

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Frequently Asked Questions

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1. Sickness Absence and Symptoms

Q1.1 - Employee says they may have symptoms?

The government now state that the most common symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) are recent onset of any of the following:

- a new continuous cough
- a high temperature
- a loss of, or change in, your normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia)

A guide to symptoms, Test and Trace and Isolation is now available [here](#)

If you have any of the symptoms above, you must comply with Government/PHE advice and are required to:

- (1) **isolate:** As soon as you experience coronavirus symptoms, medical advice is clear: you must self-isolate for at least 10 days. Anyone else in your household must self-isolate for 10 days from when you started having symptoms. Your isolation period includes the day your symptoms started (or the day your test was taken if you do not have symptoms), and the next 10 full days. Your isolation period includes the day your symptoms started and the next 10 full days. This means that if, for example, your symptoms started at any time on the 15th of the month, your isolation period ends at 23:59 on the 25th.
- (2) **test:** You should order a coronavirus test immediately at nhs.uk/coronavirus or call 119 if you have no internet access.
- (3) **results:** A positive PCR test result means you must complete your full isolation period. Your isolation period starts immediately from when your symptoms started, or, if you do not have any symptoms, from when your first test was taken, whether this was an LFD or a PCR test.
A positive LFD test result also means you must complete 10 days isolation, unless this is followed by a PCR test and the result is negative. If you are isolating because of a positive test result but did not have any symptoms, and you develop COVID-19 symptoms within your isolation period, start a new 10 day isolation period by counting 10 full days from the day following your symptom onset.
- (4) **share contacts:** If you test positive for coronavirus, the NHS Test and Trace service will send you a text or email alert or call you with instructions of how to share details of people with whom you have had close, recent contact and places you have visited. It is important that you respond as soon as possible so that we can give appropriate advice to those who need it. You will be told to do this online via a secure website or you will be called by one of our contract tracers. If NHS Test and Trace contact tracers are unable to contact you for 24 hours, they may pass your case to your local authority to follow up by phone or in person.

Please note that the governments self- isolation requirements are different if you or your household or support bubble are contacted by NHS Test and Trace. In this instance, please follow the guidance at Q2.2.

Absences should be recorded as for question [1.4](#)

If you develop symptoms, you should alert the members of your bubble or anyone else with whom you have had close contact over the last 2 days. You should tell them that you might have coronavirus but are waiting for a test result. At this stage (until the test result is known), those people should reduce social contacts and take extra care

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in practising social distancing and good hygiene, like washing their hands regularly. They should also watch out for their own symptoms. If they develop symptoms, they should follow the [stay at home guidance](#)

The NHS states you only need to self-isolate if you have symptoms, are living with someone who becomes symptomatic or you have received a notification letter from the NHS or local authority. If you have not had close contact but some contact with someone, with symptoms but they are not in your household or household support bubble, you do not need to self-isolate unless you have symptoms yourself or have been contacted by the NHS Test and Trace service.

From 16 August 2021 in England (dependant on the finalised decision to move to the final step of the roadmap on 12 July) double jabbed individuals and under 18s will no longer need to self-isolate if they are identified as a close contact of someone with COVID-19 but should get a PCR test as soon as possible. Alongside PCR testing, everyone in England is encouraged to take up the government's offer of free, twice weekly rapid testing.

If you develop symptoms, and test positive you can return to your normal routine and stop self-isolating after 10 full days if your symptoms have gone, or if the only symptoms you have are a cough or anosmia, which can last for several weeks. If you still have a high temperature after 10 days or are otherwise unwell, stay at home and seek medical advice.

In all circumstance's employees should follow the instructions of the NHS Test and Trace and keep their line manager 'in the loop' of all developments, including the test results and any advice from the NHS Test and Trace Service. The Company is keen to support employees.

If in doubt, employees and managers can request a covid consultation via Optima at www.myohportal.co.uk . Occupational clinicians will conduct assessments to determine whether there is a need to self-isolate.

ALL employee cases of special leave and sickness absence MUST be recorded with HR Direct. Local discretionary working from home does not need to be recorded with HR Direct.

There are now guidelines to support managers to keep in touch with employees who are unwell on My

Connect: [Guidelines for managers: staying in touch during long term sickness](#)

From 28 September, the government have announced that you could be fined if you do not stay at home and self-isolate following a positive test result for COVID-19 or if you are contacted by NHS Test and Trace and instructed to self-isolate.

Colleagues do not need to self-isolate if an employee has displayed symptoms unless they have symptoms themselves, have been asked to self-isolate by test and Trace Services or have tested positive themselves by either an LFT or PCR test.

Q1.2 What if you live in the same household as someone with COVID-19

Guidance on meeting family and friends has been updated, with a greater emphasis on personal responsibility. From 17 May, close contact with friends and family will be a personal choice, but you are encouraged to exercise caution. You should consider the guidance on risks associated with COVID-19 and actions you can take to help keep you and your loved ones safe. [Find out what you can and cannot do.](#)

If you live with someone in the same household or bubble as someone with Covid -19, your isolation period includes the day the first person in your household's symptoms started (or the day their test was taken if they did not have symptoms, whether this was an LFD or PCR test), and the next 10 full days. Your isolation period includes the day

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your symptoms started and the next 10 full days. This means that if, for example, your symptoms started at any time on the 15th of the month, your isolation period ends at 23:59 on the 25th.

From 16 August 2021 in England (dependant on the finalised decision to move to the final step of the roadmap on 12 July) double jabbed individuals and under 18s will no longer need to self-isolate if they are identified as a close contact of someone with COVID-19 but should get a PCR test as soon as possible. Alongside PCR testing, everyone in England is encouraged to take up the government's offer of free, twice weekly rapid testing.

If for any reason you have a negative test result during your 10 day isolation period, you must continue to self-isolate. Even if you don't have symptoms, you could still pass the infection on to others. Stay at home for the full 10 days to avoid putting others at risk.

If you develop symptoms while you are isolating, arrange to have a COVID-19 PCR test. If your test result is positive, follow the advice for people with COVID-19 to stay at home and start a further full 10 day isolation period. This begins when your symptoms started, regardless of where you are in your original 10 day isolation period. This means that your total isolation period will be longer than 10 days. **Update 14 June 2021** You should obtain a PCR test even if your symptoms are mild.

If other household members develop symptoms during this period, you do not need to isolate for longer than 10 days.

If you are identified as a contact and asked to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace, including by the NHS COVID-19 app you may be entitled to a payment of £500 from your local authority under the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme.

Failure to comply with self-isolation may result in a fine, starting from £1,000. Parents or guardians are legally responsible for ensuring that anyone under 18 self-isolates if they test positive for COVID-19 and are contacted by NHS Test and Trace and told to self-isolate.

Q1.3 What if employee thinks they have had contact with someone who has symptoms or tested positive for COVID-19 not in their household or bubble and have not been notified and advised to self-isolate?

Contacts who need to self-isolate will be notified and advised accordingly by the NHS Test and Trace service, including by the NHS COVID-19 app. If you have not been notified, this means you do not need to self-isolate. However, you can take a free lateral flow test. If positive, you should book a PCR confirmatory test and self isolate unless the PCR test returns negative update **14 June 2021** even if your symptoms are mild

If the employee thinks they have been in close contact with someone who is being tested for COVID-19, but they do not yet have a test result, they do not need to self-isolate but should take extra care in practising social distancing and good hand and respiratory hygiene.

Q1.4 Employee asks for advice if they live in an area where the new COVID-19 variant is spreading?

This new variant is sometimes referred to as the variant first identified in India. It is spreading fastest in:

Updated 15 June 2021

- [Bedford Borough Council](#)
- [Birmingham City Council](#)
- [Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council](#)
- [Blackpool Council](#)
- [Cheshire East Council](#)

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- [Cheshire West and Chester Council](#)
- [Greater Manchester Combined Authority \(Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford, Wigan\)](#)
- [Kirklees Council](#)
- [Lancashire County Council \(Burnley, Chorley, Fylde, Hyndburn, Lancaster, Pendle, Preston, Ribble Valley, Rossendale, South Ribble, West Lancashire, Wyre\)](#)
- [Leicester City Council](#)
- [Liverpool City Region Combined Authority \(Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St Helens, Wirral\)](#)
- [London Borough of Hounslow](#)
- [North Tyneside Council](#)
- [Warrington Borough Council](#)

The new COVID-19 variant spreads more easily from person to person. To help stop the spread, you should take particular caution when meeting anyone outside your household or support bubble.

In the areas listed above, wherever possible, you should try to:

- meet outside rather than inside where possible
- keep 2 metres apart from people that you don't live with ([unless you have formed a support bubble](#) with them), this includes friends and family you don't live with
- minimise travel in and out of affected areas

You should also:

- Get tested twice a week for free and isolate if you are positive
- Continue to work from home if you can
- [Get vaccinated](#) when you are offered it, and encourage others to do so as well
- Refer to local health advice for your area (linked above)
- You should get tested for COVID-19. This includes:
 - [Arranging to have a PCR test](#) if you have symptoms of COVID-19
 - Participating in [surge testing in your local area](#)
 - [Getting regular rapid tests](#) if you do not have symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19)
 - Arranging a testing or managed quarantine package if you plan to travel to red or amber list countries. [See further details](#)

You should self-isolate immediately if you have [symptoms](#) or a [positive test result for COVID-19](#). There is [financial support if you're off work because of coronavirus](#).

Q1.5 - How do I record any absences?

If an employee is ill with symptoms, this should be recorded as covid sickness absence and a case created with HR Direct.

If an employee needs to self-isolate (symptom free) but cannot work from home, then this should be recorded as covid paid special leave. A case must be created with HR Direct. Pay will include any planned base roster payments but not overtime that was not worked.

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If an employee is asymptomatic with a positive test or has symptoms that are so mild, they would in other circumstances have been able to come to work, then the employee should be recorded as covid paid special leave. A case still needs to be recorded with HR Direct.

Where special leave is being recorded as a result of a NHS test and Trace App alert, a [self-isolation note](#) is required from the employee and must be uploaded to HR Direct.

If an employee is working from home for any reason, this should not be recorded as a case with HR Direct and should be managed locally

Managers can record a case in HR Direct by using the 'e-mail us' tab at the top of the HR Direct front page.

Managers can also access HR Direct through their mobile phones and devices using these instructions: [HR Direct Mobile Instructions](#)

There are now guidelines to support managers to keep in touch with employees who are unwell on My Connect: [Guidelines for managers: staying in touch during long term sickness](#)

Q1.6 How do I get a self-isolation note?

Self-isolation notes can be obtained on line here: [self-isolation note](#)

Q1.7 – Can I be tested for coronavirus if I have symptoms?

You can only get a free NHS test if at least one of the following applies:

- you have a high temperature
- you have a new, continuous cough
- you've lost your sense of smell or taste or it's changed
- you've been asked to get a test by a local council
- you're taking part in a government pilot project
- you've been asked to get a test to confirm a positive result
- You can also get a test for someone you live with if they have symptoms.
- If lateral flow mass or surge testing is available

England and Northern Ireland

You need to get the test done in the first 8 days of having symptoms.

On days 1 to 7, you can get tested at a site or at home. If you're ordering a home test kit on day 7, do it by 3pm.

On day 8, you need to go to a test site - it's too late to order a home test kit

Scotland

You need to get the test done in the first 5 days of having symptoms. This allows you the best chance of preventing the spread of coronavirus to others. After 5 days you should still book a test if you have been advised to do so by a healthcare professional.

On days 1 to 4, you can get tested at a site or at home. If you're ordering a home test kit on day 4, do it by 3pm.

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On day 5, you need to go to a test site - it's too late to order a home test kit.

Wales

You need to get the test done in the first 5 days of having symptoms.

On days 1 to 4, you can get tested at a site or at home. If you're ordering a home test kit on day 4, do it by 3pm.

On day 5, you need to go to a test site - it's too late to order a home test kit.

Line managers should contact **HR Direct** quickly so that they receive the information about testing to discuss with their line report. For more information, please find the [Voluntary Testing FAQs](#)

Tests can be self-booked at <https://www.gov.uk/apply-coronavirus-testessential-workers>.

Alternatively, the symptomatic person can call the free number, 119 between the hours of 7am – 11pm.

A guide to home testing for adults and children can be found [here](#)

If you have symptoms of coronavirus and book a test, you should self-isolate and not attend work prior to the test result. If your result is negative, you can return to work unless you have been told to complete a self-isolation period by test and trace services or app.

You could be fined if you do not stay at home and self-isolate following a positive test result for COVID-19, or if you are contacted by NHS Test and Trace and instructed to self-isolate because you are a contact of someone who has had a positive test result. If you test positive for COVID-19, it will also be an offence to knowingly provide false information about your close contacts to NHS Test and Trace.

If you have a negative COVID-19 PCR test result following a positive LFD test

If you have a PCR test following a positive LFD test, and the result is negative, you and your household can stop isolating.

If you have a negative COVID-19 PCR test result after being tested because you had symptoms

If your PCR test result is negative but you still have symptoms, you may have another virus such as a cold or flu. You should stay at home until you feel well. Seek medical attention if you are concerned about your symptoms.

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
- you have not arrived into the UK from a non-exempt country within the last 10 days. Separate guidance is available if you are participating in the Test to Release for international travel scheme
- Anyone in your household who is isolating because of your symptoms can also stop isolating.

After your isolation period has ended

If you have tested positive for COVID-19, you will probably have developed some immunity to the disease. However, it cannot be guaranteed that everyone will develop immunity, or how long it will last. It is possible for PCR tests to remain positive for some time after COVID-19 infection. Anyone who has previously received a positive test result for COVID-19 should only be re-tested within a 90-day period if they develop any new symptoms of COVID-19. The same applies for LFT Lateral Flow tests.

If you develop COVID-19 symptoms at any point after ending your first period of isolation you and your household should follow the steps in this guidance again.

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If you develop COVID-19 symptoms and had a positive test result more than 10 days ago, you should stay at home and seek medical advice.

Q1.8 Can I get a test if I don't have symptoms?

Lateral flow testing kits (LFT) at home for households and bubbles of school children can now be ordered. Kits containing seven tests can be delivered to your home. Tests should arrive within two days. Find out more on the [gov.uk site](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/lateral-flow-testing).

You can obtain tests via:

England- <https://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests?priority-taxon=774cee22-d896-44c1-a611-e3109cce8eae>

Wales - <https://gov.wales/get-rapid-lateral-flow-covid-19-tests-if-you-do-not-have-symptoms>

Scotland - Free lateral flow home test kits will be available for pick up without an appointment from many local walk-in or drive-through test sites from 3.30pm each day, or by ordering online or by phone, for people to test themselves twice-weekly. LFT tests are now also available in pharmacies.

We are **offering Network Rail employees on a small number of sites, for employees in the workplace who do not have any symptoms** of coronavirus. These kits contain a lateral flow test (LFT) kits to be used at home twice a week to check you do not have the virus. To take part in this home testing trial you must be attending a workplace regularly. You can find more information on lateral flow testing FAQs [Lateral flow home testing trial FAQs](#)

Should an employee return a positive lateral flow test, they must have a confirmatory PCR test. This is so that 'genotype assay testing' to support identifying variants of concern can take place. In the coming weeks the NHS Covid19 app, which shows the outcome of a test result, will be able to overturn a positive LFD result if the result changes following a confirmatory PCR.

Q1.9 – Employee states they live within an area of mass testing and asks if they can attend for a test if they are asymptomatic?

Testing is normally for symptomatic (high temperature, persistent new cough, loss of sense of taste or smell) people only using a 'swab test'.

However, in areas of mass testing, a new type of test 'lateral flow antigen testing' of asymptomatic (with no signs of coronavirus) people may be offered. This is the test that delivers a result in approximately 30 minutes.

Mass testing is normally offered over a period of weeks and so planning for asymptomatic testing can be undertaken by managers and employees.

Appointments for 'lateral flow testing' should be made outside of work time where possible. However, if this is not possible then attendance for a 'lateral flow test' should be supported by paid special leave, subject to, prior approval for the absence from their manager. Managers may need to discuss with teams a phasing of time off for appointments across the team to ensure business continuity and ensuring that all team members have the opportunity to take the test.

