

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 symptoms are:

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
- (2) **test:** You should order a coronavirus test immediately at nhs.uk/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. If

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your test is negative, other household members no longer need to self-isolate. If you feel well and no longer have symptoms similar to coronavirus, you can stop self-isolating (unless you have been contacted separately by NHS Test and Trace as a contact of someone who has tested positive).

(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 [1.2](#)

If you are living with someone, or someone in your household support bubble becomes symptomatic you should not return until 10 days after the onset of symptoms of the first person who became ill. (For Wales, 10 days)

The NHS states you only need to self-isolate if you have symptoms, are living with someone or someone in your household support bubble 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.

If you develop symptoms, and test positive you can return to work after 10 days, if you do not have a high temperature. If you still have a high temperature, keep self-isolating until your temperature returns to normal. You do not need to self-isolate if you only have a cough or [anosmia](#) after 10 days, as these symptoms can last for several weeks after the infection has gone.

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.

[Q1.2 - How do I record any absences?](#)

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If an employee is ill with symptoms, this should be recorded as 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 a paid special leave. A case must be created with HR Direct. Pay will include any planned base roster payments.

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](#)

Q1.3 How do I get a self-isolation note?

Self-isolation notes can be obtained online at <https://111.nhs.uk/isolation-note>

Q1.4 - Employee says they have symptoms and are concerned.

As for Q1.1 and advise them to follow national advice on contacting the NHS by using: <https://111.nhs.uk/covid19>

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

Revised guidelines from the government state:

- if you live alone and you have symptoms of coronavirus illness (COVID-19), however mild, stay at home for at least 10 days from when your symptoms started and you should order a coronavirus test immediately at nhs.uk/coronavirus or call 119 if you have no internet access.
- If your test is positive you must complete the remainder of your 10-day self-isolation. Anyone in your household, or household support bubble, should also complete self-isolation for 10 days from when you started having symptoms. Your managers can request a covid consultation via Optima at www.myohportal.co.uk.
- If you still have a high temperature, keep self-isolating until your temperature returns to normal. You do not need to self-isolate if you only have a cough or anosmia after 10 days, as these symptoms can last for several weeks after the infection has gone
- if you live with others and you are the first in the household, or household support bubble, to have symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19), then you must stay at home for at least 10 days, but all other household members or household support bubble members who remain well must stay at home and not leave the house for 10 days. The 10-day period starts from the day when the first person in the house became ill.
- for anyone else in the household, or household support bubble, who starts displaying symptoms, they need to stay at home for at least 10 days from when the symptoms appeared, regardless of what day they are on in the original 10 day isolation period. They must also order a coronavirus test immediately at nhs.uk/coronavirus or call 119 if you have no internet access.
- staying at home for 10 days will greatly reduce the overall amount of infection the household or household support bubble, could pass on to others in the community
- if you can, move any vulnerable individuals (such as the elderly and those with underlying health conditions) out of your home, to stay with friends or family for the duration of the home isolation period

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- if you cannot move vulnerable people out of your home, stay away from them as much as possible
- reduce the spread of infection in your home: wash your hands regularly for 20 seconds, each time using soap and water, or use hand sanitiser; cover coughs and sneezes
- **if you have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms you should order a coronavirus test immediately at nhs.uk/coronavirus or call 119 if you have no internet access.**
- if you feel you cannot cope with your symptoms at home, or your condition gets worse, or your symptoms do not get better after 7 days, then use the NHS 111 online coronavirus (COVID-19) service. If you do not have internet access, call NHS 111. For a medical emergency dial 999
- if you develop new coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms at any point after ending your first period of isolation (self, household or support bubble household) then you need to follow the same guidance on self-isolation and have another test.

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.

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](#)

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.

Q1.5 – What is the advice for other employees if a colleague at work has symptoms or has had a close contact with someone outside their household who has symptoms?

