

Self-isolation for coronavirus (COVID-19)

In recent news, the Government comments that though the virus will not completely eradicate, many have now been vaccinated and with covid positive numbers decreasing, the rules, once more, will be changing.

The Government's plan is to effectively wind down covid testing and isolation rules in stages but no later than April 2022.

Effective 24th February it is not a legal requirement to isolate for covid positive cases. Employees do not need to inform their employer if they are covid positive.

Businesses who do not have a Workplace Covid Policy will no longer be able to enforce self-isolation after this date. Companies are encouraged to review their existing policies including Covid 19 procedures. Employers must be cautious due to their Health and Safety obligations to their staff as covid guidelines will no longer be lawful but seen as guidance. Businesses are encouraged to continue to follow best safety guidance including good hygiene and ventilation in the workplace.

The Government has released new guidance called 'Living with Covid 19'.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-living-with-covid-19>

Self-isolation in England

In England, there is no legal requirement to self-isolate. But if someone has COVID-19 symptoms or has tested positive, they should follow government guidance to self-isolate for at least 5 days. Employers should review the government guidance, talk with their staff, and decide what staff should do. It's good practice to agree a policy with staff on self-isolation so everyone understands the process to follow.

When deciding about self-isolating, an employer should take into account keeping the workplace safe for everyone and any concerns from staff.

Find out more about:

- [government COVID-19 guidance for England on GOV.UK](#)
- [if staff are worried about going to the workplace](#)

Self-isolation rules in Scotland and Wales

In Scotland and Wales, self-isolation is a legal requirement if someone tests positive and in some other circumstances.

Someone could get fined for breaking the law if they do not follow self-isolation rules.

If someone cannot work because they have to self-isolate, they must tell their employer as soon as possible.

To find out who must self-isolate and what rules apply, follow government guidance:

- Scotland – [Scottish Government guidance for people with a possible infection including close contacts](#)
- Wales – [Welsh Government guidance for close contacts](#)

Supporting staff to self-isolate

If an employee or worker self-isolates, the employer should:

- support them while they're at home, including their wellbeing and [mental health](#)
- consider making changes to the workplace to stop further spread

If an employee or worker is not able to work because they're ill with COVID-19 or cannot work from home while self-isolating, they must get any [sick pay they're entitled to](#).

Someone might have to self-isolate more than once during the COVID-19 pandemic. Employers should support them each time.

Support payments for self-isolation

In Scotland and Wales, if someone has been told to self-isolate, they could be entitled to a support payment.

In England, support payments ended on 24 February 2022. But if someone was told to self-isolate in England before 24 February 2022, they can claim for a support payment until 7 April 2022.

For more guidance, see:

- England – [Test and Trace Support Payment on GOV.UK](#)
- Scotland – [Self-Isolation Support Grant from the Scottish Government](#)
- Wales – [self-isolation support scheme from the Welsh Government](#)

Isolation notes – if the employer needs proof

The usual sickness absence process applies for staff who need to self-isolate and cannot work from home or are not well enough to work.

Check your organisation's absence policy to see what it says about [proving sickness absence](#). Employers might need to be flexible if asking for proof. For example, if someone is very ill, they might not be able to get proof straight away.

If someone is off work due to COVID-19 and their employer asks for proof, they can get an isolation note from the:

- [NHS website](#) – for anyone in England, Scotland and Wales
- [NHS App](#) – for those registered with a GP in England

Sick pay for self-isolation

Staff could be entitled to Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) if they cannot work because they're self-isolating for any of the following reasons:

- they have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms or have tested positive
- someone in their household has symptoms or has tested positive
- they are told to self-isolate by an NHS test and trace service
- they have been advised by their doctor to stay at home before going into hospital for surgery

To be eligible for SSP, they must be off work for at least 4 days in a row, including any of their usual non-working days.

They're entitled to be paid at least SSP for every day they're off work. This is different to the usual rules for SSP where the first 3 days are unpaid.

In England, from 24 March 2022 staff will no longer be entitled to SSP for self-isolation, unless they are not well. There are currently no changes for Scotland and Wales.

Employers might offer more than SSP – 'contractual' sick pay. Check your employment contract or workplace's policy to see if your organisation pays more than SSP.

[Find out more about sick pay](#)

Support for employers

Some employers can claim back up to 2 weeks' Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) they've paid to anyone because of COVID-19. This applies to employees who were off work on or after 21 December 2021.

In England, this is ending on 17 March 2022. Employers must submit or amend any claims by 24 March 2022. There are currently no changes for Scotland and Wales.

[Find out more about claiming back SSP due to COVID-19 on GOV.UK](#)

Who can go to the workplace

Workplaces are allowed to open, but there are different guidelines on going to the workplace in England, Scotland and Wales.

If you work in:

- England or Scotland – people are no longer asked to work from home
- Wales – working from home is recommended where possible

Read coronavirus (COVID-19) government advice:

- England – [working safely during COVID-19 on GOV.UK](#)
- Scotland – [Scottish Government COVID-19 guidance for workplaces](#)
- Wales – [Welsh Government COVID-19 guidance](#)

If you or anyone in your household has symptoms or has tested positive for COVID-19, check if you need to 'self-isolate' (stay at home). The rules are different in England, Scotland and Wales.

[Find out more about when you must stay at home](#)

Sickness and absence because of long COVID

For some people, coronavirus (COVID-19) can cause symptoms that last weeks or months after the infection. This can be called 'post-COVID-19 syndrome', 'long-tail COVID' or 'long COVID'. Long COVID symptoms could affect someone's ability to work or cause them to take sickness absence.

The usual rules for [sickness absence](#) and [sick pay](#) apply when someone is off work because of long COVID.

Find out more from the NHS about:

- [symptoms of long COVID](#)
- [COVID-19 recovery](#)

What the employer should do

Employers should be aware that the effects of long COVID can come and go. On some days the person might seem well, but on others their symptoms can be worse and they might need to be off work again.

If someone is off sick, they might feel isolated or need support to return to work. Employers should:

- agree how and when to make contact during any absence
- make sure their work is covered and shared out appropriately while they're off
- talk about ways to support them as they return to work where and when possible

When the employee feels able to return to work

The employer should talk with the employee about any support they may need. They could discuss:

- getting an [occupational health assessment](#)
- making changes to the workplace or to how the employee works, such as different working hours
- a phased return to work
- what they want to tell others at work about their illness

[Find out more about returning to work after absence](#)

If you need further detail our guidance please email or call Steve Collins:

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