Should a positive result be received from asymptomatic 'lateral flow testing' the employee must self-isolate for 10 days from the date the test was taken. Should an employee return a positive lateral flow test, they must have a confirmatory PCR test. This is so that 'genotype assay testing' to support identifying variants of concern can take place. In the coming weeks the NHS Covid19 app, which shows the outcome of a test result, will be able to overturn a positive LFD result if the result changes following a confirmatory PCR.

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The employee should work from home where possible but if not, then the absence should be recorded on oracle or timesheets as covid19 paid special leave with payment of published base roster payments. Where the employee cannot work from home, a case must be recorded with HR Direct.

Should a re-test be required due to an inconclusive test result from asymptomatic testing, it is likely that a 'swab test' will be required. The employee should self-isolate until a definite negative result is received.

Should an exercise of mass testing encourage asymptomatic people to take two 'lateral flow tests' with days in between, then there is no need to self-isolate between tests if the first test returns negative.

Following a positive lateral flow test, you must have a normal swab test (PCR). If a positive result is returned from a swab test, the employee must self-isolate for 10 days from the date of the swab test. Tests can be self-booked at <https://www.gov.uk/apply-coronavirus-testessential-workers>.

Alternatively, the symptomatic person can call the free number, 119 between the hours of 7am – 11pm.

A positive LFD test result means you must complete 10 days isolation, unless this is followed by a PCR test and the result is negative.

Q1.10 Employee lives in an area where Surge Testing is underway, should they come to work?

Update 15 June 2021 –

- [Bedford Borough Council](#)
- [Birmingham City Council](#)
- [Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council](#)
- [Blackpool Council](#)
- [Cheshire East Council](#)
- [Cheshire West and Chester Council](#)
- [Greater Manchester Combined Authority \(Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford, Wigan\)](#)
- [Kirklees Council](#)
- [Lancashire County Council \(Burnley, Chorley, Fylde, Hyndburn, Lancaster, Pendle, Preston, Ribble Valley, Rossendale, South Ribble, West Lancashire, Wyre\)](#)
- [Leicester City Council](#)
- [Liverpool City Region Combined Authority \(Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St Helens, Wirral\)](#)
- [London Borough of Hounslow](#)
- [North Tyneside Council](#)
- [Warrington Borough Council](#)

In the areas listed above, wherever possible, you should try to:

- meet outside rather than inside where possible
- keep 2 metres apart from people that you don't live with ([unless you have formed a support bubble](#) with them), this includes friends and family you don't live with
- minimise travel in and out of affected areas.

You should also:

- Get tested twice a week for free and isolate if you are positive
- Continue to work from home if you can
 - [Get vaccinated](#) when you are offered it, and encourage others to do so as well

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- Refer to local health advice for your area (linked above)

Surge testing is a form of community mass testing, it may include door to door testing. Employees living in the postcodes identified for Surge testing are strongly recommended to obtain a PCR test as a priority.

Testing will be available from mobile testing units in your area. The DFT and Public Health England have confirmed that key workers can continue to come to work if you cannot work from home.

Employees are required to maintain social distancing in the workplace and are reminded of the importance of 'hands / face / space':

- **HANDS** - Wash their hands regularly and for 20 seconds.
- **FACE** - Wear a face covering in indoor settings where social distancing may be difficult, and where they will come into contact with people they do not normally meet.
- **SPACE** - Stay 2 metres apart from people they do not live with where possible, or 1 metre with extra precautions in place (such as wearing face coverings or increasing ventilation indoors).

Q1.11 Employee works at a location within a Surge Testing area

Network Rail workplaces are covid controlled with established procedures in places. Employees should continue to attend if they are an essential worker or essential visitor to these workplaces.

Employees are required to maintain social distancing in the workplace, and are reminded of the importance of 'hands / face / space':

- **HANDS** - Wash their hands regularly and for 20 seconds.
- **FACE** - Wear a face covering in indoor settings where social distancing may be difficult, and where they will come into contact with people they do not normally meet.
- **SPACE** - Stay 2 metres apart from people they do not live with where possible, or 1 metre with extra precautions in place (such as wearing face coverings or increasing ventilation indoors).

Employees working or travelling through postcodes identified for Surge testing are strongly recommended to obtain a PCR test as a priority via the Surge testing sites available.

Q1.12 – What is lateral flow testing offered in the workplace?

In some work locations Network Rail is able to offer lateral flow testing.

There are two systems for testing:

- **surveillance testing** which typically requires a test once or twice a week and daily contact testing
- **serial testing (daily contact testing)** which is used as a daily test for anyone who's notified by the test and trace app or the tracing service that they must self-isolate. This option is only available where approved by the Department for Transport and the Department for Health and Social Care. (contact is liezel.jeans@networkrail.co.uk)

Surveillance testing is voluntary and is offered as a support and reassurance to our workplace based employees where we can provide it for those workplace employees who would like it.

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Serial (daily contact) testing is also voluntary and is a choice offered as an alternative to self-isolating when a workplace based employee has been identified as a close contact by Test and Trace services in England. This allows the employee to receive an NHS letter to allow attendance to the workplace during a period of self-isolation on the basis that they comply with all requirements of the serial (daily contact) testing programme in Network Rail throughout the 7 day period following a contact or an alert from Test and Trace services.

Serial (daily contact) testing is a choice but supports the continued running of a critical national infrastructure. If an employee chooses to self-isolate, this will not be challenged and will be paid at special leave with published base rosters. The manager should record as covid special leave on timesheets to ensure the correct level of pay is applied. If an employee chooses to undertake serial testing and attend for work, then normal pay applies.

If at any time an employee develops symptoms then they must inform the manager, self-isolate and get a PCR swab test. PCR tests can be self-booked at <https://www.gov.uk/apply-coronavirus-testessential-workers>.

Alternatively, the symptomatic person can call the free number, 119 between the hours of 7am – 11pm.

Deep cleans are not required in the event of testing positive on lateral flow with a better explanation noted in the original email. As long as the desk area are cleaned with disinfectant and where possible to quarantine the chair for 72 hours that would be acceptable.

You can find further information on workplace lateral flow testing in the [Lateral Flow FAQs](#)

Should an employee return a positive lateral flow test, they must have a confirmatory PCR test. This is so that 'genotype assay testing' to support identifying variants of concern can take place. In the coming weeks the NHS Covid19 app, which shows the outcome of a test result, will be able to overturn a positive LFD result if the result changes following a confirmatory PCR.

Q1.13 Where can I get a Lateral Flow Test?

Everyone in England from 9 April will be able to access free, regular, rapid lateral flow tests (LFDs) for themselves and their families to use twice a week, in line with clinical guidance.

Rapid testing has so far been available to those most at risk and people who need to leave home for work, including frontline workers, care home staff and residents, and schoolchildren and their families. Now rapid testing will be offered to everyone, with people encouraged to take regular tests to help prevent outbreaks and reclaim a more normal way of life.

One in 3 people with COVID-19 do not experience any symptoms and may be spreading the virus unwittingly. Rapid testing detects cases quickly, meaning positive cases can isolate immediately.

Getting a rapid test

The expanded regular testing offer for people without symptoms will be delivered through:

- a home ordering service, which allows people to order lateral flow tests online to be delivered to their home workplace testing programmes, on-site or at home
- community testing, offered by all local authorities
- collection at a local PCR test site during specific test collection time windows
- testing on-site at schools and colleges

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A new 'Pharmacy Collect' service is also launching which will provide an additional route to regular testing. People aged over 18 without symptoms will be able to visit a participating local pharmacy and collect a box of 7 rapid tests to use twice a week at home. **11 June 2021** – This service is now available in Scotland

If testing at home, individuals will need to [register their results online](#) or by calling 119. They should self-isolate if positive and order a confirmatory PCR test.

Anyone with symptoms of COVID-19 should [book a test online](#) or by calling 119.

Surveillance Lateral Flow Tests

Network Rail has surveillance lateral flow test stations in operations in some key sites, however, if these are not accessible then employees should follow the other options to obtain lateral flow testing. You can find a government lateral flow testing site:

[Find your nearest rapid lateral flow test site.](#)

Collect test kits:

You can collect 2 packs of home test kits at a local collection point. Each pack contains 7 tests.

Anyone 18 or over can collect. You can check online if the location is busy before you go.

[Find your nearest home test kit collection point.](#)

The government asks people to not order online if you can get a test through other methods. This frees up home delivery for those who need it most.

[Order rapid lateral flow home test kits](#)

Positive Lateral Flow Test

Should an employee return a positive lateral flow test, they must have a confirmatory PCR test. This is so that 'genotype assay testing' to support identifying variants of concern can take place. In the coming weeks the NHS Covid19 app, which shows the outcome of a test result, will be able to overturn a positive LFD result if the result changes following a confirmatory PCR.

Q1.14 - Do I need to report a positive test from an employee who has been in the workplace?

Yes, this allows appropriate support actions to follow such as increased testing and tracing and other mitigations.

Managers should notify their local Occupational Health and Wellbeing Manager (OHW Manager) of any positive tests, if an employee has been in the workplace in the preceding 7 days.

The OHW Managers are:

Scotland – Contact Simon Constable in the first instance, OH&W Lorraine Leahy

Eastern – Frances Garvey

Anglia – Allison Rose

Southern – Emily Mayers for Kent and Sussex and Grazia Elsehimy Wessex

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Wales – SCMTWales@networkrail.co.uk

Western – Annette Fletcher

NWC – Rob Mole

Route Services – Patricia Anumadu

Central Services – Joanne Reece

Occupational health and safety can be contacted at healthandwellness@networkrail.co.uk

From 28 September, the government have announced that you could be fined if you do not stay at home and self-isolate following a positive test result for COVID-19 or if you are contacted by NHS Test and Trace and instructed to self-isolate.

Q 1.15 - Employee states that they have ongoing effects from a covid infection (long covid) and are unfit to work?

The long-term effects of COVID are not yet fully understood. Employees who feel they may be suffering from long term effect of COVID they should be asked to engage with their GP to ensure they have access to medical support. Managers should record a case with HR Direct and record the absence as covid sickness absence on oracle or timesheets. For absences longer than 7 calendar days, a fit note will be required.

Managers should not use any covid sickness absence towards attendance management processes such as MFA/MFH.

Managers should consider both the physical and mental health effects of long covid and ensure that the employee understands the help and support available through Optima, Validium and Vita Health.

Managers can request a covid consultation for an employee via the www.myohportal.co.uk.

Validium are also available for you and employees 24/7 on 0800 3584858 or 0330 332 9980.

Vita Health can also be contacted to provide additional support for any musculoskeletal concerns they may have, or to carry out virtual DSE (Display Screen Equipment) reviews.

Q1.16 Employee states they have received the vaccine, do they need to self-isolate?

Update From 16 August 2021 in England (dependant on the finalised decision to move to the final step of the roadmap on 12 July) double jabbed individuals and under 18s will no longer need to self-isolate if they are identified as a close contact of someone with COVID-19 but should get a PCR test as soon as possible. Alongside PCR testing, everyone in England is encouraged to take up the government's offer of free, twice weekly rapid testing.

Yes, even if you have received the vaccine yourself, self-isolation and Test and Trace requirements still need to be followed.

This is due to the fact that not enough is known about transmission and rate of gaining immunity at this point. This remains under review as more information is released from the government.

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Employees who have received the vaccine but experience symptoms of coronavirus or are in a household where symptoms are experienced or are asked to self-isolate by test and Trace services or APP should continue to follow the requirements to self-isolate.

England

If you develop symptoms, you should alert the members of your bubble or anyone else with whom you have had close contact over the last 2 days. You should tell them that you might have coronavirus but are waiting for a test result. At this stage (until the test result is known), those people should reduce social contacts and take extra care in practising social distancing and good hygiene, like washing their hands regularly. They should also watch out for their own symptoms. If they develop symptoms, they should follow the [stay at home guidance](#)

Additionally, all those CEV who have been vaccinated but cannot work from home should continue to shield and not attend work until the government restriction lifts.

An information sheet and guide for managers regarding time off for vaccination appointments is available on [MyConnect](#)

There is no need to register your vaccination with Chemist On Call and it will not affect any testing for Drugs and Alcohol.

Q1.17 What is thermal testing?

According to Public Health England (PHE) a high temperature may be a sign of someone with coronavirus and thermal technology will help reduce the risk of spreading the coronavirus. Where thermal cameras or where hand held infra-red equipment is provided are provided in the workplace, employees are required to be thermal tested to be allowed to enter the work area. You can find further information here:

[Temperature Testing FAQs](#)

Q1.18 - Employee asks whether the triggers apply to COVID sickness absences?

Sickness Absence triggers will NOT now apply when employees are on covid sickness absence. They will not apply to any periods of working from home or special leave.

Q1.19 – Employee asks whether their sick pay will be extended where an operation has been cancelled as a result of COVID?

HR Directors currently approve extensions to sick leave and will continue to do so on a case by case basis.

Q1.20- Employee has a health procedure or operation and the health provider has asked the employee to self-isolate before the operation for 10 days?

Not all health procedures and health providers request self-isolation before the procedure is undertaken. Managers may ask for confirmation that it is a requirement. Where it is required, and the employee would otherwise be fit and well to attend work, an employee should work from home if they can. Where an employee cannot work from

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home, they should be recorded as paid special leave with published base roster payments and a case must be recorded with HR Direct.

If an employee lives with a household member who is undergoing a health procedure or operation and the health provider requires the whole household to self-isolate, then the same applies.

The government have announced a new link for those who need to obtain a home test kit prior to an operation:

<https://organisations.test-for-coronavirus.service.gov.uk/register-test-kit>

Should an employee be asked by the health provider to self-isolate following the procedure, if they are fit and well to attend work otherwise, then again the employee should work from home if they can, or be recorded as special leave with published base roster payments. A case must be recorded on HR Direct.

If an employee is unfit to attend work either before or after the procedure, then they should be recorded as sickness absence even if they are being asked to self-isolate.

Q1.21 – Employee requires to test prior to a hospital operation or procedure?

The NHS now requires testing prior to an operation or procedure in some circumstances. There are particular steps to take with a test being required exactly 3 days prior to the operation. Full details can be found [here](#)

Q1.22 – Can an employee have a face to face medical?

Optima are now able to carry out competence specific medicals and pre-placement medicals face-to face; with drug and alcohol tests, blood pressure and vision checks after medicals also being available. Health surveillance initial screening questionnaires will be conducted over the telephone, with onward referral for escalations to be carried out face-to-face. Currently, management referrals are still being carried out over the telephone.

To support the recovery plan of medicals, line managers are asked to support the release of team members at short notice, which will allow for all clinic spaces to be utilised.

2. NHS Test and Trace

Q2.1- Can I download the new NHS coronavirus app onto my work mobile phone?

The NHS has launched a new NHS Covid-19 app for England and Wales. Scotland's NHS app is called 'Protect Scotland'. The Company is happy for employees to download the new tracing app on to their work mobile phones from the iPhone App store, however employees should download the app on to the phone they use the most. The use of the app is voluntary.

The Test and Trace App is designed to minimise the spread of COVID. The purpose of this email is to communicate how it should be used at work. Put simply, please follow the NHS guidance. It is clear and simple and can be found at the following link.

You must not bring a mobile phone onto an operating floor etc where procedure NOP1.03 applies or lineside (unless you are a COSS / ES etc undertaking safety critical communications.)

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The app and its guide set out how employers and staff should utilise the system, recognising that there are some specific workplace scenarios when pausing contact tracing is acceptable. These are described in the NHS guidance and are:

- if you are putting your phone in storage, such as in a work locker, and it will not be on your person
- If there is separation provided by Perspex screens.

Network Rail and our Trade Unions agree that when used correctly the NHS Test and Trace App is an important way to protect our health. Mis-reporting of alerts from the app is not acceptable.

The new tracing app will only work on Apple devices with IOS version 13.5 or later, and Android phones will need Marshmallow or version 6.0 or higher. Network Rail has not been involved in the development of any of the apps, and therefore the IT Helpdesk are unable to provide support to employees if they experience any issues.

Employees will not be provided with new work phones where they don't currently have a work phone or if they are unable to download the app because they have the wrong software.

The normal rules regarding the use of work phones continue to apply and can be found in the Company's IT policy called an 'Acceptable Use of Information and Information Systems Policy' which is on [MyConnect](#)

The use of mobiles phones for certain roles and certain activities is restricted for the safety of the individual and others. These restrictions must still be adhered too and if clarification is needed please speak to your line manager.