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

An employee who develops [symptoms](#) of coronavirus symptoms must order a coronavirus test immediately at nhs.uk/coronavirus or call 119. If they test positive, they should inform their line manager. The manager should then follow the guidance for 'Reporting a Positive Test' below and notify their OH&W Manager, who in turn will work with Health Protection, Test and Trace service to alert the people, which could include their colleagues, if they have been in close contact within the 48 hours before the onset of symptoms.

Employees who have been informed by their line manager or a colleague that they have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for Covid 19 must do the following, but do not need to go home and self-isolate unless they develop symptoms themselves, symptoms in their household or have been told to do so by Test and Trace (or devolved administration equivalents):

- avoid other people who are extremely clinically vulnerable,
- must take extra care to ensure they are observing hygiene rules regarding hand washing and social distancing.

It is hoped that the sharing of information will enable employees to be better prepared should they develop symptoms or are contacted by the NHS Test and Trace service.

It is not necessary to close the business or workplace or send any staff home unless government policy changes.

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More information can be found at the government site <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-contacts-of-people-with-possible-or-confirmed-coronavirus-covid-19-infection-who-do-not-live-with-the-person/guidance-for-contacts-of-people-with-possible-or-confirmed-coronavirus-covid-19-infection-who-do-not-live-with-the-person>

Managers and employees can contact Optima if they are concerned and if necessary, contact your workplace manager or facilities manager to arrange a “cause for concern” clean.

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.

Q1.6 – Can I be tested for coronavirus?

The government advice is now that you ‘must’ test if you are symptomatic, however, this is a personal matter for individuals.

Testing is now available for symptomatic colleagues, and/or their symptomatic household or support household bubble members. This testing will enable those infected with coronavirus to continue their self-isolation and take measures to avoid spread of the virus. Tests are most effective in the first five days of symptoms so line managers of symptomatic colleagues or those self-isolating due to symptomatic household or household support bubble members should encourage their teams to let them know immediately if they or their household, or household support bubble members are unwell so that a referral for a test can be arranged. 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](#)

Testing in Wales has an updated guideline [here](#).

Tests can be self-booked at <https://www.gov.uk/apply-coronavirus-test-essential-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.

NEW! Q1.7 – 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.

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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. 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.

Some testing centres advise that a normal swab test (PCR) is undertaken after a positive lateral flow test. 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.

NEW! 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.

Q1.8 - Do I need to report a positive test from an employee who has been in the workplace?

Yes, the government has asked Network Rail to follow Action Plans to report any workplace clusters to the NHS Health and Protection team. This allows appropriate support actions to follow such as increased testing and tracing and other mitigations, if criteria are met.

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.

OHW Managers will then notify NHS Health and Protection when the criteria for the NHS Action Card has been met.

The OHW Managers are:

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

Eastern – Frances Garvey

Anglia – Allison Rose

Southern – Grazia Elsehimy

Wales – SCMTWales@networkrail.co.uk

Western – Annette Fletcher

NWC – Ben Broadley

Route Services – Patricia Anumadu

Central Services – Joanne Reece

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

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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 1.9 - 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.

Q1.10 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: [FAQs on Thermal Testing](#)

Q1.11 - 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.

Q1.12– 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.

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Q1.13- 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 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.

Q1.14 – 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. Further information on medicals can be found [here](#)
In England during the tier system, face to face medicals can continue.

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 app must not be used on NR phones shared in teams, or where phones are stored in lockers or vehicles

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- In locations where NOP 1.03 applies the requirement is unambiguous and mandated in relation to the use of mobile phones. For all other locations, we are requesting that within these workplace areas the NHS Covid-19 app functionality is turned off in these areas.

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

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 to 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?

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.

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

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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:

- (1) **Alert:** you will be alerted by the NHS Test and Trace service 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.

- (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, if you have been infected, you could become infectious to others at any point up to 10 days. 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.

- (5) **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

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you have no internet access. If your test is positive, you must continue to stay at home for at least 10 days and we will get in touch to ask about your contacts since they must self-isolate. If your test is negative, you must still complete your 14-day self-isolation period because the virus may not be detectable yet - this is crucial to avoid unknowingly spreading the virus. (For Wales, 10 days)

When employees who are at work and receive an email, text or call from the NHS Test and Trace and are advised to self-isolate, they should inform their line manager who will make arrangements for you to leave as soon as possible and when it is safe to do so. Employees, and especially those that work in safety critical roles, are requested to consider their colleagues and passengers safety and ensure they only stop working and leave site when it is safe to do so.

