms and do not drive and do not feel comfortable walking into a testing centre. What should I do?*

If you are unable to visit a test centre you should order a home testing kit at <https://self-referral.test-for-coronavirus.service.gov.uk/test-type>

All symptomatic staff should be tested between days 1 and 8 of symptoms. Failure to do so may affect your pay.

3.3 *I do not have symptoms, but have received a positive PCR test. What should I do?*

If you do not have symptoms but have tested positive for COVID-19, stay at home and self-isolate in line with section 1.1.1 above.

3.4 *How often should I be doing a lateral flow test?*

All Trust employees should be carrying out a lateral flow test twice a week, these are really important, especially with the increase in cases of the Delta /Omicron variant. Please remember, every time you take a test you need to upload your results to our portal at mytest.uhd.nhs.uk

Further information can be found on the intranet at [Covid self-testing](#).

Obtaining new Covid lateral flow tests

You can order one pack per day containing 7 tests by completing the form that can be found at

<https://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests>

Although the delivery times are swift please ensure you order ahead of running out of supplies.

3.5 *My partner has a positive lateral flow test and is waiting for the results of their PCR test. Should I also self-isolate?*

Yes, you should self-isolate in line with Trust guidance and arrange for a PCR test to be undertaken.

3.6 *What should I do if I tested positive for COVID-19 more than 90 days ago and a routine test for COVID-19 identifies the virus again (either through PCR testing or LFD)?*

It is possible the vaccine has not been 100% effective or you have been exposed to a variant not fully covered by the vaccine, therefore you should follow the current advice and self-isolate for 10 days.

This remains the case even if fully vaccinated.

3.7 What is the NHS contact tracing app?

The NHS contact tracing app was launched some time ago and we are aware that many of you will want to use this in your personal lives. Details of the app can be found [here](#).

The current advice for healthcare workers is that the app should be turned off when arriving at work as you will be wearing masks and other PPE in accordance with your role. Alongside this, you must continue to maintain the two-metre social distancing and hand hygiene rules in place.

If you are using one of the on-site café's please check in using the associated QR codes.

At this time the simple message for you is: **'Mask on - app off'** and continue to adhere to the national guidance with respect to hand hygiene, physical distancing and face coverings/masks. Please remember to switch off your phone/ app if it is going to be left in your locker whilst you work.

Further information from NHS Employers advises:

You should pause the app when you:

- are working behind a fixed Perspex (or equivalent) screen and are fully protected from other people
- store your phone in a locker or communal area, for example while working or taking part in a leisure activity like swimming
- are a worker in social care and are wearing medical grade PPE such as a surgical mask
- are a healthcare worker working in a healthcare building such as a hospital or GP surgery ([read more about using the app as a healthcare worker](#))

Remember to turn contact tracing back on once you leave this situation. When you pause contact tracing in the app it will give you the option to set a reminder to turn it back on after a certain period of time.

When contact tracing is paused, you will still be able to check into venues with an official NHS QR code poster. [Read more about the difference between contact tracing and venue check-in.](#)

3.8 A colleague has received track and trace message as they have been in contact with someone, outside of work, who tested positive for Covid-19. Do I also need to self-isolate?

Your colleague will need to self-isolate (follow 3.7 and section 1 above). You do not need to self-isolate (unless you live in the same household) or you have been contacted by Test and Trace.

3.9 *I have been contacted by track and trace, but the advice given was not to self-isolate as I have previously tested positive (within the last 90 days). Is this correct?*

You should follow the instructions given by track and trace. If you have recently recovered you are likely to be immune for at least 90 days. Should symptoms develop you should self-isolate immediately.

4. Covid-19 vaccine/Mandatory vaccinations for front line workers

4.1 *Is the Trust still providing Covid-19 vaccines?*

Vaccinations and boosters have been running within UHD since 16 April 2021. The majority of our staff have now received their first and second vaccines. If you require a vaccine this can be booked via the following link:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/book-coronavirus-vaccination/>

4.2 *Mandatory vaccinations for health care workers working on the front line – what are the new government regulations?*

New Government Regulations come into force on 1 April 2022, requiring Health and social care workers including volunteers who have face-to-face contact with service users, to provide evidence they have been fully vaccinated against COVID-19 in order to be employed (Unless there are exemptions due to health reasons).