Q2.2 What do I do if I receive an exposure alert from the NHS coronavirus phone app that I may have been in close contact with someone covid positive, what do I do?

Update from 16 August 2021 in England, The NHS covid APP will be updated to reflect new self isolation rules.

A guide to symptoms, Test and Trace and Isolation is now available [here](#)

An infographic to understand Test and Trace can be found [here](#)

The App in England, Wales and Scotland is advisory. It is the employee's decision whether to download and respond to an exposure alert, however, if you notify your manager that you have received an alert from the app the manager must make sure that you are advised to self-isolate for 10 days and that you do not attend the workplace. Likewise, if an employee chooses to self-isolate, then managers cannot ask for a return to work before the end of the self isolation period. Managers cannot ask for evidence of the phone app or alert due to privacy.

It is important to note that if the NHS Test and Trace Service, or equivalent in devolved administrations, tells you to self-isolate it is a legal requirement to do so.

If you self-isolate and you cannot work from home, you must advise your manager who will need to record a case with HR Direct. You should be vigilant for any symptoms. You should not request a coronavirus test unless you develop symptoms.

Where special leave is being recorded as a result of a NHS test and Trace App alert, a [self-isolation note](#) is required from the employee and must be uploaded to HR Direct.

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Colleagues of someone who has received an 'exposure alert' from the NHS app do not need to self-isolate unless symptomatic themselves or have been asked to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace Service (or equivalent in devolved areas) or have received their own exposure alert.

If you are the household member of someone who has received an exposure alert from the app you do not need to self-isolate unless you also receive an alert from the app, are told to do so by NHS test and Trace (or equivalent) or you or your household become symptomatic.

If you go on to become symptomatic, you need to start self-isolating for 10 days. You need to arrange a test for yourself. If you have not done so already, you will need to advise your manager who will need to record a case with HR Direct. If the test is positive you need to tell your manager. If you have been in the workplace in the proceeding 7 days, your manager must report it to their OH&W Manager who will notify the Health Protection Agency

If your test is positive, you must continue to stay at home for at least 10 days and do not return to work if you still have a temperature. Your household must self-isolate for 10 days from the onset of first symptoms in the household.

Colleagues do not need to self-isolate unless symptomatic or told to do so by NHS Test and Trace Services (or equivalent in devolved areas).

Your manager needs to report a case with HR Direct and on absence systems if you cannot work.

Q2.3 What should I do if am contacted by the NHS Test and Trace service me that I might have been in close contact with someone who has been infected with Covid 19 and I need to immediately self-isolate, should I leave work straight away?

A guideline on Test and Trace is now available on [MyConnect](#)

A guide to symptoms, Test and Trace and Isolation is now available [here](#). An infographic to understand Test and Trace can be found [here](#)

Employees are legally required to follow the instructions from the NHS Test and Trace and PHE. It is important that this is different to the advisory information available on the NHS coronavirus phone apps. The Company recognises that employees who are contacted by NHS Test and Trace or receive a notification from the NHS Test and Trace App or devolved equivalents will be concerned and will want to protect themselves, their families and colleagues.

The government advice is:

Part 1: for someone with symptoms of coronavirus

1. **isolate:** as soon as you experience coronavirus symptoms, medical advice is clear: you must self-isolate for at least 10 days. Anyone else in your household must self-isolate for 10 days from when you started having symptoms. Your isolation period includes the day your symptoms started and the next 10 full days. This means that if, for example, your symptoms started at any time on the 15th of the month, your isolation period ends at 23:59 on the 25th.
2. **test:** get a free NHS test immediately to check if you have coronavirus or call 119 if you have no internet access
3. **results:** if your test is positive, you must complete the remainder of your 10-day self-isolation. Anyone in your household must also complete self-isolation for 10 days from when you started having symptoms. Failure to self-isolate for the full time-period can result in a fine, starting from £1,000. If your test is negative you will no longer be required to self-isolate, though you may wish to do so if you still feel unwell and have

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symptoms similar to coronavirus. If your test is negative, other household members no longer need to self-isolate.

4. **share contacts:** if you test positive for coronavirus, NHS Test and Trace will send you a text or email alert or call you with instructions of how to share details of people with whom you have had close, recent contact and places you have visited. It is important that you respond quickly and accurately so that we can give appropriate advice to those who need it. You will be told to do this online via a secure website or you will be called by one of our contract tracers. If NHS Test and Trace contact tracers are unable to contact you for 24 hours, they may pass your case to your local authority to follow up by phone or in person.

Part 2: if you are contacted by NHS Test and Trace because you have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for coronavirus

1. **alert:** you will be alerted by NHS Test and Trace if you have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for coronavirus. The alert will usually come by text, email or phone call. You should then log on to the NHS Test and Trace website, which is normally the easiest way for you and the service to communicate with each other – but, if not, a trained call handler will talk you through what you must do. Under-18s will get a phone call and a parent or guardian will be asked to give permission for the call to continue
2. **isolate:** you will be told to begin self-isolation for 10 days from your last contact with the person who has tested positive. It's really important to do this even if you don't feel unwell because you could still be infectious to others. Failure to self-isolate for the full time period can result in a fine, starting from £1,000. Your household doesn't need to self-isolate with you, if you do not have symptoms, but they must take extra care to follow the guidance on social distancing and handwashing and avoid contact with you at home.
3. **test if needed:** if you develop symptoms of coronavirus, other members of your household must self-isolate immediately at home for 10 days and you must get a test to check if you have coronavirus or call 119 if you have no internet access. If the test is **negative**, the employee should remain in self-isolation for a period of 10 days because the virus may not be detectable yet. If the test is **positive**, the employee should remain in self-isolation for 10 days, and the household and/or household support bubble should self-isolate for 10 days. In addition, the employee will be asked to help the NHS test and trace all the people they may have been in close contact with by sharing all the possible contacts they may have had whilst they were infected. This could include household members, household support bubble members, people with whom they have been in direct contact, or within 2 metres for more than 15 minutes (cumulative in one day). An interaction through a Perspex (or equivalent) screen with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 is not usually considered to be a close contact, as long as there has been no other contact such as those in the list above.

Please note that if you, or your household or support bubble have symptoms and have not been contacted by NHS test and trace, the governments self-isolation requirements are different, please follow the guidance in Q1.1. If you and your household or support bubble do not have symptoms and you have not been contacted by the NHS test and trace (and equivalent functions for devolved areas) as a close contact, you do not need to self isolate.

Please note that from 28 September, the government have announced that you could be fined if you do not stay at home and self-isolate following a positive test result for COVID-19 or if you are contacted by NHS Test and Trace and instructed to self-isolate.

Absences should be recorded as for question [1.2](#)

People who are contacted by the NHS Test and Trace service will be given clear information explaining what they must do and how they can access local support if needed. Guidance is also available online at gov.uk/coronavirus. In all circumstance's employees should follow the instructions of the NHS Test and Trace and keep their line

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manager 'in the loop' of all developments, including the test results and any advice from the NHS Test and Trace Service. The Company is keen to support employees.

Q2.4 How will I know that the call, email or text is from NHS Test and Trace?

When NHS Test and Trace service contact you, they will identify themselves and provide suitable verification of the fact that they represent the NHS Test and Trace service. Employees are advised to only share personal data and details when they are sure that the person calling is working for NHS Test and Trace.

Where callers request a payment, they are not calling from NHS Test and Trace and are attempting to defraud the caller.

Text messages from NHS Test and Trace will show as **NHStracing** on your mobile.

An infographic may help to identify fraud can be found [here](#)

Q2.5 Will the NHS Test and Trace system be the same across the UK?

The new Test and Trace systems for England and Scotland and Wales have now started, whilst names slightly differently they operate in similar ways. The different devolved apps are now interoperable and so you do not need to download both apps.

3. Vaccinations

Q3.1 Employee states that they have been offered a vaccination, where can I find information?

An information sheet and guide for managers regarding time off for appointments is available on [MyConnect](#)

The government has released further information for all women of childbearing age, those currently pregnant or breastfeeding [here](#)

Q3.2 I have had my vaccination, do I need to social distance, wear a mask and follow covid protocols and requirements?

Yes. It is vitally important that all protocols for covid-19 remain observed and our compliance remains high to ensure everyone is safe.

Although you may be vaccinated, you can still contract the virus and the science has not stated that your ability to transmit virus is reduced.

Q3.3 I have had my vaccination, do I need to self-isolate if I have symptoms?

Yes. It is vitally important that you continue to self-isolate if you or a household member has symptoms.

Although you may be vaccinated, you can still contract the virus and the science has not stated that your ability to transmit virus is reduced.

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From 16 August 2021 in England (dependant on the finalised decision to move to the final step of the roadmap on 12 July) double jabbed individuals and under 18s will no longer need to self-isolate if they are identified as a close contact of someone with COVID-19 but should get a PCR test as soon as possible. Alongside PCR testing, everyone in England is encouraged to take up the government's offer of free, twice weekly rapid testing.

Q3.4 Can I ask my team and my colleagues if they have been vaccinated, and can I keep a record of who has and who has not been vaccinated?

No. Having a coronavirus vaccination is voluntary, and all employees will be expected to respect each employee's individual choices. At the moment there is no need to record who has been vaccinated or not, or ask employees to provide information on whether they are willing to have a coronavirus vaccination. The collection and storage of such personal data would be a breach of the Company's Privacy and Data Protection Policy.

Q3.5 Do I need to declare my vaccination to Chemist on Call

There is no need to register your vaccination with Chemist On Call and it will not affect any testing for Drugs and Alcohol.

Q3.5 I am CEV and have had a vaccination can I come back to work as normal?

Everyone one in the workplace still needs to adhere to social distancing and covid protocols such as hand sanitising, wearing masks where directed, following building safety measures as directed.

This still applies even if you have been vaccinated. Those CEV or living with CEV should be extra vigilant.

It is still the case that you should work from home if you can.

From 1 April 2021 - In England and Wales, the requirement to shield is lifted. However, all employee who can work from home should continue to do so. For those who cannot work from home, they can now return to the workplace but manager must follow the safe return process outlined above in 6.3. Those who have been vaccinated must follow the same process, self-isolate if they become symptomatic and follow all social distancing and covid controlled protocols. This is because they can still contract and transmit coronavirus but will have greater immunity against the adverse effects of the virus.

In Scotland employees who have received a letter saying they should 'shield' need to continue to shield whilst the government is strongly advising CEVs not to go to work, if they cannot work from home. This will change on 26 April 2021.

An information sheet and guide for managers regarding time off for appointments is available on [MyConnect](#)

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4. Returning to the Workplace

Q4.1 - Can I return to the workplace?

Colleagues can only leave home for work purposes where it is unreasonable for you to do your job from home. This includes, but is not limited to, people who work within critical national infrastructure, construction or manufacturing that require in-person attendance

For frontline and safety critical colleagues, we know you cannot work from home, so please continue going into work in line with the COVID-19 risk-assessed procedures. However, only essential workers and essential visitors should attend workplaces. As essential key workers, you can continue to travel for work across the borders between England, Wales and Scotland. Whether maintaining our infrastructure on track or helping passengers travel safely through our stations - your work is going to continue to be vital in the coming weeks.

Our front line activities will continue to operate as normal, keeping passengers and freight moving.

The railway remains open for passengers to travel safely, wearing face coverings and keeping a safe distance apart.

There are some essential activities such as timetable planning which need to be done from the office. If you are currently working in a COVID controlled workplace, or who cannot work from home, you should continue to work as you are now.

This information aims to support a safe return to your workplace after covid restrictions have been lifted. Please also read this [Q&A document covering some common question about returning to workplaces](#). Other covid queries will be covered in this [COVID FAQ document](#). **Update 18 June 2021** – A further Wellbeing and support pack for employees returning to the workplace is now available [here](#).

Key points:

- Planning has started for a gradual return of colleagues who are currently working from home to workplaces in line with the timescales set out in Government roadmaps and the easing of covid restrictions.
- Returning to workplaces will be managed locally and in line with the workspaces available and the priorities/requirements of your region/function and all teams in your workplace.
- Each workplace has a Covid-19 Workplace Recovery Plan with covid controls appropriate for that building. Workplaces will be different and you may be sitting in a different seat, perhaps using a desk booking app to book a desk and you'll still need to observe social distancing and other covid workplace rules to keep everyone safe.
- During the pandemic many of us have adjusted our routines to work in a smarter, more efficient way. To enable you to do your best work you may wish to keep some of these new ways of working in place longer term. There is [guidance](#) to help you discuss this with your line manager.
- Before you return to the workplace the [Principle 2 form](#) should be completed and agreed with your line manager (use [this version](#) if you are considered clinically extremely vulnerable).
- Check the latest Government guidance for [England](#), [Scotland](#) and [Wales](#).

COVID-champions have been working behind the scenes to put extra safety measures in place to make our workplaces COVID-secure including temperature checks on arrival, clearly marked one-way systems and extra COVID-cleaning regimes.

You should follow three simple actions to protect yourself and others:

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- Wash **hands** keep washing your hands regularly
- Cover **face** wear a face covering in enclosed spaces
- Make **space** stay at least 2 metres apart – or 1 metre with a face covering or other precautions
- The [NHS video](#) on the front page of the coronavirus hub on MyConnect explains more about how to minimise the spread of infection.

If you are concerned you should discuss with your line manager.

Our priority is the safety and welfare of all our colleagues during this challenging time. Please continue to look after

Managers can now access a guide on making reasonable adjustments in the workplace [here](#)

The use of an antimicrobial product as part of our cleaning regime, will provide ongoing protection against the virus living on surfaces and this will be implemented as part of the workplace recovery plan process. High touch point surfaces such as desks, chairs, doors, handrails and kitchen/restroom equipment and surfaces will be treated.

Update 18 June 2021 – If you are CEV and have been working from home, any plan to return to the workplace for the first time should follow the [Full information pack](#) for both employees and line managers.

Q4.2 - I have asked an employee to return to the workplace today but they are unsure?

If you do request a return, because the work cannot reasonably be done from home, discuss with the employee any concerns. Talk through the social distancing measures that are in place, hygiene requirements and any PPE requirements. Discuss options for flexibility. If still unsure then managers can request a covid consultation via Optima at www.myohportal.co.uk for further advice.

In planning for any return to workplace for anyone CEV for the first time a [Full information pack](#) for both employees and line managers is available.

For all other employees, information to support an employee with any concerns is available in a wellbeing and support pack available [here](#)

Managers can find guidance on workplace recovery on [MyConnect](#)

Managers can now access a guide on making reasonable adjustments in the workplace [here](#)

Separate guidance for the return of those who have been required to shield can be found in section 4 below and managers are required to follow this guidance if the employee has been absent from work or has continued to work from home and is now required to return to the workplace.

Q4.3 - Employee lives in Scotland or Wales?

- Information for Scotland can be found [here](#)
- Information for Wales can be found [here](#)

Q4.4 - Employee says they can only attend work on public transport, what should they do?

Manager should discuss if the role can be undertaken from home if this is effective. Manager should discuss the phasing of start and finish times to avoid rush hour.

In all devolved nations during the national lockdown, going to work is a 'reasonable excuse' where it cannot reasonably be done from home, public transport remains open for going to work.

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Support will continue for the following groups (next review 19 July 2021):

- Where an individual performs a business critical, operational role and do not normally travel to work by car
- They are aged 60 and above or are clinically vulnerable and therefore at higher risk of severe illness from coronavirus
- Where there is a requirement and it is still necessary for maintenance and other critical front line employees to use a private vehicle such as; circumstances where social distancing cannot be maintained by using the existing NR vehicles and, where this means we can reduce the use of hire vehicles
- Where a local lockdown restricts shared travel in cars or, prohibits use of public transport or, public transport frequency is reduced significantly or, public transport is no longer available
- the complexity and/or duration of the journey is such that it involves the prolonged use of busy public transport and this causes the employee to be anxious about being in close proximity to other people who may have coronavirus.

Q4.5 - Employee has been asked to return to work, do they need to take a test first?

No, however, lateral flow tests for non symptomatic people are now freely available in England, Wales and Scotland and are encouraged. PCR tests are available for those who have symptoms. See Q1.12.