All employees who receive a call from NHS Test and Trace service should do the following:

- (1) start self-isolating for 10 days from the date they last had close contact with the person who has tested positive, irrespective of whether they are suffering any symptoms or not. Your household or household support bubble doesn't need to self-isolate with you, unless they display symptoms and require a test, but they must take extra care to follow the guidance on social distancing and washing your hands);
- (2) book a Covid 19 test if they develop symptoms on nhs.uk/coronavirus or by calling 119

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. It is important that if you and/or your colleagues were in close contact or within 2 metres of each other for more than 15 minutes and you had a Perspex barrier in between you at the time, you make this clear to the NHS Test and Trace service, this may mean you do not need to self-isolate but is dependent on advice given by the tracer.

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.

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 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.

explain:

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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.

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 lightly differently they operate in similar ways.

The different devolved apps are now interoperable and so you do not need to download both apps.

3. Returning to the Workplace

Q3.1 - Can I return to the workplace?

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 necessary for a colleague to be in a workplace for their physical or mental wellbeing because they cannot work from home effectively, they can do so.

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. 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 secure workplace, or who cannot work from home, you should continue to work as you are now.

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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:

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 yourselves and each other.

If you are attending the workplace you should follow the social distancing protocols, hand washing and PPE guidelines. It is important that everyone returns to work safely with social distancing implemented.

Managers should not ask anyone who is shielding due to a local lock down notification from their local authority or NHS until the need to shield in that local lockdown is lifted.

Colleagues working from home who are identified to return to the workplace will complete a risk assessment detailed in the Workplace Recovery Plan as part of our coronavirus health and wellbeing support measures.

Your region or function director will let you know as and when workplaces are able to safely welcome more colleagues back in. In the meantime, you can ask questions in the [Return to work support Yammer group](#).

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.

Q3.2 - I have asked an employee to return to the workplace today but they are unsure?

If you do request a return, discuss with the employee their 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.

Managers should not ask anyone who is in an area of local lockdown and is required to shield, or has received an extremely clinically vulnerable letter from their local authority or NHS. Anyone with a shielding or clinically extremely vulnerable notification that wishes to return to work before the end of a local lockdown should consult their GP and provide evidence accordingly.

Line managers are advised to follow the guidance in the [Case Notification](#), to support a safe return to work for those who have been shielding, keeping in mind where colleagues can work productively and effectively from home they should continue to do so. A [Full Information Pack](#) for both employees and line managers of those who have been shielding is now available.

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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.

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.

Q3.3 - Employee lives in Scotland or Wales?

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

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

Q3.4 - 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 England during the tier system, public transport remains open for going to work.

Support will continue for the following groups:

- Where a reasonable adjustment is applicable such as; employees who have had to shield and will not be using public transport
- 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

Q3.5 - Employee has been asked to return to work, do they need to take a test first?

No, the tests available are only effective if you are symptomatic. However, tests should be undertaken with any concerns over symptoms.

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.

Q3.6 – 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 yammer group to help us to shape the way it works for you.

Q3.7 - 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.

Q3.8 – 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.

4. Social Distancing and Self Isolation**Q4.1 – Employee states they are concerned about social distancing at work, how can a manager respond?**

A new 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](#)

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

Q4.2 – 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.

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 the mileage through expenses this will cease with effect from 30 September 2020. Support will continue for the following groups:

- Where a reasonable adjustment is applicable such as; employees who have had to shield and will not be using public transport
- 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

Q4.3 – 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 31 December in the following situations:

- Where a reasonable adjustment is applicable such as; employees who have had to shield and will not be using public transport
- 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 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:

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- 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;
- 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 is not 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](#).

Q4.4 – 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:

- Where a reasonable adjustment is applicable such as; employees who have had to shield and will not be using public transport
- 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.