Staff will need to evidence that that they have had two doses of a Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) approved COVID-19 vaccine, or that they come within a specified exemption. Staff will need to have had their first covid vaccination by 3rd February 2022 to meet this requirement.

Information on how this new regulation will be operationalised will be provided in due course.

This new guidance is in addition to the Government regulations that came into place on 11 November 2021, for staff working in care homes.

5. Social distancing

5.1 *What is social distancing?*

To reduce the risk of catching or spreading coronavirus keep at least 2 metres away from people you do not live with. Social distancing is essential to stop

the spread of the virus, as it is more likely to spread when people are close together. An infected person can pass on the virus even if they do not have any symptoms, through talking, breathing, coughing or sneezing.

Where you cannot stay 2 metres apart you should stay more than 1 metre apart, as well as taking extra steps to stay safe. For example:

- wear a face covering: on public transport and in many indoor spaces you must wear a face covering by law, unless you are exempt
- move outdoors, where it is safer and there is more space
- if indoors, make sure rooms are well ventilated by keeping windows and doors open

It may not always be possible or practicable to maintain social distancing when providing care to a young child, or person with a disability or health condition. You should still limit close contact as much as possible when providing these types of care, and take other precautions such as washing hands and opening windows for ventilation.

Further information can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-coronavirus-restrictions-what-you-can-and-cannot-do>

5.2 *Can we meet as a group when leaving our usual work area or during break times?*

- When going in to offices, kitchens and rest rooms you must adhere to the number of people allowed as indicated on the Covid-19 risk assessment displayed on the door.
- The risk assessment should have been undertaken by a line manager from that area.
- Facemasks must be worn as guided in the hospital where you cannot socially distance (2 metres) **and** in all corridors.
- Breaks **MUST NOT** be taken in ward offices or small rooms where a distance of 2 metres cannot be achieved between you and your colleagues.
- Where practicably possible, break times should be staggered to encourage social distancing.

5.3 *How do I physically distance within an office workplace?*

It is recognised that some office staff work in close proximity to each other, in view of this some precautions need to be put in place to physically distance when working. There are a number of options to support this, including working from home if equipment is available; developing a rota system, so that sufficient people are in the office to respond to walk-in enquiries and any urgent situations as they arise; splitting the working day into early and late shifts, dependant on the needs of the service.

Try and reduce congestion at entry/exit points of buildings, opening up additional doors where possible and safe.

Review layout of desks and equipment to ensure a 2m distance – using tape to mark out areas may be helpful. Where people can't be distanced use screens to separate them from each other.

Avoid hot-desking. If this is unavoidable frequently sanitise workstations and equipment between uses.

Reduce movement around the buildings as much as possible, by use of Microsoft teams and telephone calls. If meeting face-to-face ensure the room is well ventilated and large enough to physically distance from others or meet outdoors. Use stairs rather than lifts to avoid being in an enclosed space with others.

Evidence suggests that the virus can exist for up to 72 hours on hard surfaces, therefore, frequent cleaning of work areas with anti-bacterial wipes is recommended, particularly those areas that are touched frequently, such as door handles, phones, keyboards and light switches. Clear work spaces at the end of each day to allow thorough cleaning and removal of waste

Staff should wash their hands frequently and use hand gel when soap and water isn't available. Where possible, use paper towels rather than hand dryers. Also avoid touching your face.

It is also important to wash clothes worn in clinical areas at greater than 60 degrees. Uniforms must be worn if provided. Uniforms and work wear for the clinical area must not be worn when travelling to and from work.

Following these guidelines should help prevent transmission of the virus.

If a member of an office team is symptomatic they should not come into work and should request a test from the staff swabbing line.

Physical distancing in the workplace should be observed by everyone. It is everyone's responsibility to practice physical distancing in all circumstances.

Further details are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do>

5.4 Do I need to stay 2 metres apart – or 1 metre?

You should minimise time spent outside your home and when around other people ensure that you are two metres apart from anyone not in your household or support bubble.

Reminder:

•**HANDS** - Wash your hands regularly and for 20 seconds.

•**FACE** - Wear a face covering in indoor settings where social distancing may be difficult, and where you will come into contact with people you do not normally meet.