Managers can find guidance on workplace recovery on [MyConnect](#)

Managers can now access a guide on making reasonable adjustments in the workplace [here](#)

The use of an antimicrobial product as part of our cleaning regime, will provide ongoing protection against the virus living on surfaces and this will be implemented as part of the workplace recovery plan process. High touch point surfaces such as desks, chairs, doors, handrails and kitchen/restroom equipment and surfaces will be treated.

Q4.5 – Does Network Rail have a Working from Home policy?

A new working from home policy has been released. Details can be found on [MyConnect](#)

Q4.6 – An external visitor would like to attend a workplace, what is the process?

External visitors needing to attend workplaces for short-term, infrequent visits, for example for a meeting, should complete [this visitor form](#) before each visit. Once completed, the visitor should email it back to the meeting host who retains the form for 3-4 weeks after the meeting. It is important that the host ensures that they have received the completed form before the visitor is accepted into the workplace.

The principle 2 have been updated to point everyone in this direction.

https://networkrail.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/sites/myconnect/communications/_layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc=%7BBFABC760-6655-4BED-AFDB-6D5162333204%7D&file=Covid%20Visitor%20Registration%20Form.docx&action=default&mobileredirect=true&cid=a7f690ec-6964-4f33-8a06-4f4132b7d38d

There is further information for visitors here:

<https://networkrail.sharepoint.com/sites/myconnect/communications/Pages/Coronavirus-Returning-to-Workplaces.aspx>

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Q4.7 – Where can I find information on agile working?

We want to create an environment that supports you to do your best work. Colleagues and trades unions have shared their views about what works and doesn't. So we are introducing a new agile way of working.

Agile working isn't just about where you work. It's also about **when** and **how** you work. It is about adjusting your routines to work in a smarter, more efficient way. It means ways of working to bring us closer to colleagues, customers, passengers and our communities.

To support this new way of working, we've created some [principles](#) and a [conversation guide](#) so you can discuss with your team how you can work in a more agile way.

Line managers will be provided with more information on the process for returning to workplaces in this new agile context.

A MyConnect page to support agile working is now available. This new way of working has been created using your feedback. Please continue to share your suggestions, questions and feedback on the return to workplace jammer group to help us to shape the way it works for you.

Q4.8 - Should we allow the use of desk fans as a reasonable adjustment to assist employees who may be menopausal or have a reasonable requirement?

Yes – the use of desk fans should be considered with appropriate mitigation measures in place to avoid increasing the risk of transmission of the virus. For example, by ensuring the desk is separate from other users and preferably placed close to a window. Please refer to the guidance [here](#) Electrical items should be PAT tested.

Q4.9 – Can I use hydration stations?

Contactless bottle fill stations with an updated risk assessment and the usual mitigations now embedded with COVID, are considered to be low risk.

Touch dispensers are not recommended for use.

5. Social Distancing and Self Isolation

Q5.1 – Employee states they are concerned about social distancing at work, how can a manager respond?

It is important to note that social distancing and covid controlled procedures must continue to be observed following vaccination. There is no need to register your vaccination with Chemist On Call and it will not affect any testing for Drugs and Alcohol.

A social distancing policy is now available for employees who still attend the workplace. This includes suggestions to increase social distancing, including in vehicles. More information can be found [MyConnect](#)

A reporting App for crowding during COVID-19 is now available. Details can be found on [MyConnect](#)

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Q5.2 - Employee is returning to work (following a completed period of self-isolation), what should a manager do?

If an employee has been self-isolated, and is a critical worker required return to the workplace, then an interview should take place to check that there are no symptoms or risks for the workplace and the employee's wellbeing is good.

Employee cannot return to work before 10 days from onset of symptoms.

An employee can return to work after ten days if they are fit to do so and their temperature has returned to normal. A continued cough but normal temperature after 10 days does not require self-isolation

Managers should not ask anyone who is shielding due to a local authority notification of shielding for a local lockdown to return before the end of the shielding period. Anyone with a shielding notification that wishes to return to work before the end of a local lockdown should consult their GP and provide evidence accordingly.

Managers can find guidance on workplace recovery on [MyConnect](#)

The use of an antimicrobial product as part of our cleaning regime, will provide ongoing protection against the virus living on surfaces and this will be implemented as part of the workplace recovery plan process. High touch point surfaces such as desks, chairs, doors, handrails and kitchen/restroom equipment and surfaces will be treated.

If you are living with someone who is symptomatic, you should not return until 10 days after the onset of symptoms of the first person who became ill. Managers should follow the recording of absence advice in question 1.2. **From 16 August 2021 in England** (dependant on the finalised decision to move to the final step of the roadmap on 12 July) double jabbed individuals and under 18s will no longer need to self-isolate if they are identified as a close contact of someone with COVID-19 but should get a PCR test as soon as possible. Alongside PCR testing, everyone in England is encouraged to take up the government's offer of free, twice weekly rapid testing.

If you develop symptoms, you should alert anyone else with whom you have had close contact over the last 2 days. You should tell them that you might have coronavirus but are waiting for a test result. At this stage (until the test result is known), those people should reduce social contacts and take extra care in practising social distancing and good hygiene, like washing their hands regularly. They should also watch out for their own symptoms. If they develop symptoms, they should follow the [stay at home guidance](#)

This can be by telephone if there is concern regarding possible symptoms. Managers

MUST notify HR Direct to close the case for the employee

Managers can request a covid consultation via Optima at www.myohportal.co.uk where Occupational clinicians can conduct a telephone assessment for employees wishing to return to work following a period of self-isolation to assess fitness to return to work.

Please find the COVID-19 Guidelines on Social Distancing for Key Workers [here](#)

Further practical information on putting social distancing into practice can be found on [MyConnect](#)

Q5.3- Employee advises they are suffering domestic abuse, where can I find help?

We know that coronavirus household isolation instructions can cause anxiety for those who are experiencing or feel at risk of domestic abuse.

Household isolation instructions as a result of coronavirus do not apply if you need to leave your home to escape domestic abuse.

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Network Rail has toolkits and information relating to domestic abuse:

[Everyone Matters Guide to Domestic Abuse](#)

[The slides used at the domestic abuse during covid-19 webinars](#)

Codeword scheme

If an employee is experiencing domestic abuse and needs immediate help, they can ask for 'ANI' in a participating pharmacy. 'ANI' stands for Action Needed Immediately but also phonetically sounds like the name Annie. If a pharmacy has the 'Ask for ANI' logo on display, it means they're ready to help. They will offer a private space, provide a phone and ask if support is needed from the police or other domestic abuse support services.

You can find extensive information and support at https://www.gov.uk/guidance/domestic-abuse-how-to-get-help?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_source=17d3ae6d-9f20-4d52-8f28-76d7b2614917&utm_content=immediately

Additional, support information for domestic abuse in Scotland can be found: <https://safer.scot/da/page-6/> and sexual abuse is found (LINK to : <https://www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk/>)

Q5.4- Can I claim the government's £500 allowance for self-isolation?

The government allowance is only applicable where an employee is being paid statutory Sick Pay (SSP) only for a period of self-isolation. If you need to self-isolate in Network Rail, if you cannot work from home, then it is currently paid at full pay. Therefore, the government allowance is not applicable and cannot be claimed due to the full pay offered by Network Rail.

6. Expenses

Q6.1 – Where can I find information on Expenses?

A COVID business expenses guide is now available on [MyConnect](#)

Employees may find the following manual expenses form useful if using their own vehicles, in line with the guidance, and do not have access to Oracle.

You can find the manual expenses claim form [here](#)

Expense update - There are now COVID-19 related options when selecting the expense type drop. Please select the corresponding type when submitting your expenses if they are COVID-19 related, this covers accommodation, meals and IT related equipment.

Internet boosters are equipment, so if needed to work effectively from home whilst working from home where possible is mandated, then boosters can be provided. However, the booster would remain as company equipment and should be returned when working from home is no longer compulsory.

Internet costs fall within the tax relief claim through personal self-assessment. You can find information from HMRC [here](#). This scheme from the HMRC may be subject to review throughout the COVID crisis.

The railway remains open for use and has extensive COVID controlled procedures for the safety of our passengers. Following discussion with the line manager and agreement on an expense claim, employees may choose to claim expenses for alternative travel arrangements in the following circumstances (next review 19 July 2021):

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- Where an individual performs a business critical, operational role and do not normally travel to work by car
- They are aged 60 and above or are clinically vulnerable and therefore at higher risk of severe illness from coronavirus and do not normally travel to work by car (correction 12 Feb 2021)
- Where there is a requirement and it is still necessary for maintenance and other critical front line employees to use a private vehicle such as; circumstances where social distancing cannot be maintained by using the existing NR vehicles and, where this means we can reduce the use of hire vehicles
- Where a local lockdown restricts shared travel in cars or, prohibits use of public transport or, public transport frequency is reduced significantly or, public transport is no longer available
- the complexity and/or duration of the journey is such that it involves the prolonged use of busy public transport and this causes the employee to be anxious about being in close proximity to other people who may have coronavirus.

While this temporary change to the expense policy will be in place until 19 July 2021 when it will be reviewed, and a decision taken on its continuation in light of the circumstances at that time.

Please note that a deep clean of shared vehicles, where an occupant has tested positive, is required and that the vehicle is to be left in quarantine for 72 hours before use again.

Q6.2 – Where Can I find information on vehicle insurance?

The extension of the motor insurance [motor insurance certificate](#), to cover the use of personal vehicles, as per the existing arrangements during the coronavirus period, has been extended by three months to 31st July 2021.

Support for claiming expenses is supported (next review 19 July 2021) in the following situations:

- Where an individual performs a business critical, operational role and do not normally travel to work by car
- They are aged 60 and above or are clinically vulnerable and therefore at higher risk of severe illness from coronavirus
- Where there is a requirement and it is still necessary for maintenance and other critical front line employees to use a private vehicle such as; circumstances where social distancing cannot be maintained by using the existing NR vehicles and, where this means we can reduce the use of hire vehicles
- Where a local lockdown restricts shared travel in cars or, prohibits use of public transport or, public transport frequency is reduced significantly or, public transport is no longer available
- the complexity and/or duration of the journey is such that it involves the prolonged use of busy public transport and this causes the employee to be anxious about being in close proximity to other people who may have coronavirus.

Please contact the [relevant RVC team](#) if proof of this insurance is required.

The following points should be considered along with the motor insurance certificate as reliance on the certificate alone will not suffice:

- The Network Rail insurance is provided on a contingency basis only, which means it will only be utilised if no other cover is available. If the end user has business use insurance on their personal insurance policy, then Network Rail's insurance will not cover the end user and they should revert to their own policy if the need arises;

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- End users will need to provide information before using their vehicle. This is being managed differently in each route so end users need to contact their Road Vehicle Compliance Manager who's details can be found [here](#);
- The vehicle needs to be taxed, insured and have a valid MOT (with current extensions taken into account)
- End users will need authorisation from the budget holder;
- Only non-fault costs will be covered by the insurance. At-fault costs will be covered by the cost centre the end user sits under;
- Breakdown, windscreen and tyre damage is covered when sustained whilst on genuine company business. General wear and tear are not covered as this is covered in the mileage payment;
- End users will need to have a valid licence check.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps announced government has temporarily relaxed the requirement for bus and lorry drivers to provide a doctor's medical report in order to renew their licence. Under the scheme, drivers will be able to receive a temporary one-year licence, providing they do not have any medical conditions that affect their driving and their current licence expires in 2020.

Drivers with health issues will still need to declare these, and those with health issues that prevent them from driving safely will not have their licence renewed.

This temporary change will only apply to those drivers whose licences are due to expire or have expired since 1 January 2020. The licence will only be valid for one year and then the driver will need to submit a completed D4 when the licence is next due for renewal.

The government's announcement can be found [here](#).

Please note that a clean of shared vehicles, where an occupant has tested positive, is required and that the vehicle is to be left in quarantine for 72 hours before use again.

Q6.3 – Employee asks will I have to pay the London congestion charge if I use a vehicle to travel into London?

The company will reimburse congestion charges where these are incurred in the course of a duty journey, but do not cover fees related to non-payment. A receipt must be submitted when making a claim for congestion charges.

The COVID business expenses guide is now available on [MyConnect](#)

Network Rail has been following Government guidelines on the use of public transport however, this has now been relaxed and employees are encouraged to use public transport with immediate effect. For those employees who have been travelling by car to their normal place of work and claiming congestion charge through expenses this will cease with effect from 30 September 2020. Support will continue for the following groups (next review 19 July 2021):

- Where an individual performs a business critical, operational role and do not normally travel to work by car
- They are aged 60 and above or are clinically vulnerable and therefore at higher risk of severe illness from coronavirus and do not normally travel to work by car
- Where there is a requirement and it is still necessary for maintenance and other critical front line employees to use a private vehicle such as; circumstances where social distancing cannot be maintained by using the existing NR vehicles and, where this means we can reduce the use of hire vehicles
- Where a local lockdown restricts shared travel in cars or, prohibits use of public transport or, public transport frequency is reduced significantly or, public transport is no longer available

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- the complexity and/or duration of the journey is such that it involves the prolonged use of busy public transport and this causes the employee to be anxious about being in close proximity to other people who may have coronavirus.

Q6.4 – What if a local lockdown requires that no car sharing or use of public transport?

Currently public transport is open for use.

Manager should discuss if the role can be undertaken from home if this is effective. Managers should discuss any other forms of transport such as work van. Manager should discuss the phasing of start and finish times to avoid rush hour if that helps with the lock down requirements.

Use of home start and expenses is supported where local lockdown means that car hire or personal use of vehicles will be required.

Q6.5 - What can I do about my season ticket?

Revised guidelines for the refund of season tickets are now available on My Connect:

[Guidance on Season Ticket Loans](#)

This provides the information and process for season ticket refunds.

Other useful sites are:

<https://www.abellioseasontickets.com/aftersales/network-rail> You may

find more information on the following government link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-ensures-ticket-refunds-and-protects-services-for-passengers-with-rail-emergency-measures>

Q6.6 – Employee has an additional travel agreement, what happens?

A new guideline for employees who have an Additional Travel Agreement can be found on MyConnect:

[Guideline for previously displaced employees - additional travel support](#)

7. Clinically Extremely Vulnerable, Vulnerable and Pregnant Employees

Q7.1 – Employee states they have received a letter from the NHS stating that they are clinically extremely vulnerable or are required to shield, what should a manager do?

The government now uses the term 'clinically extremely vulnerable' or CEV, to describe those at high risk from coronavirus.

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England only

In addition to people who are clinically extremely vulnerable' or CEV, in England the Government has a new model called QCovid® to identify adults with multiple risk factors that make them vulnerable to Covid19.

These individuals will be sent a letter to inform them and from this point they will be advised to shield, similar to the other CEV employees. Employees who have not received a letter stating that they are at a higher risk of Covid and instructed to shield, do not fit into this new group and do not need to shield.

If you have been identified as being [clinically extremely vulnerable](#) you should continue to work from home where possible. If you cannot work from home, you should go to work. Your employer is required to take steps to reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace and should be able to explain to you the measures they have put in place to keep you safe at work. Some employers may introduce regular testing of employees as part of these measures. You may also want to consider how you get to and from work, for example, if it is possible to avoid using public transport during rush hour.

Scotland -For those employees who are Clinically extremely vulnerable' or CEV and have **received a letter** and cannot work from home, they should be recorded as on covid paid special leave which includes payment for published base rosters until the requirement to shield is lifted on 26 April 2021. It is vital that managers record a case with HR Direct so that communication, support and advice during the shielding period can be provided and actions to return employees safely at the end of the restricted period can be effectively provided.

Letters to those who are CEV are being distributed by the respective Chief Medical Officer of their nations.

Letter for England can be found [here](#)

The letter for Wales can be found [here](#)

If an employee states that they are CEV or they believe that they fit into the new group because they have multiple risk factors or medical conditions but have not received a letter, or are anxious about being in the workplace, managers can suggest the employee consults with their G.P and ask whether they should be added to the Shielded Patient List or issued a Fit note. Following that, managers can request a Covid consultation via Optima at www.myohportal.co.uk.

Advice and resources for supporting wellbeing are available via Validium and managers should be making colleagues aware of this support.

For Wales you can find more information [here](#)

Q7.2 What if an employee is a parent, household member or in a support or care bubble of someone who is CEV?