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- Where a local lockdown restricts shared travel in cars or prohibits use of public transport

Q4.5 - Employee states they have received a letter from the NHS stating that they are clinically extremely vulnerable, what should a manager do?

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

England:

The government has now released advice to those clinically extremely vulnerable for when national restrictions end on 2 December.

The advice can be found [here](#).

This states that from 2 December 2020 If you cannot work from home, you can still go to work in all tiers. Additionally, it states that shielding may only be introduced in the worst affected areas of tier 3 and will be notified individually by a letter from the Chief Medical Officer.

A copy of the letter to those CEV in England can be found [here](#)

A copy of the CEV letter in Scotland can be found [here](#)

If an employee states that they are CEV but have not received a letter, managers can suggest the employee consults with their G.P and can request a covid consultation via Optima at www.myohportal.co.uk. Occupational clinicians will conduct assessments to determine vulnerable employees (increased risk from coronavirus) and any need to self-isolate.

The advice to CEV is different to the requirement to shield that was introduced earlier in the year. The government have not advised other household members to refrain from attending work and so they can continue to come to a covid secure workplace as before.

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

For Wales, there is no requirement for CEV people to shield but the government has issued further guidance here and has written to those on the 'shielded patient list' [here](#)

For Scotland, the government state that if you are on the shielding list, you should follow the same advice as everyone else in your protection level. You can find more information [here](#).

For those in level 4, the Chief Medical Officer has written to those clinically extremely vulnerable with extra protection information by tier. At level 4 in relation to work it states that the majority of work places are covid secure and the Chief Medical Officer will issue a letter which is similar to a fit note and which will last for as long as your area is under Level 4 restrictions. This letter can be used in the few cases where it is not possible to make your workplace safe. Please note that this does not automatically mean you should not attend work. You should discuss this further with your employer, and if this results in adequate protection, you can continue to work.

In Network Rail in Scotland, if a clinically extremely vulnerable person is concerned, the manager should arrange a covid consultation with Optima at www.myohportal.co.uk.

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Q4.6 The government has written or text me to lift shielding for me or my household member due to no longer being deemed clinically extremely vulnerable, should I come to work?

Yes, but if you can work from home you should continue to do so if it is effective.

If you cannot work from home, you should contact your manager and discuss your return to work in terms of any needs or concerns you may have, social distancing, hygiene and PPE requirements. Your manager should follow the guidance in the workforce recovery plan on [MyConnect](#)

If you are concerned managers can request a covid consultation via Optima at www.myohportal.co.uk.

If a manager is concerned, they can request a COVID consultation for the employee by contacting Optima Manager helpline on 0800 0833 324.

You should not come to work if you are symptomatic of COVID or a member of your household is or a member of your household support bubble is. You should arrange for a test and follow self-isolation requirements.

Q4.7 What are the plans for a lifting of shielding and returning to the workplace?

The government has now released advice to those clinically extremely vulnerable for when national restrictions end on 2 December 2020 in England.

The advice can be found [here](#).

This states that from 2 December 2020 if you cannot work from home, you can still go to work in all tiers. Additionally, it states that shielding may only be introduced in the worst affected areas of tier 3 and will be notified individually by a letter from the Chief Medical Officer. Further details can be found in Q4.5.

Shielding has now paused in England, Scotland and Wales, except where it is directed as part of a local lockdown response, where a letter to the individual from the Chief Medical Officer.

CEV employees should work from home where this is effective. Where a CEV employee needs to travel to work in an area affected by local lockdown, as a reasonable adjustment, personal travel in cars or NR vehicles may be authorised to avoid use of public transport for the lock down period.

For anyone CEV, including those that may have been working from home, managers should plan for the return of your affected team member in advance of any return to the workplace. 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.

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- 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

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.

Q4.8 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?

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 necessary for a colleague to be in a workplace for their physical or mental wellbeing because they cannot work from home effectively, they can do so.

It is important for managers to undertake all steps listed in Q4.8 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 adhoc 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

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.