•**SPACE** - Stay 2 metres apart from people you do not live with where possible, or 1 metre with extra precautions in place (such as wearing face coverings or increasing ventilation indoors).

6. Maintaining service requirements

6.1 *Should I be staying at home?*

Where possible, you should work at home see section 7.1. Where this isn't possible you should attend work and take the precautions to keep safe, as shown in section 5. Outside of work the advice remains for everyone to stay local and to minimise travel.

6.2 *If I am asked to work more hours can I opt out of Working Time Regulations?*

Yes. The reference period is averaged over 17 weeks with a maximum number of hours of 48 per week. You may also sign an opt-out form if required to work additional hours over an extended period.

7. Homeworking

7.1 **What is the Government's advice on working from home in relation to Covid?**

Work from home if you can - Office workers who can work from home should do so from Monday 13 December. Anyone who cannot work from home should continue to go into work - for example, to access equipment necessary for their role or where their role must be completed in person. In-person working will be necessary in some cases to continue the effective and accessible delivery of some public services and private industries. If you need to continue to go into work, consider taking lateral flow tests regularly to manage your own risk and the risk to others.

Consideration should be given by line managers around the appropriateness of home working for those that may need additional support or are facing mental or physical health difficulties, or those with a particularly challenging home working environment.

7.2 *How do I arrange to work from home?*

What to do:

Please speak to your line manager. In order to register as an agile worker/working from home, please use the e-form "Work from home/Agile working Request" on the EFORMS portal.

It is essential that discussion and approval has already been made by line manager and service manager, to evaluate and manage the impact and implications on the individual, of co-workers and the service. Any requests will be approved online by approving managers.

Select agile working on the eForm and fill out the OH information that follows in the questionnaire that is applicable to your situation. Risk and OH have been part of developing this process and will evaluate each case on individual basis if the member of staff who is applying reports health issues that need to be considered.

- If you already have IT equipment and only want to register your application as an agile worker and be able to work from home, please state that you do not have any equipment requirements.
- If you don't have IT equipment, the website will link you to the IT service desk through the IT self-service to request equipment. You will need the reference number provided in the agile working form. All equipment will be budgeted against the department budgets and need managerial approval.

Additionally, you MUST complete a DSE online self-assessment for your new working environment (i.e. home or new office). To do so use the EFORMS portal in Google Chrome and complete the "DSE User Self-Assessment".

7.3 *If I'm working from home should I be calling in?*

If your line manager agrees that you are able to work from home, arrangements should be put in place to catch up with them or another appropriate person in the team on a regular basis. Please also refer to the wellbeing section of this document the [remote and offsite working policy](#) on the intranet.

8. Staff Absence

8.1 *How do I record Staff Absence?*

Please ensure that you update your staff absence records on a daily basis. If you are a member of staff reporting your absence, please do this via your line manager and not through the HR Covid-19 helpline. If your department is on the roster please record via the roster ONLY, this will pull through to ESR. ESR Related reasons can be found on your absence screen (second

from bottom option). If you have a staff member who is taking a large amount of unpaid leave or you need help with recording please email Workforcehelp@uhd.nhs.uk.

Please see appendix 1 for recording Covid-19 absence on Health Roaster and ESR.

8.2 *If I'm on long term sickness as a result of Covid-19 will I go into half pay?*

There is a national agreement that anyone on sickness absence due to any Covid-19 related condition receives full pay.

8.3 *Is Covid-19 sickness/isolation included when managing staff attendance?*

Any periods of Covid-19 related sickness, including self-isolation, will not count towards a sickness score and should be removed from any calculations before inviting staff to a managing attendance meeting.

8.4 *Should I provide a fit note (sick note) for any Covid-19 sickness absence that lasts for longer than ten days?*

If you have Covid-19 symptoms and have been told to self-isolate by the NHS website, NHS111 online, NHS inform or Covid-19 app you can get an isolation note, which will be for a duration of 10 days. The latest advice regarding isolation notes can be found at: <https://111.nhs.uk/isolation-note/>

In the event that your sickness, due to Covid-19 symptoms, or another illness, last longer than 10 calendar days, you should submit a self-certificate, which can be downloaded from the internet. This will cover you for a further 7 calendar days. You will need to request a Fit Note (sickness certificate) from your GP for extended periods of sickness absence.