In accordance with government guidelines, there is no requirement to shield if an employee is a parent or household member of someone who is CEV or, if they live in England, has received a letter stating that they fit into the new group identified through QCovid®. However, Network Rail recognises that these employees may be worried, and they may have shielded last year.

If you have been identified as being [clinically extremely vulnerable](#) you should continue to work from home where possible. If you cannot work from home, you should go to work. Your employer is required to take steps to reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace and should be able to explain to you the measures they have put in place to keep you safe at work. Some employers may introduce regular testing of employees as part of these

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measures. You may also want to consider how you get to and from work, for example, if it is possible to avoid using public transport during rush hour.

The requirement to shield continues in Scotland until 26 April 2021. Therefore, in order for Network Rail to support these individuals who live with CEV, they should raise the matter with their line manager who will then arrange for their work/shifts to be covered.

It is not for Network Rail to advise these people to shield and therefore it is completely voluntary.

Following the discussion with the manager and subject to type of work the person undertakes the manager may be able to allocate tasks or training that can be done at home. If an employee does voluntarily shield they are advised to speak to their GP or clinician for specific advice. Managers will need to satisfy themselves the employee the child or household member is within the CEV category, this may include seeing a copy of the letter (subject to GDPR and possible redaction by the household member). Employees who remain at home for these reasons will effectively be considered as shielding and paid special leave and paid in accordance with published base rosters.

Q7.3 What are the plans if shielding is lifted and returning to the workplace?

If you have been identified as being [clinically extremely vulnerable](#) you should continue to work from home where possible. If you cannot work from home, you should go to work. Your employer is required to take steps to reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace and should be able to explain to you the measures they have put in place to keep you safe at work. Some employers may introduce regular testing of employees as part of these measures. You may also want to consider how you get to and from work, for example, if it is possible to avoid using public transport during rush hour.

Scotland -For those employees who are 'Clinically extremely vulnerable' or CEV and have **received a letter** and cannot work from home, they should be recorded as on covid paid special leave which includes payment for published base rosters until the requirement to shield is lifted on 26 April 2021. It is vital that managers record a case with HR Direct so that communication, support and advice during the shielding period can be provided and actions to return employees safely at the end of the restricted period can be effectively provided.

Manager should follow advice from HR Direct and the process to below to safely return to the workplace those CEV, who cannot work from home where the requirement to shield is lifted. In summary the advice to follow is:

Step 1 - Contact the employee to arrange a workplace assessment

Step 2 - Complete a workplace assessment, using the resources below

Step 3 - Involve Occupational Health, as necessary

Step 4 - Confirm the assessment is complete

Resources to use

These resources should be used to complete the actions set out in the case note that you will have received:

- The [Clinically Extremely Vulnerable Pack](#) for employees and managers
- The P2 Checklist for those returning to the workplace for those considered CEV will help you complete an assessment, following principle 2 of the Work Area Recovery Plan.
- The [reasonable adjustment](#) form should be used to document the adjustments you agree on
- The [reasonable adjustment guide](#) will help you to consider and document the adjustments that can be made

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In addition to the above, there are other tools which you and the employee can refer to for help:

- Support for mental wellbeing during coronavirus can be found [here](#).
- Optima offers managers the option to request a covid consultation via Optima at www.myohportal.co.uk
- Validium are also available for you and employees 24/7 on 0800 3584858 or 0330 332 9980.

Vita Health can also be contacted to provide additional support for any musculoskeletal concerns they may have, or to carry out virtual DSE (Display Screen Equipment) reviews.

Manager should update any recorded case with HR Direct via the 'e-mail us' facility to confirm that a risk assessment and return to work plan is in place. When shielding is lifted, managers should update the case again to confirm the return to work.

Q7.4 If I have received a letter saying I am CEV and have had a vaccination can I come back to work?

In England and Wales, the requirement to shield is lifted. However, all employee who can work from home should continue to do so. For those who cannot work from home, they can now return to the workplace but manager must follow the safe return process outlined above in 6.3. Those who have been vaccinated must follow the same process, self-isolate if they become symptomatic and follow all social distancing and covid controlled protocols. This is because they can still contract and transmit coronavirus but will have greater immunity against the adverse effects of the virus.

In Scotland employees who have received a letter saying they should 'shield' need to continue to shield whilst the government is strongly advising CEVs not to go to work, if they cannot work from home. This will change on 26 April 2021.

An information sheet and guide for managers regarding time off for appointments is available on [MyConnect](#)

There is no need to register your vaccination with Chemist On Call and it will not affect any testing for Drugs and Alcohol.

Q7.5 What if someone who has been required to shield has been working from home and now is now returning to the workplace, even if on a phased basis?

You are strongly advised to work from home because the risk of exposure to the virus in your area may currently be higher.

As the current restrictions change, colleagues should continue to work from home where they can and only come into a workplace if something cannot be done from home. Exceptionally, if it is then necessary for a colleague to be in a workplace for their physical or mental wellbeing because they cannot work from home effectively, then formal planning for safety must be undertaken.

It is important for managers to undertake all steps listed in Q6.3 above also apply to employees who have continued to work from home during the period they were required to shield. Before an employee returns to workplace, even if on an ad hoc basis, managers should follow the steps:

- Step 1 - Contact the employee to arrange a workplace assessment
- Step 2 - Complete a workplace assessment, using the resources below

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Frequently Asked Questions

- Step 3 - Involve Occupational Health, as necessary
- Step 4 - Confirm the assessment is complete

Resources to use

These resources should be used to complete the actions set out in the case note that you will have received:

- The [Clinically Extremely Vulnerable Pack](#) for employees and managers
- The [P2 Checklist for those returning to the workplace for those considered CEV](#) will help you complete an assessment, following principle 2 of the Work Area Recovery Plan.
- The [reasonable adjustment form](#) should be used to document the adjustments you agree on
- The [reasonable adjustment guide](#) will help you to consider and document the adjustments that can be made

Manager should note that reasonable adjustments may include the support for the use of cars instead of public transport or continued working from home where it is effective and appropriate for the role to be performed.

Q7.6 – What happens if someone shielding does not return at the end of the shielding period?

Any CEV/shielding employee, who cannot return to work at the end of a CEV/shielding period will need to supply a fit note from their G.P and be updated to be recorded as being on COVID sickness absence with effect from the end of the shielding period advised by the NHS or local authority. This means that they will move to their contractual sick pay but that attendance triggers will not apply for this absence. For those who are not returning as they are waiting an Optima appointment, full basic pay is assured until that process has completed. A GP fit/sick note will be required after 7 calendar days absence.

Q7.7 - Employee states that they are at moderate risk from coronavirus (clinically vulnerable), what should I do as a manager?

The government now uses the term 'clinically vulnerable' for this cohort and considers those who fall into this cohort to be at moderate risk from coronavirus.

England only

In England some people who have previously been classified as clinically vulnerable may be sent a letter stating that they have been identified as being at a higher risk from Covid19 and will receive the vaccine earlier than they otherwise would and should shield. In such circumstances they should follow the advice above that relates to CEV employees. Employees who have not received a letter stating that they are at a higher risk of Covid and instructed to shield, do not fit into this new group CEV people.

If you are over 60 or clinically vulnerable, you could be at higher risk of severe illness from coronavirus. You:

- should be especially careful to follow the rules and minimise your contacts with others. (Wash hands, Cover Face and Make Space) and

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- should continue to wash your hands carefully and more frequently than usual and maintain thorough cleaning of frequently touched areas in your home and/or workspace

Clinically vulnerable people are those who are:

- aged 70 or over (regardless of medical conditions)
- under 70 with an underlying health condition listed below (that is, anyone instructed to get a flu jab each year on medical grounds):
- chronic (long-term) mild to moderate respiratory diseases, such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), emphysema or bronchitis
- chronic heart disease, such as heart failure
- chronic kidney disease
- chronic liver disease, such as hepatitis
- chronic neurological conditions, such as Parkinson's disease, motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis (MS) or cerebral palsy
- diabetes
- a weakened immune system as the result of certain conditions or medicines they are taking (such as steroid tablets)
- being seriously overweight (a body mass index (BMI) of 40 or above)
- pregnant

In accordance with Government guidance, if an employee is clinically vulnerable (or moderate risk) and cannot work from home, then they are expected to attend work and must strictly follow social distancing, hygiene and PPE guidance.

If employees are concerned or these steps cannot be followed then they should discuss the matter with their manager. Over the last year we have found that through discussions managers have been able to re-allocate duties to maintain social distancing so the work can be undertaken. If this cannot be achieved the manager will advise the employee to remain at home, providing them with work to be done at home where possible, and refer them for a COVID-19 consultation with Optima at www.myohportal.co.uk. A clinician will undertake a risk and welfare assessed approach to determine if any adjustments are required and this may include consideration of any alternative work or remaining at home as special leave and paid in accordance with published base rosters.

For those employees who can work from home managers should ask whether employees have a safe and appropriate environment in which to work. This does not need to be recorded with HR Direct.

If an employee becomes symptomatic, they must self-isolate, This absence should be recorded as sickness absence on Oracle and case MUST be created with HR Direct. Manager should follow the answer in Q1.3.

Further information can be found on Public Health England - [Guidance on Social Distancing](#)

If an employee states that they are actually clinically extremely vulnerable (increased risk from coronavirus) but have not received an NHS letter, or are vulnerable and are concerned. managers can request a covid consultation via Optima at www.myohportal.co.uk. Occupational clinicians will conduct assessments to determine vulnerable (increased risk from coronavirus) employees.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Frequently Asked Questions

Please find the COVID-19 Guidelines on Social Distancing for Key Workers [here](#) which should be followed for all employees in the workplace

Further practical information on putting social distancing into practice can be found on [MyConnect](#)

Q7.8 - Employee advises that they are pregnant and are concerned, what should I do as a manager?

The UK Government now advise:

If you are pregnant and have let your employer know in writing of your pregnancy, your employer should carry out a **risk assessment. This is both an Expectant and New Mother Risk assessment and an additional COVID New and Expectant Mother pregnancy risk assessment. Both need to be completed. Anyone attending the workplace also needs to complete a P2 checklist for the workplace.**

[covid New and Expectant Mother Risk Assessment](#)

[New and Expectant Mother Risk Assessment](#)

[P2 checklist](#)

[P2 checklist for those CEV](#)

Pregnant women of any gestation should not be required to continue working if this is not supported by the risk assessment. Pregnant women are considered '[clinically vulnerable](#)'

Therefore, managers and pregnant employees should follow the advice above for those who are at moderate risk (clinically vulnerable), except where they have received a letter informing that they are CEV or should 'shield'. Managers must also ensure that a new and expectant mothers risk assessment is undertaken.

These employees should work from home and attend the workplace only where their work cannot be performed at home.

Pregnant women of any gestation should not be required to continue working if this is not supported by the risk assessments.

Under 28 weeks gestation - Then, you should only continue working if the risk assessment advises that it is safe to do so.

28 weeks gestation and over, or if you have an underlying health condition- are encouraged to work from home after 28 weeks pregnancy until their maternity leave commences. Where employees cannot work from home and prefer to remain at home, they should be recorded as paid special leave with published base rosters until the commencement of planned maternity leave or birth (whichever is sooner).

Employees can find latest advice at Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and speak to your GP or maternity unit if in doubt.

<https://www.rcog.org.uk/en/guidelines-research-services/guidelines/coronavirus-pregnancy/covid-19-virusinfection-and-pregnancy/>

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Managers should ask whether employees have a safe and appropriate environment in which to work remotely. Any concerns should be raised by the employee to the manager who can consult with their OH&W managers and arrange a covid consultation with Optima if necessary.

If an employee states that they are pregnant (increased risk from coronavirus), managers can request a covid consultation via Optima at www.myohportal.co.uk. Occupational clinicians will conduct assessments to determine vulnerable (increased risk from coronavirus) employees.

Please find the COVID-19 Guidelines on Social Distancing for Key Workers [here](#) which should be followed for all employees in the workplace

Further practical information on putting social distancing into practice can be found on [MyConnect](#)

8. National and Local Lockdowns

Q8.1 – What if I live in a local lockdown area?

Summary of possible work impacts of local lockdowns as at **7 July 2021**:

England

Update 7 July 2021

From 16 August 2021 in England (dependant on the finalised decision to move to the final step of the roadmap on 12 July) double jabbed individuals and under 18s will no longer need to self-isolate if they are identified as a close contact of someone with COVID-19 but should get a PCR test as soon as possible. Alongside PCR testing, everyone in England is encouraged to take up the government's offer of free, twice weekly rapid testing.

15 May 2021

England remains in Step 3

The government has announced a 4-week pause at Step 3. Step 3 restrictions remain in place, and you should follow the guidance on this page, which explains what you can and cannot do.

It is expected that England will move to Step 4 on 19 July, though the data will be reviewed after 2 weeks in case the risks have reduced. The government will continue to monitor the data and the move to Step 4 will be confirmed one week in advance.

However, some restrictions will change on 21 June. From 21 June, there will be changes to the rules on:

- weddings and civil partnership ceremonies and wedding receptions or civil partnership celebrations
- commemorative events following a death such as a wake, stone setting or ash scattering
- large events pilots
- care home visits
- domestic residential visits for children

England moves to tier 3 on 17 May 2021

From 17 May, you can socialise indoors in a group of up to 6 people or 2 households, including for overnight stays. Up to 30 people can meet outside. Pubs, theatres and other venues can open indoors. Hotels, hostels and B&Bs can open for people on holiday

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You should continue to work from home if you can. When travelling within the UK, you should aim to do so safely and plan your journey in advance.

You should [get a test](#) and follow the [stay at home guidance](#) if you have COVID-19 symptoms.

- Gathering limits will be eased. Outdoor gatherings will be limited to 30 people and indoor gatherings will be limited to 6 people or 2 households (each household can include a support bubble, if eligible).
- New guidance on meeting friends and family will emphasise personal responsibility rather than government rules. Instead of instructing you to stay 2m apart from anyone you don't live with, you will be encouraged to exercise caution and consider the guidance on risks associated with COVID-19 and actions you can take to help keep you and your loved ones safe. Remember that the risks of close contact may be greater for some people than others and in some settings and circumstances, there will be specific guidance that you will need to follow even when you are with friends and family.
- Indoor entertainment and attractions such as cinemas, theatres, concert halls, bowling alleys, casinos, amusement arcades, museums and children's indoor play areas will be permitted to open with COVID-secure measures in place.
- People will be able to attend indoor and outdoor events, including live performances, sporting events and business events. Attendance at these events will be capped according to venue type, and attendees should follow the COVID-secure measures set out by those venues.
- Indoor hospitality venues such as restaurants, pubs, bars and cafes can reopen.
- Organised indoor sport will be able to take place for all (this includes gym classes). This must be organised by a business, charity or public body and the organiser must take reasonable measures to reduce the risk of transmission.
- All holiday accommodation will be open (including hotels and B&Bs). This can be used by groups of up to 6 or 2 households (each household can include a support bubble, if eligible).
- Funeral attendance will no longer be limited to 30 people, but will be determined by how many people the COVID-secure venue can safely accommodate with social distancing. Limits at weddings, wakes and other commemorative events will be increased to 30 people. Other significant life events, such as bar/bat mitzvahs and christenings, will also be able to take place with 30 people.
- The rules for care home residents visiting out and receiving visitors will change, allowing up to five named visitors (two at any one time), provided visitors test negative for COVID-19.
- All higher education students will be able to access in-person teaching.
- Support groups and parent and child group gathering limits will increase to 30 people (not including under 5s)
- There will no longer be a legal restriction or permitted reason required to travel internationally. There will be a traffic light system for international travel, and you must follow the rules when returning to England depending on whether you return from a red, amber or green list country.

Wales

Update 18 June 2021

A 4-week pause to the coronavirus rules on Friday (June 18) to help boost protection against the new delta variant.

– the regulations will be reviewed again on 15 July – some small technical amendments are being made to the coronavirus regulations to make them easier to understand and easier to apply for businesses.

These include:

The number of people who can attend a wedding or civil partnership reception or wake, organised by a business in an indoors regulated premise, such as a hotel, will be determined by the size of the venue and a risk assessment.

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Clarifying small grassroots music and comedy venues will be able to operate on the same basis as hospitality venues, like pubs and cafes.