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Q4.9– Should employees shield if they live in an area affected by a local lockdown?

The government has released advice for the clinically extremely vulnerable. This is not the same advice as shielding and details can be found in q4.5

The government in England has released further advice and guidance for those CEV. In relation to any local lockdowns, the government advises that they may advise more restrictive formal shielding measures for the clinically extremely vulnerable in the worst affected very high alert areas, based on advice from the Chief Medical Officer. This will only apply to some very high alert areas, and the government will write separately to inform you if you are advised to shield. You are not advised to follow this revised shielding advice unless you receive a new shielding notification advising you to do so.

Local authorities have a range of emergency measures that can be deployed in the event of a local lockdown. If shielding is required, then an employee who has previously received NHS notifications will be alerted by a text message or communication in the event of the requirement to shield. The alert should advise the review date.

Employees should follow the advice to shield for the stated period. If possible, they should work from home. If not, the manager should record a case with HR Direct and the absence will be paid at special leave with published base roster payments. The manager may ask for evidence of the shielding alert.

Unless local authority advice changes for essential workers then an employee who lives outside a lockdown area that has previously shielded, can continue attending work. Where a previously shielded employee needs to travel to work in an area affected by local lockdown, as a reasonable adjustment, personal travel in cars or NR vehicles may be authorised to avoid use of public transport for the lock down period.

Q4.10 – 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 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.

Q4.11 - 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.

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
- 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:

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- 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

These employees should work from home if possible if it is effective and at managers discretion. Managers should ask whether employees have a safe and appropriate environment in which to work remotely.

This does not need to be recorded with HR Direct.

If the employee is 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.

There are some roles that are business critical roles that will need to be advised on a case by case basis. Managers should discuss with their business continuity lead.

If an employee who meets these criteria cannot work from home, then they are expected to attend for work as normal following social distancing, hygiene and PPR guidance.

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

If an employee states that they are clinically extremely vulnerable (increased risk from coronavirus) but have not received an NHS letter, 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](#)

Q4.12 - Employee advises that they are pregnant and are concerned, what should I do as a manager?

The government now advise:

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There's no evidence that pregnant women are more likely to get seriously ill from coronavirus. But pregnant women have been included in the list of people at moderate risk (clinically vulnerable) as a precaution.

Therefore, managers and pregnant employees should follow the advice above for those who are at moderate risk (clinically vulnerable).

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/>

Public Health England is not advising self-isolation but is recommending working from home if it is possible. If an employee who meets this criteria cannot work from home, then they are expected to attend for work as normal, following social distancing, hygiene and PPE guidance.

There are some roles that are business critical roles that will need to be advised on a case by case basis. Managers should discuss with their business continuity lead.

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](#)

Q4.13 - Employee says that they are over 70, 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.

There are some roles that are business critical roles that will need to be advised on a case by case basis. Managers should discuss with their business continuity lead.

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

Public Health England is not advising self-isolation but is recommending working from home if it is possible. If an employee who meets these criteria cannot work from home, then they are expected to attend for work as normal following social distancing, hygiene and PPR guidance.

If an employee states that they are vulnerable (increased risk from coronavirus) but have not received an NHS letter, 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](#)

Q4.14 - 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 to 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, or someone in your household support bubble 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.

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](#)

Q4.15 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.

This is called making a 'support bubble'.

Once you're in a support bubble, you can think of yourself as being in a single household with people from the other household. It means you can have close contact with that household as if they were members of your own household.

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On 2 December the rules changed to widen eligibility for forming a support bubble.

You can form a support bubble with another household of any size if:

- you live by yourself – even if carers visit you to provide support
- you are the only adult in your household who does not need continuous care as a result of a disability
- your household includes a child who is under the age of one or was under that age on 2 December 2020
- your household includes a child with a disability who requires continuous care and is under the age of 5, or was under that age on 2 December 2020
- you are a child aged 16 or over living alone or with other children and without any adults
- you are a single adult living with one or more children who are under the age of 18 or were under that age on 12 June 2020

You should not form a support bubble with a household that is part of another support bubble.