Interim Government advice (until 26.1.22) is here: <https://www.gov.uk/taking-sick-leave>

9. PPE/Uniforms

9.1 *How do I get FIT tested?*

Information on FIT testing is available on the intranet at:

https://intranet.rbch.nhs.uk/uploads/infection-control/documents/coronavirus/Fit_testing_4.pdf

<https://intranet.poole.nhs.uk/index.php/infection-control/fit-testing-ffp3-masks>

9.2 What is the latest guidance about PPE and staff uniforms?

Latest guidance can be found at:

<https://intranet.rbch.nhs.uk/index.php/infection-control/organisms#PPE-video>
<https://intranet.poole.nhs.uk/index.php/infection-control/fit-testing-ffp3-masks>

As new evidence emerges PPE requirements are continually reviewed but at this time there are no changes to the PHE guidance.

PPE is just one of the tools available to minimise the spread of Covid-19 and other transmittable infections – click [here](#) for more detailed guidance on how Covid-19 is managed in hospitals, and links to the latest evidence and guidance.

9.3 Are masks or other face coverings advised for non-clinical areas?

Only masks provided by the Trust should be worn in the workplace.

PPE, and importantly, the *right* PPE, is still required. Guidance on the PPE needed in high, medium or low risk areas can be found at the top of [this page](#).

For full information on wearing of PPE and Covid-19 secure areas please see the link below or call the Covid-19 help-line for advice on ext. 4804:

<https://intranet.rbch.nhs.uk/index.php/infection-control/organisms#PPE-video>
<https://intranet.poole.nhs.uk/index.php/infection-control/fit-testing-ffp3-masks>

9.4 A member of staff has asked to wear their own PPE. Is this permitted?

Only PPE supplied and approved by the Trust can be worn at work. The member of staff should be referred to the PPE guidelines on the intranet. If there are specific health reasons for this request please liaise with Occupational Health for further advice.

10. Pregnant employees/maternity leave

10.1 What is the advice if I am a healthcare worker and pregnant?

Advice for pregnant healthcare workers (as at Government advice 20 July 2021):

The following recommendations apply for women less than 28 weeks pregnant with no underlying health conditions that place them at a greater risk of severe illness from coronavirus (COVID-19):

You must first have a workplace risk assessment with your manager or occupational health team and should only continue working if the risk assessment advises that it is safe to do so.

This means that your manager should remove or manage any potential risks. If this cannot be done, your manager should consider suitable alternative work or working arrangements (including working from home) or suspend you on your normal pay.

You will need to ensure you are able to adhere to any active national guidance on social distancing.

Some higher risk occupations such as those with greater public contact or in healthcare positions there may be a higher risk of exposure to the virus. In healthcare settings this may include working in specific higher risk areas or higher risk procedures as summarised in the Public Health England publication Guidance on Infection Prevention and Control.

You should be supported by your manager with appropriate risk mitigation in line with recommendations from your workplace risk assessment, e.g. appropriate PPE.

The following recommendations apply for pregnant women who are 28 weeks pregnant and beyond or less than 28 weeks pregnant with underlying health conditions that place them at a greater risk of severe illness from coronavirus:

If you are 28 weeks pregnant and beyond, or if you are pregnant and have an underlying health condition that puts you at a greater risk of severe illness from COVID-19 at any gestation, you should take a more precautionary approach.

This is because although you are at no more risk of contracting the virus than any other non-pregnant person who is in similar health, you have an increased risk of becoming severely ill and of pre-term birth if you contract COVID-19.

Your manager should ensure you are able to adhere to any active national guidance on social distancing.

For many people, this may require working flexibly from home in a different capacity.

All managers should consider both how to redeploy affected staff and how to maximise the potential for homeworking, wherever possible. Advice can be sought from Human Resources.

Where adjustments to the work environment and role are not possible and alternative work cannot be found, you should be suspended on paid leave.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-pregnant-employees/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-pregnant-employees>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/pregnancy-breastfeeding-fertility-and-coronavirus-covid-19-vaccination/>

10.2 What is the earliest date I can start my maternity leave?

The earliest date you are able to commence maternity leave is at 29 weeks. Further information can be found in the maternity leave pack on the intranet or by contacting your HR Advisor.