Primary school children in the same school contact group or bubble will be able to stay overnight in a residential outdoor education centre.

Pilot events in theatre, sport and other sectors will also continue throughout June and July.

Update 4 June 2021 Phased move to Alert level 1

Expected in two weeks from 7 June 2021:

Rule of six for meeting indoors in private homes and holiday accommodation.

Increased numbers for indoor organised gatherings and indoor events.

Opening ice skating rinks

From 7 June 2021:

The first phase of the move to alert level one means that from Monday June 7:

Up to 30 people can meet outdoors, including in private gardens, outdoor hospitality and public places.

Larger outdoor organised gatherings and events, such as concerts, football matches and sporting activities, like organised running groups can go ahead for up to 4,000 people standing and 10,000 people seated. All organisers planning events and activities must undertake a full risk assessment and put in place measures to prevent the spread of coronavirus, including social distancing.

From 17 May 2021, Wales will move to alert level 2, you will be able to:

Other than in limited circumstances, nobody other than members of your extended household should enter your home. Please refer to the visiting people in private homes below for further information on this, including what is meant by an “extended household”. people can meet with people they do not live with outdoors (including in private gardens) as long as a maximum of six people from up to six households (not including carers or children under 11 from any of these households) meet at one time

The Welsh Government state: please try and be restrained in how many different people you see. It is better to see the same five people regularly than to see lots of different people occasionally, please maintain social distancing, including outdoors, avoid doing activities that might increase the risk of transmission (for example shouting to be heard over loud music, or singing in close proximity)

- Indoor hospitality can re-open – six people from up to six households (not including children under 11) can book;
- All holiday accommodation can re-open fully;
- Entertainment venues, including cinemas, bingo halls, bowling alleys, indoor-play centres and areas, casinos, amusement arcades, and theatres can re-open. Cinemas, theatres concert halls and sports grounds can sell food and drink as long as it is consumed in a seated area for watching the performance;
- Indoor visitor attractions, including museums and galleries can re-open;
- Up to 30 people can take part in organised indoor activities and up to 50 people in organised outdoor activities. This includes wedding receptions and wakes.
- International travel can resume

You must:

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- Self-isolate and get a test if you or anyone in your household has symptoms.

From 3 May

If public health conditions permit, the following relaxations can go ahead:

- gyms, leisure centres, swimming pools and fitness facilities can open
- extended households can be formed with one other household
- indoor supervised activities for children can take place
- indoor organised activities for up to 15 adults can take place
- community centres can open

From 26 April

If public health conditions permit, the following relaxations can go ahead:

- outdoor hospitality can open
- organised outdoor activities will be permitted for up to 30 people
- outdoor wedding receptions will be permitted for up to 30 people
- outdoor visitor attractions can open

From 24 April

- 6 people from 6 households will be able to meet outdoors (not including children under 11 years of age or carers from those households).

From 12 April

- travel restrictions within the UK and Common Travel Area will be lifted
- full return to schools and further education settings
- university campuses can open for blended face-to-face and online learning for all students
- all shops and close contact services can open
- wedding venues will be able to let prospective clients view their premises by appointment only

Scotland

1 June 2021 update:

From 17 May 2021:

Mainland Scotland and islands not moving to Level 1 will move to Level 2

Orkney, Shetland, Na h-Eileanan Siar, all islands in Highland (except Skye) and the following islands within Argyll and Bute will move to Level 1 - Coll, Colonsay, Erraid, Gometra, Iona, Islay, Jura, Mull, Oronsay, Tiree and Ulva

7 June 21 - Glasgow has moved to level 2

Under Level 2 restrictions:

- up to six people from three households will be able to meet in each other's homes or gardens without physical distancing – this was the limit previously planned for Level 1 but has now been accelerated for areas in Level 2. People will be encouraged to use their judgment about close physical contact with others
- up to six people from three households will be able to meet indoors in places such as pubs, cafes and restaurants, while up to eight people from eight households will be able to meet outdoors

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- pubs and restaurants will be able to serve alcohol indoors until 10:30pm in two-hour booked slots
- venues including cinemas, theatres, concert halls, music venues, comedy clubs, amusement arcades, casinos, snooker halls and bingo halls will be able to reopen
- events will resume with a maximum capacity of 100 people indoors, 250 outdoors where there is unrestricted standing and 500 for events with seating. Organisers will be allowed to apply to hold bigger events
- outdoor contact sports and indoor group exercise classes will be able to restart
- more than one person will be able to sing during religious services
- amateur performing arts groups will be able to perform outdoors
- colleges and universities will have more flexibility to resume in-person learning

Scotland will make some changes to this system to make sure it's as effective as possible against new strains of the virus. It is explained in more detail in the [section: protective measures and levels system](#)

Q8.2 – Can I travel into and within the Tier 4/5 in England and during Scotland and Wales national lockdown?

Update 7 June 2021 – Scotland is now at tier 2, travel between England and Scotland is no longer restricted. Travel between England and Wales is now also permitted.

If restrictions change then travel into, out of at Tier 4/5 and associated protection levels in Scotland and Wales is restricted for essential work purposes only.

If you need to travel, walk or cycle where possible, and plan ahead and avoid busy times and routes on public transport. This will allow you to practise social distancing while you travel.

Avoid car sharing with anyone from outside your household or your support bubble.

You should continue to practice safe behaviours on public transport:

- plan ahead, check for disruption before you leave, and avoid the busiest routes, as well as busy times
- avoid making unnecessary stops during your journey
- avoid sharing a car with people not in your household
- keep your distance from other people when you travel, where possible
- wash or sanitise your hands regularly

9. Working from home

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Frequently Asked Questions

Q9.1 - Who do I ask if I am a manager and don't know whether to agree working from home, what do I do?

Managers should first consider whether working from home is feasible.

Secondly, manager should consider any business impacts of agreeing working from home.

Managers should also ask the employee whether the working environment is suitable and safe and is not likely to cause any injury or harm long term. If the employee cannot assure a safe system of working at home, then home working is not suitable. Employees can take items of Network Rail property on the understanding that they will be returned.

Manager should balance the severity of any employees' concerns.

If a manager feels they need more support in decision making, they should consult their line manager and if necessary, their business continuity lead.

Managers should ensure that they have consulted their business continuity plans and check with their management before proceeding.

Heating and broadband costs are not being reimbursed.

Other savings are likely such as travel to work and parking costs

Employees may find the following supportive information useful for working from home <https://networkrail.sharepoint.com/sites/myconnect/ste/Pages/Supporting-Mental-Wellbeing.aspx> The normal company insurance arrangements will apply to activity in the course of an employee's employment whether at home or on NR premises.

Guidance on how to install Z scaler remote access can be found on MyConnect: [installation guide here](#)

A new guideline on temporary home working can be found [here](#)

Q9.2 - How can I get the IT equipment I need to work from home safely?

Many of us are now working from home, often using a laptop and other mobile computing equipment under conditions that can be less than ideal.

A 2 in 1 laptop/tablet device is now available to address the needs of ONLY those colleagues who currently don't have access to a device they can use for work purposes. In order to prevent loss of Network Rail assets, laptops for new starters can only be ordered, after the individual has been in post for one day. Faulty devices should be reported to the IT Helpdesk using the online reporting form available via the [IT Helpdesk page](#). To request a device, [click here to access the form](#).

Review your working arrangements using the guidance on the [Managing your Workspace page](#). You should have been invited to complete a survey which checks your arrangements and provides access to a virtual homework consultation to give advice/help if you need it. The [Managing your Workspace page](#) provides advice on how to obtain certain items of equipment and furnishing if needed. Certain small items (e.g. keyboards, mice, headsets) can be purchased by individuals and costs, up to a limit, claimed through expenses or from the on-line store on iProcurement.

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Further details are provided on the [IT Helpdesk page](#). For chairs and monitors, you should try first to obtain these from offices. If not available or practical, then there are options to purchase. Other IT equipment can be procured, based on a justifiable business need, and ordered via iProcurement or by contacting ITHDProcurement@networkrail.co.uk. The need for such items should be discussed and agreed with your line manager or budget holder first who will approve the expense. The specific page relating to IT equipment during COVID is found [here](#)

Expense update - There are now COVID-19 related options when selecting the expense type drop. Please select the corresponding type when submitting your expenses if they are COVID-19 related, this covers accommodation, meals and IT related equipment. A COVID business expenses guide is now available on [MyConnect](#)

Guidance on how to install **Zscaler** remote access can be found on MyConnect: [installation guide here](#) A new guideline on temporary home working can be found [here](#)

Q9.3 How do I report an accident when working from home?

Please follow the guidance for working from home on [MyConnect](#)

Q9.4 Can I work from home at a family home abroad, pending the requirement to any return to working from Network Rail premises

From 5 November 2020 in England further restrictions on foreign travel will come into force.

No. Working from home is defined as from a home residence in the UK, not abroad. Travel abroad is currently excluded to some listed countries by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) except for essential travel (i.e. matters of national security e.g. boarder control, forces, diplomats etc. Please check the latest Government advice – www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice - and speak with your line manager in the first instance.

Beyond the FCO advice there are tax, legal and insurance implications for people working outside the UK. NR employees are employed to work in the UK, so the work needs to be done from the UK.

Over time, as Government advice changes, Network Rail worksites will be opened up. For the time being, where employees can work from home (in the UK), they are being asked to do so.

10. Working Away from Home

Q10.1 What advice is there if an employee is staying away from home for work?

A new guidance has been released to support employees with questions and information on working and staying away from home during coronavirus. The guidance can be found [here](#).

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Frequently Asked Questions

11. Child Care during school/Nursery closures and school breaks

Q11.1 – What if my child's school or school year or nursery is closed due to local lockdown or test and trace requirements?

There are several ways that parents and carers can continue to access childcare during national lockdowns, especially as Network Rail employees are key workers:

- Early Years settings (including nurseries and childminders) remain open to the children of key workers.
- Vulnerable children and children of key workers can continue to use registered childcare, childminders and other childcare activities (including wraparound care).
- Schools will remain open during national and local lockdowns for the children of key workers.
- In England, you no longer need a childcare bubble to provide informal childcare. You can now meet indoors in groups of up to 6 people, or more if everyone present is from 2 households.

You no longer need a childcare bubble to provide informal childcare. You can now meet indoors in groups of up to 6 people, or more if everyone present is from 2 households.

You and your childcare bubble count as 2 separate households. This means that you and your childcare bubble cannot meet with another household indoors, unless there are fewer than 6 people in total or another exemption applies.

- Some households will be able to benefit from being in a support bubble (please see 10.5 below).
- Nannies will be able to continue to provide services, including in the home.

Where employees' children are not able to attend a nursery or school, or be cared for by a nanny, childminder or as part of a childcare or support bubble, and childcare is required, line managers are advised to have supportive conversations. In such circumstances:

- employees should work from home wherever possible;
- line managers and employees should discuss and consider temporary flexible working arrangements and changes to the employees' working patterns as appropriate;
- use compensatory (TOIL) days, where possible;
- use annual leave, where this is available. In line with the Annual Leave Guidelines [here](#) employees may, with the agreement of their line manager, bring forward up to two (2) week of their 2022 annual leave.

Employees should consider all options available to them in their household.

Where the employee has no remaining annual leave for this Holiday Year, have brought forward and used two (2) week of their 2022 annual leave, has no TOIL owing, cannot work from home, changing the employee's hours of work will not help, and no other option is available, then the employee should be placed on paid special leave one week at a time for the periods of care where work cannot be completed. Where employees are placed on paid special leave (basic pay only), this is intended to allow time to explore alternative arrangements. Employees and line managers are encouraged to engage in regular and at least weekly conversations as the situation regarding school closures appears to a fast-moving subject.

In all circumstances, no child that is being cared for should be left in an unsafe situation.

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The payment of any special leave is not an entitlement and should not be paid where an alternative arrangement is available. The Company will only pay special leave to any one employee for a limited period of time after which a resolution will hopefully materialise, although where it does not, the Company reserves the right to cease paying special leave and in which case the special leave would revert to being unpaid.

Q11.2 – Employee asks whether there is any discretionary leave available to help with parenting responsibilities and school closures

Where these options above have been exhausted, employees may use up to five 'Caring Days Leave' days available in 2021 only.

These days are recorded as paid special leave and must be authorised by line managers. Caring Days Leave should be recorded on Oracle and timesheets as covid paid special leave.

Caring Days Leave are discretionary leave days and employees must gain agreement with the line managers in advance.

Caring Days Leave are offered as an alternative to Volunteer Days. This means that someone who has taken 5 days Caring Days Leave cannot be authorised for any Volunteer Leave in 2021. Should an employee utilise, for example, two Caring Days Leave, they would be able to take three Volunteer Days in 2021. However, the total discretionary leave paid for Caring and Volunteer Leave in total should not exceed five days paid special leave in 2021.

Q11.3 Employee advises that their child's school or nursery place is open, but they do not want to send their child to school?

The Company recognises that sending any child back to school during COVID is worrying for parents. The choice each parent will make regarding this subject will be difficult and must be their own. The Company, line managers and all employees are encouraged to respect each parent's individual choice.

If an employee decides to not send their child to school and cannot attend work as a result, they can use their annual leave, work the time taken at another time or be placed on unpaid special leave. Managers are encouraged to be flexible where possible.

Managers can request a covid consultation via Optima at www.myohportal.co.uk.

Updated 18 June 2021 - Q11.4 Employee states that their normal or pre-arranged wrap around or holiday childcare is not available, what should a line manager advise?

Line managers should discuss and consider flexible working and changes to the employees' working pattern to accommodate working if possible. Where appropriate, annual leave or compensatory (TOIL) days may be used.

In all cases, no child that is being cared for, should be left in an unsafe situation.

Employees should consider all options available to them in their household.

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Where the employee has no remaining annual leave for this Holiday Year, have brought forward and used two (2) week of their 2022 annual leave, has no TOIL owing, cannot work from home, changing the employee's hours of work will not help, and no other option is available, then the employee can use Caring leave for parents described in Q11.2 above can be used by paid covid special leave one week. Further periods of care where work cannot be completed is intended to allow time to explore alternative arrangements. Employees and line managers are encouraged to engage in regular and at least weekly conversations as the situation regarding childcare provision appears to a fast-moving subject.

Q11.5 What is a Childcare Care Bubble?

In England

You no longer need a childcare bubble to provide informal childcare. You can now meet indoors in groups of up to 6 people, or more if everyone present is from 2 households.

You and your childcare bubble count as 2 separate households. This means that you and your childcare bubble cannot meet with another household indoors, unless there are fewer than 6 people in total or another exemption applies.

Q11.6 What is a Household Support Bubble?

A support bubble is a close support network between a household with only one adult in the home (known as a single-adult household) and one other household of any size.

You no longer need a support bubble to meet indoors. You can now meet indoors in groups of up to 6 people, or more if everyone present is from 2 households. You and your support bubble count as one household.

Q11.7 Employee advises that there is a positive test result in their child's nursery, school or year bubble or that their child has been sent home from school and asks if they should self-isolate?

The government advises that household members of those contacts who are sent home (from school) do not need to self-isolate themselves unless the child or young person staff member (if there is a teacher in the household) who is self-isolating subsequently develops symptoms. If someone in a class or group that has been asked to selfisolate develops symptoms themselves within their 10-day isolation period they should follow [guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection](#).

They should get a test, and:

- if the test delivers a negative result, they must remain in isolation for the remainder of the 10-day isolation period. This is because they could still develop the coronavirus (COVID-19) within the remaining days.
- if the test result is positive, they should inform their setting immediately, and should isolate for at least 10 days from the onset of their symptoms (which could mean the self-isolation ends before or after the original 10-day isolation period). Their household should self-isolate for at least 10 days from when the symptomatic person first had symptoms, following [guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection](#)

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Frequently Asked Questions

You can find more information from the government [here](#) For Wales – self-isolation periods are 10 days.

You could be fined if you do not stay at home and self-isolate following a positive test result for COVID-19, or if you are contacted by NHS Test and Trace and instructed to self-isolate because you are a contact of someone who has had a positive test result. If you test positive for COVID-19, it will also be an offence to knowingly provide false information about your close contacts to NHS Test and Trace.

12. Financial Wellbeing

Q12.1 – Where can I find information on financial support?