In **Wales**, further guidance on extended households has been released [here](#). Extended households (bubbles), because a household can vary in size, there is no limit on the number of people who can be in an extended household. But only four households can form part of the extended household, and only six people (not including children under 11) from within the extended household can meet up at any one time (subject to the rules below).

No person can be part of more than one extended household, with the exception of children who live in two homes (for example because their parents have separated and have joint custody)

All individuals in one home must belong to the same extended household

All of the adult members of each household must agree to join the same extended household

Once you have agreed and joined an extended household, nobody can leave the extended household to form a new one.

In **Scotland**, rules which extended households (bubbles): one of the households must be a person who lives alone (or who lives only with children under 18 years old) a household should not form an extended household with more than one other household households can end the arrangement at any time, but should not then form an extended household with a new household this means that all the adults living in both households should agree to form the extended household. We would also encourage parents or guardians to discuss this with any children in their household. This is an important decision that should be properly discussed and agreed beforehand

NEW! Q4.16 – What is a Christmas bubble?

Christmas bubbles apply to England Wales and Scotland.

Between 23 and 27 December:

- you can form an exclusive 'Christmas bubble' composed of people from no more than three households
- you can only be in one Christmas bubble
- you cannot change your Christmas bubble
- you can travel between tiers and UK nations for the purposes of meeting your Christmas bubble

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- you can only meet your Christmas bubble in private homes or in your garden, places of worship, or public outdoor spaces
- you can continue to meet people who are not in your Christmas bubble outside your home according to the rules in the tier where you are staying
- you cannot meet someone in a private dwelling who is not part of your household or Christmas bubble
- You should travel to meet those in your Christmas bubble and return home between the 23 and 27 December.

NEW! In **Wales** to recognise the risks of loneliness and isolation, the Christmas bubble can be joined by a single person, a single parent household or the household of someone with caring responsibilities for that five-day period.

In Scotland there will be a limited relaxation of the COVID-19 rules to allow people to travel within the UK to spend Christmas together, in “Bubbles” of up to 8 people from up to 3 households if they wish. Children under the age of 12 from these households need not count towards the total number of people counted in the bubble. Children under 12 do not need to maintain physical distance from others.

Q4.17 - 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.

5. Local Lockdowns

UPDATED Q5.1 – What if I live in a local lockdown area?

Local lock down areas are designated parts of the country where local restrictions have been put in place which means some non-essential shops and facilities are closed (e.g. pubs, restaurants), and travel is restricted. Employees who live in an area under local lockdown should work from home if they can. Employees who live outside a local lockdown area but cannot work from home, can still travel into a lockdown area as a key worker to undertake their work.

Guidance on local lockdowns can be found [here](#)

A list of local lock downs in place can be found [here](#)

Local authorities have a range of emergency measures that can be deployed in the event of a local lockdown. These may vary from different local authorities. Network Rail will continue to follow government guidance and local authority guidance and will announce any additional measures as they may be known.

Summary of possible work impacts of local lockdowns as at 15 December 2020:

Wales

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15 December 2020 These measures will be in place from 6pm Friday 4 December until such time as the situation changes. **Temporary relaxations to the restrictions will be made between 23 and 27 December** to allow more people to see each other at home over the festive period.

- Stay out of each other's homes, except in very limited circumstances
- Limit the times you leave your home, and the distance you travel
- When you do leave home, please try and reduce how many people you see. It is better to see the same one or two people regularly than to see lots of different people occasionally
- maintain social distancing, including outdoors
- meet people outdoors rather than indoors where possible, even in circumstances where the law allows you to meet indoors
- Work from home if you can
- Wash your hands regularly and follow other advice on hygiene
- Self-isolate if you show symptoms of coronavirus

You can find more information at <https://gov.wales/coronavirus-regulations-guidance>

Scotland

Introduction of a five tier system from 2 November

You can find out which tier an area is in [here](#)

Protection level 0 - 8/3 indoors (in-home socialising permitted) i.e. max 8 people from 3 households, 15/5 outdoors