11. Domestic/caring responsibilities

11.1 My child has been sent home from school and told to self-isolate because another child from within their classroom has tested positive for coronavirus? Do I need to self-isolate as well?

You do not need to self-isolate, unless your child develops COVID-19 symptoms. Your child will then need to be PCR tested and if positive, you will need to isolate as per section 1.2 above. If you develop symptoms you will need to follow the instructions in section 1.1.1 above.

If your child does not have symptoms/not confirmed as COVID-19 positive, but you are unable to work due to caring responsibilities, you should discuss how this can be supported with your line manager. If possible, you may be able to continue working from home or you may request a temporary change to your working hours/shift pattern. Alternatively, you may take annual leave, time owing, unpaid leave, carers leave or make time up at a later date.

11.2 What should I do if my child's school closes and I can't come into work?

You may request dependant's leave (typically one day) to arrange alternative child care. If you require further time, this will be granted in accordance with existing Trust policy. If you require further flexible working your manager can then consider a number of options, including working from home (where possible), or you could request to take annual leave, special leave, unpaid leave or time owing, by agreement with your manager.

TOPS nursery both on-site and in other locations has availability for children up to the age of 11, between the hours of 06:00 and 20:00, Monday to Friday. Parents who wish to find out more information should contact the nursery on 01202 300688 or 01202 551553 (select option 1, then 2) or contact info.rbh@topsdynurseries.co.uk

Further information relating to childcare issues can be found at:

<https://www.nhsemployers.org/covid19/health-safety-and-wellbeing/supporting-staff-with-childcare-responsibilities/faqs>

11.3 I am concerned about my elderly relative who I care for on a regular basis. What entitlement do I have to take leave?

You may request dependant's leave (typically one day) to arrange alternative care. If you require further time, this will be granted in accordance with

existing Trust policy. If you have been in contact with Covid-19 you should refrain from visiting vulnerable relatives or friends and arrange alternative care.

12. Travel to work arrangements

12.1 *What happens if Public Transport arrangements break down?*

All reasonable efforts should be made to come in. It may be worth making plans for lift shares with members of your household / alternative forms of transport.*

*There may be a temporary requirement to adjust hours to accommodate this.

Please also consider cycling or walking to work, to avoid close contact with others on public transport.

12.2 *Is car parking free on site for staff?*

Free staff car parking onsite is only applicable to staff who hold and display a valid parking permit. Deduction from salary payments has been temporarily suspended for these staff. Any member of staff wishing to park on site who does not hold a current permit should apply in the usual way. The usual criteria will apply and applications can be made at the following link:

Parking permit application: <https://www.rbchparkingpermit.co.uk/>
<https://www.phftparkingpermit.co.uk/>

Any queries relating to parking should be made to:

Email: travelteam@uhd.nhs.uk

12.3 *Should people wear face coverings on public transport?*

As of 30 November 2021, the wearing of face coverings has been re-introduced in shops and settings such as banks, post offices and hairdressers, as well as on public transport. This list was extended with effect from 10th December: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own>

Some people are exempt, and do not have to wear a face covering on public transport, including for health, age or equality reasons.

A face covering is not the same as surgical masks or respirators used as part of personal protective equipment by healthcare and other workers; these should continue to be reserved for those who need them to protect against risks in their workplace such as health and care workers and those in industrial settings like those exposed to dust hazards.

12.4 I need to travel in a car with my colleague to make a home visit. What are the current guidelines?

You should try not to share a vehicle with those outside your household or support bubble. If you need to do this, try to:

- share the transport with the same people each time
- keep to small groups of up to 6 people at any one time
- open windows for ventilation
- travel side by side or behind other people, rather than facing them, where seating arrangements allow
- face away from each other
- consider seating arrangements to maximise distance between people in the vehicle
- clean your car between journeys using standard cleaning products - make sure you clean door handles and other areas that people may touch
- ask the driver and passengers to wear a face covering
- wash your hands for at least 20 seconds or sanitise your hand as soon as possible when finishing the journey.

13. Meetings and training courses

Restarting Group Meetings

The guidance around staff meetings, both on and off site, has been updated to reflect the latest advice from the Government.

Organisers should carefully consider whether any staff may be disadvantaged by the re-introduction of face-to-face meetings.

Please use the Covid-19 Mitigation Risk assessments for any rooms / venues used in conjunction with the current UHD and national [IPC Guidance](#).