A guidelines for financial wellbeing can be found on [MyConnect](#)

13. Compassionate Leave

Q13.1 – Where can I find information on compassionate leave and bereavement?

A guidelines for compassionate leave and bereavement can be found on [MyConnect](#)

In addition to bereavement leave being provided for a family member, line managers may on a discretionary basis, permit employees to take one day's paid leave where they have recently lost a colleague or close friend who they have known for a long time and worked closely with.

Employees who have protected terms from previous transfers can still refer to their previous arrangements.

Q13.2 – What should I do if I am told to self-isolate after visiting a close relative in hospital?

During coronavirus, visiting seriously ill or end of life patients has been restricted. Where employees visit patients in hospital in these circumstances, the employee may be asked to self-isolate for 10 days following the visit by the hospital. In these circumstances, the employee should inform their line manager and adhere to the advice they have been given and self-isolate. Where possible, employees should work from home but for some roles where this is not possible then they should be recorded as paid special leave with published base roster payments. A case must be recorded with HR Direct.

Should they develop symptoms they should get a test. In all circumstances, the line manager should be kept informed to enable the Company to support the employee.

14. Annual Leave

Q14.1 – What are the implications of booking an international holiday?

Follow current COVID-19 rules where you live: [England, Scotland, Wales](#) and [Northern Ireland](#).

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Frequently Asked Questions

Some countries have closed borders, and any country may further restrict travel or bring in new social distancing rules with little warning. [Check our advice](#) for all the countries you will visit or transit through.

When you return, follow the rules to [enter the UK from abroad](#)

Employees should be aware that classification of countries may change at very short notice.

Employees should discuss any potential quarantine requirements with their manager in advance to understand any implications. If possible, managers should consider whether the employee can work from home during any quarantine period. If an employee is unable to work due to any required quarantine, this will be treated as unpaid special leave. Employees may choose to use annual leave or agree a plan to work back time as an alternative. Frontline workers who have accumulated leave may discuss with their manager whether this could be used to cover any quarantine period instead of carrying forward to next year or selling five days.

All employees returning to the UK after foreign travel, will be expected to comply with all quarantine and hotel quarantine measures unless they are authorised under the exemption for essential workers doing essential work.

All employees returning to the UK after foreign travel, will be expected to comply with all mandatory testing at the borders both before and after travel. The cost of testing is the responsibility of the employee. Currently holidays are not legally permitted

Managers should anticipate any possible business continuity impacts of quarantine in advance to ensure any service delivery continues.

A case must be created with HR Direct for any quarantine, symptoms or self-isolation requirements Updated government guidelines on travel can be found [here](#)

Q14.2 – What is the traffic light system in England, Scotland and Wales?

The traffic light system only applies from 17 May 2021. Please be aware that the three nations may adopt different advice regarding the traffic lights system, for example, Wales still advises against non-essential international travel. There may be some essential differences in the Scottish scheme.

You should not travel to a red or amber country for leisure purposes.

If you travel to England, Wales or Scotland from a country or territory on the green list from 17 May. You must only have been in or travelled through a green list country or the Common Travel Area in the previous 10 days.

Before you return you must:

[complete a passenger locator form](#)

[take a COVID-19 test](#)

[book and pay for a day 2 COVID-19 test](#)

On arrival in England:

You must [take a COVID-19 test](#) on or before day 2 after you arrive.

You do not need to quarantine unless the test result is positive.

You must [self-isolate](#) if NHS Test & Trace informs you that you travelled to England with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19.

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Frequently Asked Questions

Employees should be aware that classification of countries may change at very short notice.

All employees returning to the UK after foreign travel, will be expected to comply with all quarantine and hotel quarantine measures unless they are authorised under the exemption for essential workers doing essential work. If the need for mandatory quarantine was known before travel, then any quarantine period would be unpaid special leave if the employee cannot work from home. Employees can opt to use annual leave as an alternative.

All employees returning to the UK after foreign travel, will be expected to comply with all mandatory testing at the borders both before and after travel. The cost of testing is the responsibility of the employee.

Q14.3 – What is the position for International travel for Scotland and Wales?

All Foreign and Commonwealth Office travel advice applies to the UK, such as a travel ban. However, rules for essential and non essential travel varies between the nations.

For Scotland - From 17 May, anyone entering Scotland from countries on a new international travel 'Green List' will not be required to quarantine on arrival, but will have to take a PCR test for COVID-19. The Green List will initially be the same as that in place for England but will be subject to review based on Scotland's specific needs. <https://www.gov.scot/news/next-steps-out-of-lockdown/>

For Wales – From 17 May 2021 it is advised not to travel abroad for non essential purposes, however, if travel occurs then the testing and quarantine arrangements of the traffic light system must be adhered to. When arriving from overseas you must follow [border rules](#) depending on where you have travelled from. From Monday 24 May, a paper-based vaccination status will be available for people in Wales who have had two doses of vaccination and need to urgently travel to a country that requires covid vaccination proof.

Q14.4 - Employee asks whether they can cancel their booked annual leave?

If an employee wants to cancel booked annual leave, they should inform their line manager and provide an alternate date for the annual leave to be taken. The granting of the alternate dates for annual leave must take into account operational needs and the requirement to balance leave requests throughout the year. Employees who are recorded as sickness absence will continue to accrue annual leave and can make a request to cancel their annual leave as normal. In this instance, employees must comply with normal sickness absence reporting procedures including completing a sick pay claim form.

Further guidance on annual leave can be found in a [Guideline for Annual Leave](#)

If an employee needs to self isolate during a period of annual leave, the annual leave period continues as this is planned time out from the workplace. If the self isolation period is longer than the annual leave then the employee should continue to self isolate and work from home where it is possible and effective. However, if they are unable to work from home then the remainder of the self isolation period would be on paid special leave with published base rosters.

If an employee incurs covid sickness absence and is recorded and paid as covid sickness then any planned and booked leave during the period covid sickness absence can be returned to the leave card. This does not apply if covid special leave has been recorded and paid.

Q14.5 - Employee asks whether the rules on the carry forward of annual leave will be relaxed?

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Frequently Asked Questions

Recognising the exceptional nature of the current crisis, employees are entitled to, carry forward up to four weeks of 2020 accrued annual leave where it has not been reasonable or practicable for 2020 annual leave to have been taken. Annual leave accrued in 2020 can carry forward into 2021 and 2022 leave years. Arrangements for the carrying forward of annual leave on this basis are to be agreed with the line manager. If a request to carry forward leave is declined then the annual leave must be used by the end of your normal leave year, for most this will be 31 December 2021.

Further guidance on annual leave and selling leave has now been provided in a [Guideline for Annual Leave](#)

Q14.6 – Employee asks whether they can anticipate any annual leave from next year?

Understanding concerns regarding caring for children and dependant adults during the current crisis, employees may, with the agreement of their manager, bring forward up to 10 days of their 2022 annual leave to use in 2021.

Further guidance on annual leave can be found in [Guideline for Annual Leave](#)

Q14.7 – Employee asks if they can ‘sell back’ any annual leave in 2021?

All employees may ‘sell back’ up to two (2) weeks of their 2021 annual leave, subject to the employee having sufficient remaining annual leave entitlement to comply with the statutory provisions detailed in the Working Time Regulations 1998.

Further guidance and conditions on ‘selling back’ annual leave can be found in [Guideline for Annual Leave](#)

Q14.6 - Employee is planning to book a last-minute holiday abroad

Employee should be advised to consider any implications of any government quarantine restrictions as well as testing requirements. The cost of testing is the responsibility of the employee. If such restrictions mean an individual cannot work on their return from holiday, and the need for quarantine was published before the date of travel, then the period of quarantine will be classed as unpaid special leave, unless it is agreed that they can effectively work from home. Employees may choose to use annual leave or agree a plan to work back time as an alternative.

Annual leave requests should only be declined with HRBP advice and sanction.

Q14.7 - What if a quarantine is imposed whilst I am away?

Exceptionally, if a quarantine period is imposed **after** leaving the UK for a permitted legal reason and is not known before travel, work from home, if you can for the required quarantine period. If you can't work from home, and you can't undertake any training/learning to update your competencies or skills, for the required quarantine period starting from the date when the employee was last in the non- exempt country, you should be recorded on paid special leave.

Testing requirements remain the responsibility and cost of the employee.

A case **MUST** be created on HR Direct for any absences.

Should an employee become symptomatic, these should get a test and follow the self-isolation requirements for being symptomatic.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Frequently Asked Questions

Q14.8 – Am I exempt from quarantine rules as a Network Rail Employee?

No. This only applies to Eurotunnel, High Speed and Network rail workers engaged in essential or emergency works to the rail network as part of a specialist team with or for Network Rail.

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): jobs that qualify for travel exemptions - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-jobs-that-qualify-for-travel-exemptions)

Before you travel to England you need to:

- [complete the passenger locator form](#)
- [take a COVID-19 test](#)

After arrival in England

Green list countries

Applies if you have only been in a [green list country](#) in the 10 days before you arrive in England.

You must take a COVID-19 test on day 2 or earlier after you arrive, if you intend to stay in England for 3 days or longer.

Amber list countries

Applies if you been in an [amber list country](#), but not a [red list country](#), in the 10 days before you arrive in England.

If you are in England for longer than 2 days, you need to take a mandatory workplace, community or home [lateral flow device \(LFD\) test](#) on or before days 2, 5 and 8 after your arrival.

If you are travelling every day, you must take a lateral flow test at least once every 3 days.

You must [quarantine in your accommodation](#). You can leave your accommodation when conducting the specific exempt activity or travelling directly to and from your accommodation and a location for the purposes of this work. You must quarantine at all other times during your stay. You must be either:

working on automated ballast cleaning and track re-laying systems, or

a specialist rail maintenance technicians maintaining or commissioning industrial machinery for use on national rail infrastructure

Red list countries

Applies if you have been in a [red list country](#) in the 10 days before you arrive in England.

You need to [quarantine in a government approved hotel and take a COVID-19 test on day 2 and day 8](#).

In certain limited circumstances, an exemption can be granted (from the need to quarantine in a government approved hotel) if you have been in any country on the travel ban red list in the previous 10 days. This is for workers who undertake essential or emergency work in the UK, or are returning from conducting such work outside of the UK, where a department certifies that the work is necessary to facilitate essential government work or essential state business.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Frequently Asked Questions

This exemption will only be granted on a case by case basis, in exceptional circumstances, where the work is sufficiently urgent and critical that undertaking a managed quarantine period is not possible.

Evidence

You should show a letter from your company at the border which includes:

your personal details, such as name and address

contact details from your employer

what work you'll be doing

If your employer issued you with photo identification (sentinel card), you should bring this with you to the UK.

Applies to:

Workers engaged in essential or emergency works to the rail network as part of a specialist team with or for Network Rail.

The government is now carrying out public health self-isolation compliance checks on individuals who have a legal duty to self-isolate for 10 days following international travel.

This means that if you are required to self-isolate, you may receive a visit from someone employed by a company on behalf of the government to make sure you are complying with your legal duty.

Q14.9 Is an employee AWOL if they do not return from holiday?

The line manager must try and ascertain the reason for the employee not returning. If it is because their hotel/cruise/flight is quarantined the employee will not be considered AWOL in this scenario and the above advice for quarantine should be followed

If the employee has not returned any other reason, the manager should contact HR Direct for case advice, which may include invoking AWOL procedures

Q14.10 Can I use the government test to release scheme to go on holiday

In England, employees must understand and follow the guidance for any absences related to travel quarantine outlined in q11.5 and 11.6 above.

Passengers arriving into England will be able to reduce mandatory self-isolation requirements by a new strategy for testing international arrivals.

Update 17 May 2021 - If you have been in a country or territory on the [amber list](#) in the 10 days before you arrive in England you must quarantine for 10 days on arrival.

Under the Test to Release scheme you can choose to pay for a private COVID-19 test. If the result is negative, you can end your quarantine.

You cannot take a test until you have been in England for 5 full days.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Frequently Asked Questions

The scheme is voluntary and applies to those quarantining in England only.

If you do not want to opt into the Test to Release scheme, you will need to quarantine for 10 days. You cannot take part in the scheme if you have been in or through a country or territory on the [red list](#) in the 10 days before you arrive in England.

Those opting in to the scheme having to book and pay for a coronavirus (COVID-19) test from a private provider on the GOV.UK list.

Employees are advised to follow the Foreign Office advice on travel in the normal way as well as checking with their travel insurance provider before any travel.

A list of approved test services has been released by the government [here](#)

All employees returning to the UK after foreign travel, for example following a holiday, will be expected to comply with all mandatory testing at the borders even if not participating in Test to Release. Should an employee not comply with this requirement, and this was the cause of the requirement to quarantine, then any quarantine period would be unpaid special leave if the employee cannot work from home. Employees can opt to use annual leave as an alternative.

Q14.11 - I have purchased annual leave, can I have a refund?

Any payments already made for purchased annual leave cannot be refunded and leave should be taken as normal.

Any future payments expected will continue to be deducted and you can continue to book annual leave days as normal.

The window for booking flexible leave will be extended next year. You will then have the opportunity to sell annual leave when the flexible leave window is opened, in line with the scheme rules and Working Time Regulations.

15. Key Workers

Q15.1 - Employee asks whether they would qualify as a critical / Key worker?

All Key worker letters have been updated for January 2021.

The government defines critical/key workers as:

Parents whose work is critical to COVID-19 response.

The government have now published its guidance on critical/key workers and states:

Transport

This includes those who will keep the air, water, road and rail passenger and freight transport modes operating during the COVID-19 response, including those working transport systems through which supply chains pass.

Key worker letters have been updated and re-dated and can be found:

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Frequently Asked Questions

[Key Worker Letter](#)

[Key Worker Letter \(Supply Chain\)](#) Information

can be found at:

[Guidance for parents and carers - closure of schools](#)

Government advice for key workers in Scotland can be found here: [Key](#)

[Workers in Scotland](#)

16. Volunteers and Reservists

Q16.1 - Employee says that they are a reservist and has been put on standby

The Company will support mobilisations of Reservists wherever possible. However, there may be some circumstances where the employees' skills are essential and therefore the Company will appeal to defer the mobilisation, particularly where they are key workers and/or where their skills are critical to the continued running of the railway.

Managers will need to record this in Oracle as an option under special leave. A case must be created on HR Direct. Continuity of employment will be guaranteed

Q16.2 – NHS Volunteers

Jabs Army' volunteering

Pauline Holroyd has stated on 18 January 2021: 'And today, I'm proud to be able to share that colleagues can now use their volunteer leave to support the "Jabs Army" campaign, in addition to the existing volunteering options available. As a Steward Volunteer (COVID-19 vaccinations) colleagues can help by guiding people at COVID-19 vaccination sites. Colleagues may also be asked to support with stewarding at flu vaccination sites and support the NHS with non-clinical tasks such as signposting people around a health site or helping them check in.

More information about the NHS volunteer responders in England, and the types of volunteering available can be found on www.nhsvolunteerresponders.org.uk. For those in Wales, more information on volunteering can be found on <https://gov.wales/safe-help/volunteering> and for those in Scotland on <https://www.nhsinform.scot/care-support-and-rights/nhs-services/volunteering/volunteering-with-the-nhs>.

Any amount of allocated volunteer leave from 1/4 of a day up to five days (or the number of volunteer leave days currently available to you for the remainder of the calendar year) should be booked as community engagement volunteer leave under the category 'Volunteering Other' on Oracle E-Business. For this type of volunteering, no registered charity number is required. Our priority is to provide a vital public service by keeping train services running, so volunteer leave will be given subject to operational needs. '

Employees must follow usual procedures to authorise any volunteer leave in advance.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Frequently Asked Questions

Network Rail supports volunteers for the National Health Service please find further information on [MyConnect](#)

An updated guidance for 2021 has now been published for those wishing to undertake volunteering. It can be found on [MyConnect](#)

Volunteer Leave are offered as an alternative to Caring Days Leave. This means that someone who has taken 5 days Volunteer Leave cannot be authorised for any Carers Days Leave in 2021. Should an employee utilise, for example, two Volunteer Days, they would be able to take three Caring Days Leave in 2021. However, the total discretionary leave paid for Caring and Volunteer Leave in total should not exceed five days paid special leave in 2021.

17. Business Meetings, Business Travel and Personal Travel

Q17.1 - Do I complete sickness absence meetings?