Protection 1 - 6/2 indoors (at times, depending on circumstances, we may need to stop indoor socialising in Level 1 in an area) i.e. max 6 people from 2 households, **18 Nov 2020** 8/3 outdoors

Protection 2 - no in-home socialising, 6/2 outdoors and in public places, e.g. hospitality settings i.e. max 6 people from 2 households

Protection 3 - no in-home socialising, 6/2 outdoors and in public places, e.g. hospitality settings i.e. max 6 people from 2 households

Protection 4 - no in-home socialising, 6/2 outdoors and in public places i.e. max 6 people from 2 households. Schools open, essential shops open. Public services will be delivered online where possible. Face-to-face services can continue where this is essential. **18 Nov 2020** - Travel restrictions will be put into law on 20 November to further enforce the current guidance that restricts people who live in a Level 3 or Level 4 local authority area from travelling outside their local authority except for an essential purpose - such as work or caring responsibilities. The regulations also prevent non-essential travel into a Level 3 or 4 local authority area, except for the same reasons.

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-protection-levels/>

England

From 2 December, England reverts back to a three tier system:

The government has published a [full list](#) of which parts of England will be in which of the three tiers of coronavirus rules, from 2 December. Please [check the rules](#) that apply locally to each tier.

Tier 1 –

- you must not socialise in groups larger than 6 people, indoors or outdoors, other than where a legal exemption applies. This is called the 'rule of 6'

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- businesses and venues can remain open, in a COVID secure manner, other than those which remain closed by law, such as nightclubs
- hospitality businesses selling food or drink for consumption on their premises are required to:
- provide table service only, for premises that serve alcohol
- close between 11pm and 5am (hospitality venues in airports, ports, on transport services and in motorway service areas are exempt)
- stop taking orders after 10pm

Tier 2 –

- you must not socialise with anyone you do not live with or who is not in your support bubble in any indoor setting, whether at home or in a public place
- you must not socialise in a group of more than 6 people outside, including in a garden or a public space – this is called the ‘rule of 6’
- businesses and venues can continue to operate, in a COVID-Secure manner, other than those which remain closed by law, such as nightclubs
- pubs and bars must close, unless operating as restaurants. Hospitality venues can only serve alcohol with substantial meals
- hospitality businesses selling food or drink for consumption on their premises are required to:
- provide table service only, in premises which sell alcohol
- close between 11pm and 5am (hospitality venues in airports, ports, transport services and motorway service areas are exempt),stop taking orders after 10pm

Tier 3-

- you must not meet socially indoors or in most outdoor places with anybody you do not live with, or who is not in your support bubble, this includes in any private garden or at most outdoor venues
- you must not socialise in a group of more than 6 in some other outdoor public spaces, including parks, beaches, countryside accessible to the public, a public garden, grounds of a heritage site or castle, or a sports facility – this is called the ‘rule of 6’
- hospitality settings, such as bars (including shisha venues), pubs, cafes and restaurants are closed – they are permitted to continue sales by takeaway, click-and-collect, drive-through or delivery services.
- accommodation such as hotels, B&Bs, campsites, and guest houses must close. There are several exemptions, such as for those who use these venues as their main residence, and those requiring the venues where it is reasonably necessary for work or education and training
- you can continue to travel to venues or amenities which are open, but should aim to reduce the number of journeys you make where possible
- avoid travelling to other parts of the UK, including for overnight stays other than where necessary, such as for work, education, youth services, to receive medical treatment, or because of caring responsibilities. You can travel through other areas as part of a longer journey

Q5.2 – Should I shield if I live in a local lockdown?

Shielding is now paused in England, Scotland and Wales except where stipulated as part of a local lockdown and where the employee receives a text or e-mail alert from their local authority/NHS service.

If an employee is able to work from home, they can if it is effective. This will not need to be recorded with HR Direct.

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If an employee needs to self-isolate as part of a local lockdown measure as directed by a text or e-mail alert from their local authority or NHS, (symptom free) but cannot work from home, then this should be recorded a paid special leave. A case must be created with HR Direct. Pay will include any planned base roster payments.