The full guidance can be read [here](#).

Face to face training is taking place with some changes having been made:

- The number of places on each course has been reduced. The Training department reviewed delegates on a “first come first served” basis, therefore, some staff will be notified that their place has been cancelled.
- If you have a session booked and can no longer attend please can you withdraw via ESR or call Ext 4267 so we can reallocate the place.
- All staff attending mandatory face-to-face training in the Trust **must now attend in uniform**. This is in line with current infection control advice (as at 15 June 2021).

Staff on training are reminded to continue with good infection control procedures by wearing masks, wiping down surfaces and practicing good

hand hygiene. For any questions around this please contact the IPC Team UHD ipcteamuhd@uhd.nhs.uk

All training can be booked via ESR as usual.

The BEAT team continue to consider different ways of helping staff access their mandatory training, any new changes will be communicated to you as soon as possible.

14. Annual leave/travel

14.1 *Can I book annual leave for a member of staff who hasn't used any leave yet?*

Yes, all employees are encouraged to take a proportionate amount of annual leave throughout the year to support their own wellbeing and the needs of the service. Where individuals choose not to book leave, this can be undertaken by their line manager.

14.2 *Will I get my annual leave if I need to self-isolate during my annual leave?*

If you are contact traced while on annual leave and advised to self-isolate you should contact your line manager and produce a copy of the text or email. If you are required to self-isolate for any period of time then this will be recorded accordingly and not as annual leave.

If you continue to be unwell after the self-isolating period this will be recorded as sickness absence in the usual way.

14.3 *If I decide to travel whilst restrictions are in place will I be paid during for my isolation period?*

Annual leave should only be booked once the total duration of your leave, including any known isolation period, has been approved by your line manager.

Where you have to self-isolate on your return (whether known at the time or travel of not), this will need to be taken as one, or a combination of, the following:

- paid annual leave (from your usual annual leave allowance)
- unpaid leave
- making up some or all of the 10 days' leave through working additional hours/shifts over your normal contracted hours. Time must be made up within 18 months of your return to work
- taking previously accrued time off in lieu (TOIL)
- working from home, where this is possible and meets the needs of the service

- temporary reassignment, where possible, to appropriate work that can be carried out from home

All of the above should be agreed in advance with your line manager.

In extenuating circumstances, such as attending family funerals abroad or where cancelled holidays would incur financial loss, line managers are asked to contact their HR Business Partner for advice.

Anyone who has had to travel for the purpose of their job, and has to quarantine on their return, will be entitled to continue to receive normal full pay.

15. Support for staff

15.1 *How do I look after my mental wellbeing?*

You may find self-isolation or 'social distancing' affects your mood or makes you feel anxious or worried. This may also affect your ability to sleep. There are things you can do to help you stay mentally and physically active, such as:

- Look for ideas of exercises you can do at home on the [NHS website](#)
- Spend time doing things you enjoy – this might include reading, cooking, other indoor hobbies or listening to/watching favorite radio or TV programmes
- Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, drink enough water, exercise regularly, and try to avoid smoking, alcohol and drugs
- Keep your windows open to let in fresh air, get some natural sunlight if you can, or get outside into the garden.
- You can also go for a walk outdoors if you stay more than 2 meters from others

Wellbeing advice, including:

- A healthy eating programme
- Personal training programme
- Stress management advice
- Downloadable health and fitness fact sheet.

is also available from Care First (Employee Assistance Programme) at www.rbch-vitality.co.uk register using the organisation code: rbch

If you are feeling anxious or concerned Care First (Employee Assistance Programme) provide confidential, impartial advice and support 24 hours a day, 365 days a year on telephone number 0800 174 319.