Please use telephone and skype communication methods if the return has been due to COVID-19. This is because it is important to understand that employees has a normal temperature and have completed any self-isolation requirements, as well as to ensure their wellbeing and any reasonable adjustments required.

Oracle should be updated as normal

Managers must inform HR Direct for the case relating to the absence to be updated. To save time, managers can do this by replying to the case note instead of ringing.

Sickness absence triggers do not apply for COVID related sickness absence.

Managing for Health and Managing for Attendance procedures are now resumed, and deferred cases can continue.

There are now guidelines to support managers to keep in touch with employees who are unwell on My Connect:

[Guidelines for line managers - staying in touch during long term illness](#)

Q17.2 - Do I undertake informal meetings (where there are no rights of representation and no formal sanctions will result, such as one to ones and informal resolutions)?

Yes. You may need to change your method of communication to a telephone call or skype. For more sensitive situations you may need to postpone until a covid controlled face to face meeting can be arranged. You can discuss this with your local HR on a case by case basis.

Q17.3 - Do I continue with Disciplinary and Grievance meetings?

Disciplinary and grievance meetings should all be undertaken remotely through teams or conference calls. Exceptions should be discussed with HR.

To support managers who are involved with formal processes, a guideline is provided to give practical steps to follow. You can find the guidelines on [MyConnect](#)

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Frequently Asked Questions

Q17.4 - Employee is travelling on Network Rail business overseas

The government has now issued measures on social distancing and so any travel is now only for business critical reasons.

Business travel must still be approved by the Executive Leadership Team for all overseas travel.

Q17.5 - Employee asks if they should avoid travel to attend meetings

Employees should only be requested to attend and travel to business meetings where the meeting cannot be conducted via Microsoft Teams or some other form of video or teleconferencing facility. In such circumstances line managers should ensure appropriate safety measures are taken. Strict social distancing protocols should be adhered to and where possible people should avoid sitting directly opposite each other, open windows, and make use of hand sanitiser.

In addition, all participants should be reminded of the fact that they are required to wear face coverings whilst on public transport, [FAQs Face Coverings, Masks, Visors](#), and need to link in with the Covid19 champion/lead for the building they will be attending prior to the meeting.

Q17.6 - Manager asks if they can ask employees to work at a different contractual location to cover staff shortages

Managers can ask employees if they would support the running of the railway and Network Rail with flexibility on location. However, managers should be sensitive to employee issues and cannot mandate any change of locations which conflicts with the employees' contract.

18. Recruitment, Secondment and Onboarding

Q18.1 What are the general interview guidelines during COVID Restrictions?

Interviews should continue to be conducted virtually where possible.

- If the candidate is unwell due to COVID-19, they may not be well enough to carry out an interview. The recruiting manager should postpone the interview up to 10 days.
- Minimise interviews held to between 3-5 video calls. Use the pre-determined sift criteria for the job, sift the top scoring candidates through to be selected for conference interview.
- Interview paperwork should be scanned or typed and sent to their local resourcer. Photographs of the completed interview pack is not recommended as this can be difficult to read and revert to for feedback purposes.

Q18.2 Can we carry out face to face (f2f) interviews?

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Frequently Asked Questions

Interviews should be carried out virtually where possible to continue to protect both our employees and candidates. Face to face interviews can commence providing:

- a national lockdown is not imposed
- you comply with the government guidelines
- you keep yourself and others safe by social distancing
- the interview location is fully risk assessed
- candidates are given the option of a face to face or virtual interview
- you comply with the [‘How to carry out f2f interviews during COVID-19 restrictions’](#) guidance

UPDATED 21 June 2021 Q18.3 What are the guidelines to carry out right to work (RTW) checks during COVID restrictions?

- Virtual RTW checks have been extended and can continue to be carried out until 31 August 2021.
- As of the 1st September 2021, face to face (f2f) RTW checks recommence and virtual checks will end.
- For further information on how to carry out RTW checks, please contact your local resourcing team.

Instructions to arrange virtual RTW checks:

- Candidates can send scanned documents or a photo of documents for checks using email or a mobile app, rather than sending originals
- Arrange a video call with the candidate and ask them to hold up the original documents to the camera – check them against the digital copy of the documents
- Record the date and check was made using the [RTW verification document](#) found on the hiring manager hub.
- The line manager should notify new employees to bring the original RTW document post COVID restrictions in person to show their line manager, if they haven't already. The line manager will need to verify they have seen the original document using the RTW document and store this document in with Employee Records.
- Record the date and check was made and mark 'adjusted check undertaken on [insert date] due to COVID-19
- When candidates return to the workplace, they will need to bring the original RTW document and show this to their line manager. The manager will need to verify they have seen the original RTW document and send the RTW verification document to onboarding.

Q18.4- Do we have any recruitment guidance to manage the process during COVID-19?

We have created [recruitment principles](#) to reflect changes to the recruitment during COVID-19.

Q18.5- How do we manage fixed-term contracts through COVID-19?

Guidelines have been produced to help line managers and HR when considering fixed-term contract extensions through COVID-19. Please refer to the [guidance](#) for more information.

Q18.6 – How do we manage secondments through COVID-19?

A set of Secondment Principles have been created to help support secondments during the COVID restrictions.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Frequently Asked Questions

[Click here to view](#)

Q18.7- Can new starters and Capita workers have access to IT equipment and support?

IT Support is available for all new starters in line with [New start guidelines for IT](#) and further information is available on the 'Useful Information' page at [IT Helpdesk](#) and the [business expense guide](#). Capita workers should follow the same process.

Q18.8 - New starters, what is the advice to line managers.

If the start date is not yet agreed, then use discretion around setting the start date. If a verbal or written offer has been accepted, then a contract is formed and managers should act reasonably in setting start dates, albeit that a candidate will not be able to attend the workplace.

If the start date is already agreed, should follow PHE advice and ask for self-isolation if the candidate is symptomatic until 10 day from the onset of symptoms. This conversation must be by telephone or electronically.

Should a new starter, with an agreed start date, have symptoms then they should be recorded as sick leave on Oracle.

If it is decided to self- isolate, it is for 10 days from the onset of symptoms and 10 days if they live with others who experience symptoms.

The IT new starter guide for the period of COVID restrictions, is available for both managers and employees (their first day) [New start guidelines for IT](#)

Should there be a delay for a new starter being able to commence work, they should be reported as paid special leave.

For maintenance new starters, who have joined, but cannot work for whatever reason (training, competencies, PPE etc), special leave payment should be in line with the base roster or base published roster plus contractual allowances

A case MUST be created on HR Direct for cases of sickness and self-isolation special leave.

19. Leavers

19.1 – How can a leaver return equipment?

A new process has been put in place for leavers to return equipment. Managers should access the revised asset retrieval form for Covid. This can be found in the HR Direct documents section under 'Leavers' and [here](#)

19.2 - Will Network Rail be using the Government Job Retention Scheme and furloughing staff?

Network Rail receives its funding from the Department of Transport and therefore is not able to access the job retention scheme and furlough staff.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Frequently Asked Questions

19.3 - Can I request to be furloughed?

As Network Rail is not able to access the job retention scheme no staff will be furloughed.

19.4 - I have resigned but the job I was due to go to has now been withdrawn or my start date is likely to be delayed. Can my notice period be extended?

Consideration will be given to extending leaving dates where circumstances allow. You should direct your request to your regional or functional HR director.

20. Training and Apprenticeships

Q20.1 -What is happening to Leadership & Professional Development training?

We have transformed the majority of our existing courses for delivery through virtual classrooms and blended learning. With a more accessible catalogue of courses at our fingertips, we can ensure that colleagues feel empowered to learn and can continue to operate a safe and reliable railway.

We are constantly reviewing the current Covid-19 situation, the government advice regarding social distancing and Network Rail policies. However, at this time we have total confidence in the quality of our virtual and blended offerings, therefore, we are not currently planning face-to-face courses unless absolutely necessary. When and where our Network Rail delegates require face-to-face training delivery for the safe and efficient running of the railway, we will work with you to ensure it is safe and compliant to do so. At this time, we must take each requirement on a case by case basis and will provide more information regarding the wider return to face-to-face L&PD training as soon as possible.

For further information and to view a full list of courses available for virtual/online delivery, please visit our new ['Virtual, Online and Distance Learning'](#) page on the Course Catalogue.

Q20.2 – How can I find out if my training is going ahead?

If your training has been changed/cancelled/postponed, a member of the appropriate team within Network Rail Training will contact you via email or phone with further information. Training has also created a dedicated [COVID19 news and information page](#), which includes information on the measures being taken to ensure the safety of colleagues attending training centres.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Frequently Asked Questions

Q20.3 – What safeguards are in place to protect colleagues that need to attend essential training?

We've implemented a raft of measures at our training centres to safeguard colleagues and ensure essential training can continue to be delivered. Please watch our short training centre video or visit Network Rail Training's [COVID-19 info](#) page.

In England during the tier system, training for reaccreditation, competences and safety critical training can continue in covid controlled training areas.

Q20.4 - I do not have access to Remote Connect – can I still undertake eLearning?

Our 165 eLearning courses are available on our [eLearning site](#) and can be accessed remotely without the need to access to Remote Connect; all you need is a reliable internet connection and to log in as you normally would. eLearning can also be accessed when connected to Zscaler. To find out more, visit the eLearning site, and click 'Help' at the top of the homepage after you've logged in to view the latest eLearning FAQ. If you experience any other issues, please [log a query with the team here](#).

Q20.5 – I employ an apprentice. Should my apprentice be in the workplace?

As employees of Network Rail, all sections of this FAQ document are applicable. This includes Sections 8 and 14, which tackle the topic of working from home and key workers, and Section 6 which tackles the topic of shielding.

Typically, apprentices who work in either signalling or maintenance will not be able to work from home. As detailed in Section 1 of this document, if apprentices are required to stay at home and cannot carry out their day-to-day duties, this should be recorded as paid special leave and a case created in HR Direct. In these cases, the length of the apprenticeship must be extended to account for the period of absence, and the apprentice must be notified in writing of this. The case should support a safe return to the workplace when appropriate, in line with Sections 1 and 6 of this document.

Q20.6 – Should my apprentice attend face-to-face training?

From 8 March 2021 face-to-face training for apprentices outside of their normal place of work will be permitted under Department for Education guidance. Where possible, a blended approach to learning – making best of use technology – should still be explored.

Prior to 8 March, face-to-face training for apprentices and associated travel to training sites is still not permitted.

Q20.7 – I have multiple apprentices working in my maintenance depot. Is it possible to reduce the amount of time they need to be in the depot during a lock-down?

Maintenance depots can reduce apprentice working hours on-site to a minimum of 22hrs per week without affecting the apprentice's pay or length of their apprenticeship. This should not exceed the period of national lockdown.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Frequently Asked Questions

Q20.8 – Can I use my maintenance apprentices for Higher Grade Working?

HGW is no longer permitted for maintenance apprentices. In extreme cases with high sickness levels, where the use of apprentices for HGW may be required in order to maintain a safe and effective railway, this should be discussed with the Westwood apprenticeship team and local HRBP.

21. Suppliers and Contractors

Q21.1 - Employees ask about what happens with suppliers and contractors

If the contractors and suppliers are working in Network Rail premises, they are expected to follow Network Rail instruction and guidance, which will be aligned to PHE and NHS guidelines.

A contractor has a different relationship with Network Rail than employees.

Contractors do not have a contract of employment and so are not entitled to sick pay or pay for any other absence.

If a contractor can provide their full service from home, then managers can use their discretion to authorise work from home which will attract pay in the normal manner.

If working from home is not possible then contractors will not receive pay as above.

HR Direct cannot deal with any issues or log cases for contractors.

22. First Aid and Equipment

Q22.1 – Where can I find First Aid Advice during COVID?

There is a new guidance document available on the coronavirus Hub on MyConnect:

[First Aid Precautions During COVID-19](#)

Q22.2 - Should employees wear Masks and/or Visors?

Further guidance is now available:

Changes have been introduced in Scotland. It is mandatory to wear face coverings in canteens except when seated and it is mandatory to wear a face covering in all other social and communal areas in workplaces. In Network Rail super sensitive locations such as signal boxes, signalling centres, electrical control room and operations control, a 3 ply disposable face mask should be worn. When staff wear a face visor to reduce coronavirus transmission they must also wear a face mask. This means that the use of reusable face coverings will not be allowed in any of these sensitive locations, 3 ply disposable masks will be the minimum standard. At receptions or entrances a supply of disposable masks to anyone visiting these locations for essential work will be provided.

For England and Wales our policy is that it would be best practice (not mandatory) to wear a face covering in all social and communal areas, whilst in transit and in canteens when not seated.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Frequently Asked Questions

Update for England 16 April 2021 - Transparent face coverings may be worn by those who communicate through reading or facial expressions. However, their effectiveness is not supported by evidence so the government does not recommend their use by the wider public at this time. In order to be most effective, a face covering should fit securely around the face to cover the nose and mouth, and be made of a breathable material capable of filtering airborne particles

Employees are not required to wear a face covering at their desk or work station, unless explicitly risk assessed to do so. Local managers should feel empowered that for their location they can implement the use of masks in communal areas if they consider that risk control warrants this. Additionally, In some shared buildings there may be specific requirements for mask use, please utilise those instructions.

If an employee has a medical condition that makes them exempt from wearing a face covering, they can obtain a sunflower lanyard [here](#).

[Face Coverings, masks and Visors on our Managed Stations](#)

[FAQs Face Coverings, Masks, Visors](#)

[Rail Industry Principles on Face Masks](#)

Advice on using a visor can be found on MyConnect:

[When to use a visor at work](#)

Information on the use of face coverings whilst on public transport can be found on [MyConnect](#)

Information on the use of face coverings whilst on public transport can be found on [MyConnect](#)

Wearing equipment and personal protective equipment (PPE) in warm/hot environments increases the risk of heat stress. This occurs when the body is unable to cool itself enough to maintain a healthy temperature. Heat stress can cause heat exhaustion and lead to heat stroke if the person is unable to cool down. Please see the world health organisation advice on how to keep cool during the hot weather

<https://who.canto.global/pdfviewer/viewer/viewer.html?v=coronavirus&portalType=v%2Fcoronavirus&column=document&id=541qquo4ah1tnee5fe8c43uj0k&suffix=pdf>

Q22.3 - If I work for Network Rail, do I need to wear a face covering in a station shop when face coverings become mandatory in shops?

Yes, the mandatory requirement to wear a face covering still applies to employees entering and using shops at train stations.

Additionally, face coverings are required in substantially enclosed areas of transport hubs

Q22.4 – If I work for Network Rail do I need to wear a face covering when travelling on trains?

Yes, the mandatory requirement to wear a face covering on public transport from all devolved governments still applies.

Q22.5 How do I store hand sanitiser safely?

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Frequently Asked Questions

70 % + alcohol-based hand sanitiser must be stored safely to minimise fire risk. That should preferably be outdoors and in a fire-resisting enclosure. Additional precautions are needed for decanting from larger containers to small dispenser units too. Guidance is available from fire safety engineers in the Technical Authority.

Q22.6 - Should managers offer alternative non-alcohol based hand sanitiser to employees of faith or those who may experience skin issues?

Network Rail is a diverse organisation and is dedicated to creating an inclusive environment for its people. To deliver against our diverse and inclusive approach, managers should seek to ensure that hand gel is available to all staff. Any feedback or concerns should be listened to and, if required managers should consider obtaining alternatives. Procurement may be able to assist. Please remember maintenance of good hand hygiene is paramount and we actively encourage frequent hand washing.

Q22.7 - Are non-alcohol based hand sanitisers effective?

PHE guidance recommends hand sanitisers which contain 60% alcohol are used. However, other anti-viral alternatives such as that produced by BioGuard which has been tested to EN14476 (the European virus testing standard) and has been confirmed as effective against coronavirus, are effective and can also be used. It has been clarified with our Drug and Alcohol testing laboratory that using an alcohol based hand sanitiser will not affect drug and alcohol screening results.

Q22.8 Where can I find guidance on using digital thermometers?

Guidance on using digital thermometers is now available on [MyConnect](#)

23. Personal Data

Q23.1 – How will personal data be processed for COVID?

Network Rail has published a privacy notice for COVID. It can be found on MyConnect:

[covid privacy notice](#)