15.2 *What support is available for NHS staff during the COVID-19 pandemic?*

Support is available on the Covid intranet site at:

For support from your Organisational Development team please do not hesitate to contact us at:

Email: organisational.development@uhd.nhs.uk,
Royal Bournemouth Hospital and Christchurch Hospital extension: 4438
Poole Hospital extension: 2820

You matter page on intranet - LINK

Occupational Health: Helpline to signpost to relevant support – please email: Occupational.Health@uhd.nhs.uk

Weekdays: 01202 704217 or ext. 4217 weekdays

The UHD app has information under support for you

Care first - Employee Assistance Programme Helpline:
Freephone 0800 174319 helpline 24/7

NHS Wide Staff Support Helpline:
0300 131 7000 or Text FRONTLINE to 35258

Wellbeing advice is available for both sites at:
<https://intranet.rbch.nhs.uk/index.php/covid-19/hr>

Information relating to Staff Discounts; Mental, Physical and Financial wellbeing; Domestic Violence and Carers is also available on the NHS Employers site:
<https://www.nhsemployers.org/covid19/health-safety-and-wellbeing/support-available-for-nhs-staff>

15.3 *What financial support will be available for my family/partner should I die in service as a result of contracting Covid-19 virus?*

The government has announced a scheme to provide benefits for eligible NHS and social care staff who perform vital frontline work during the Covid-19 pandemic. This scheme, known as life assurance benefits recognises the increased risks teams are currently facing.

In the event of a staff member dying in the course of Covid-19 related work, the government has confirmed that a lump sum payment of £60,000 will be made to their estate. Covid-19 will need to be shown as the cause (or one of the causes) of death on the employee's death certificate. This payment will be made whether or not a colleague has in place their own life insurance or is a member of the NHS Pension Scheme.

We await further specifics of the scheme and will up-date as soon as information becomes available.

15.4 *Is there any specific support for Filipino colleagues?*

A hotline has been developed for the Filipino community and is accessed via Hospice UK. To access this service call 0300 303 4434 (8am-8pm, 7 days a week) and ask to speak to the Filipino support service. They call back within 48 hours. (Hospice UK has been commissioned to provide this additional support following feedback and requests. It is not limited to bereavement counselling).

16. Risk Assessments

16.1 *Who should receive a risk assessment?*

In addition to the specific Risk Assessments for early return from COVID-19 isolation (for yourself as a confirmed positive case or as a contact of a confirmed COVID-19 case) **all staff should have a general COVID-19 risk assessment.** The 'Individual Employee Risk Assessment' is regularly updated in line with updated evidence and to reflect local prevalence of COVID-19 infection rates. This is published on the Covid-19 website on the intranet at:

<https://intranet.rbch.nhs.uk/index.php/covid-19/hr>

<https://intranet.poole.nhs.uk/index.php/human-resources/covid-19-staff>

Whilst this is available for all staff, it is a priority for the staff who have been identified as being at higher risk from the symptoms of COVID-19, these priority groups are:

- 1) Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) members of staff
- 2) Staff with underlying health conditions which make them 'extremely vulnerable'
- 3) Staff who are aged 70+
- 4) Staff who have informed their manager they are pregnant
- 5) A change in health status or a change in medication

16.2 *How should the 'Individual Employee Risk Assessment' be recorded?*

A log of the Individual risk assessment carried out needs to be recorded via ESR Manager Self Service this is available on the Intranet under Risk Assessment Toolkit – How to log a completed risk assessment on ESR – see link here: (<https://intranet.rbch.nhs.uk/index.php/covid-19/hr>) The logging of this as soon as possible is very important as it gives the Trust real time information on staff unavailability. The completed form should be scanned and sent to HR.filing@uhd.nhs.uk so it can be held in the individual's personal file. Any local copy should be held securely or disposed of in confidential waste once scanned and sent.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss this further please contact the Covid-19 helpline on ext. 4804, or contact your HR Business Partner.

16.3 Do I need to use the new risk assessment if one has been completed in the past?

It is recommended you review risk assessments regularly to take into account any changes that are made as knowledge relating to the coronavirus increases and also if there are any changes to individual circumstances or the place of work.

16.4 What happens if I can't work in my usual area following risk assessment?

Where individuals are a greater risk they will be supported to find **temporary** alternative employment within the Trust wherever possible; while redeployed into a temporary role employees will continue to be paid at their usual rate of pay.

Where the risk assessment deems it is not safe for you to physically return to the workplace, it may be appropriate to consider reallocation of duties for a staff member in order to facilitate home working.

In instances where reason(s) for being unable to return to the workplace have been established and do not relate to ill health and working from home is not possible, managers will need to consider the use of following options on a case by case basis taking account of the duration needed:

- local special leave
- annual leave
- unpaid leave
- suspension on full pay for medical or health and safety reasons.

17. Retire and return pensioners and special classes already returned to work

- 17.1** The Government had temporarily suspended the rule that currently prevents some NHS staff who return to work after retirement from working more than 16 hours per week, along with rules on abatements and drawn-down of NHS pensions that apply to certain retirees who return to work. This temporary suspension is coming to an end **24TH MARCH 2022**.
For more info [NHS Pensions website COVID 19](#)

Recording Covid19 absence on Health Roster and ESR

If your department is on the roster please only record via the roster, this will pull through to ESR.

ESR Related Reason can be found on your ESR absence screen (second from bottom option).

If you need any further advice or help locating the above reasons please contact:

Bournemouth Hospital Site: Workforcehelp@UHD.nhs.uk

Poole Hospital Site: WorkforcePHT@UHD.nhs.uk

Shielding has ceased therefore this category has now been removed:

Absence Types	HealthRoster	ESR
- Positive test to Covid-19	<u>Sickness due to Corona virus:</u> Sickness – Covid-19 - S27 Covid 19	<u>Sickness due to Corona virus:</u> Sickness - S27 Infectious diseases - S27998 Other infectious disease Related reason: Coronavirus (COVID-19)
- Isolating before Surgery (Not working from home)	<u>Medical Suspension:</u> Other Leave – Medical Suspension COV - Paid	<u>Medical Suspension:</u> Special Increasing Bal - Medical Suspension Related reason: Coronavirus (COVID-19)
- Isolating due to own symptoms awaiting test results (Not working from Home)	<u>Infection Precaution:</u> Other Leave – Leave Paid – Infection Precaution	<u>Infection Precaution:</u> Special Increasing Bal – Infection Precaution Related reason: Coronavirus (COVID-19)
- Isolating when member of employee household has symptoms awaiting test results (Not working from home)	<u>Household Member Symptoms</u> HSEMemSymp - Leave Paid- Household Member symptoms	<u>Household Member Symptoms</u> Special Increasing Bal – Infection Precaution Related reason: Coronavirus (COVID-19) – Household Member Symptoms
-Working from home - Working from home due to Test and Trace Contact -Working from home due to - Household Member Symptoms	<u>Home Working:</u> Working Day - HW - Home Working Working Day – HW – Test & Trace Contact Working Day – HW – Household Member Symptoms	<u>Home Working:</u> Standard home working not recorded Special Increasing Bal –Other - Related reason: Coronavirus (COVID-19) – Test and Trace Contact Special Increasing Bal – Other – Related reason: Coronavirus (COVID-19) – Household

-Working from home due to - Post Travel Quarantine	Working Day – HW – Post Travel Quarantine	Member Symptoms Special Increasing Bal – Other-Related reason: Coronavirus (COVID-19) – Post Travel Quarantine
- Contacted by NHS Test & Trace - Direct contact with person who is diagnosed as COVID Positive	<u>Test and Trace Contact</u> Other Leave – Leave Paid – Test and Trace Contact	<u>Test and Trace Contact</u> Special Increasing Bal – Infection Precaution Related reason: Coronavirus (COVID-19) – Test and Trace Contact
	<u>Post Travel Quarantine - TOIL</u> Other Leave – Post Travel Quarantine TOIL PLEASE ENSURE ZERO HOURS ARE APPLIED TO THIS	<u>Post Travel Quarantine TOIL</u> Special Increasing Bal – Time off in Lieu Related reason: Coronavirus (COVID-19) – Post Travel Quarantine
	<u>Post Travel Quarantine – Unpaid leave</u> Other Leave – Post Travel Unpaid Leave Hrs	<u>Post Travel Quarantine – Unpaid leave</u> Unpaid Authorised Special Hrs – Other Related reason: Coronavirus (COVID-19) – Post Travel Quarantine
	<u>Post Travel Quarantine – Annual leave</u> Annual leave – Annual leave post travel	<u>Post Travel Quarantine – Annual leave</u> Annual leave Related reason: Coronavirus (COVID-19) – Post Travel Quarantine
-Post Covid vaccine recovery sickness	<u>Sickness</u> Sickness – C19 vacrec S98 C19 vaccine related recovery	<u>Sickness</u> Sickness – S98 Other known causes – not elsewhere classified Related reason: Coronavirus (COVID-19)