Managers should not ask anyone who is shielding due to an NHS alert as part of a local lockdown to return to work until the end of the shielding period. Anyone with a shielding notification that wishes to return to work during a local lock down requirement should consult their GP and provide evidence accordingly.

Managers can find guidance on workplace recovery on [MyConnect](#). Processes for the return of an employee should be followed if an employee has been shielding as part of a local lockdown. Information can be found in the [Clinically Extremely Vulnerable Pack](#).

Unless local authority advice changes for essential workers then an employee who lives outside a lockdown area that has previously shielded, can continue attending work. Where a previously shielded employee needs to travel to work in an area affected by local lockdown, as a reasonable adjustment, personal travel in cars or NR vehicles may be authorised to avoid use of public transport for the lock down period.

Q5.3 – What if my child’s school or school year is closed due to local lockdown or test and trace requirements?

Line managers are advised to have supportive conversations with their reports and remember that the arrangements for one school and locality may vary with other schools, areas and other circumstances. Employees should work from home wherever possible. 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. Employees should consider all options available to them in their household.

No child that is being cared for should be left in an unsafe situation.

Where the employee has no remaining annual leave for this Holiday Year, 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.

The payment of any special leave is not an entitlement, and the Company can 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.

Q5.4 – What if a local lockdown requires that no car sharing or use of public transport?

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.

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6. Working from home

Q6.1 - 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](#)

Q6.2 - 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

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iProcurement. 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](#)

Q6.3 How do I report an accident when working from home?

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

Q6.4 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. border 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.

NB - this does not apply to any NRC colleagues who may have been “stranded” abroad and continue to work on their projects from their “home” base abroad.

7. Working Away from Home

Q7.1 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](#).

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

Q8.1 An employee advises that one or more of their children's school's or nursery remains has closed. How should I advise?

Line managers are advised to have supportive conversations with their reports and remember that the arrangements for one school and locality may vary with other schools, areas and other circumstances. Employees should work from home wherever possible. 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. Employees should consider all options available to them in their household. No child that is being cared for should be left in an unsafe situation.

Where the employee has no remaining annual leave for this Holiday Year, 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.

The payment of any special leave is not an entitlement, and the Company can 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.

Q8.2 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.

Q8.3 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.

Where the employee has no remaining annual leave for this Holiday Year, has no TOIL owing, cannot work from home, changing the employee's hours of work will not help and they have explored all options in their household

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with no other option is available, then the employee should be placed on paid special leave, (basic pay only), this is intended to allow time to explore alternative arrangements. Where employees are placed on special paid leave, employees and line managers are encouraged to engage in regular and at least weekly conversations.

The payment of any special leave is not an entitlement, and the Company can only pay special leave to employees for a limited period of time. Therefore, paid special leave may only be paid during the 2020 summer break. Where the above situation occurs during any other school holiday break in 2020, 2021 or 2022, any special leave taken will be unpaid.

Q8.4 What is a Care Bubble?

The government has introduced Care Bubbles.

- Informal carers will be able to provide care for children and vulnerable adults in parts of the country with restrictions on interhousehold mixing
- Children under 14 will be able to be cared for by individuals outside of their immediate household as part of a care bubble
- Arrangements must be part of a consistent childcare relationship

In England from 2 December you may change your childcare bubble provided that:

- at least one person in the proposed new childcare bubble is under the age of 14
- neither household is part of a separate childcare bubble which they intend to remain a part of

If you decide to change your childcare bubble, you should treat your previous bubble as a separate household for 10 days before forming a new bubble. This means following the rules on meeting people from other households in the tier you are in.

Guidance can be found [here](#).

Q8.5 Employee advises that there is a positive test result in their child's 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 self-isolate develops symptoms themselves within their 14-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 14-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 14-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](#)

You can find more information from the government [here](#)

coronavirus (COVID-19) Frequently Asked Questions



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.

Q8.6 Employee asks whether grandparents can now resume informal childcare?

The government coronavirus FAQs state:

'People in groups of up to 6 can meet indoors or outdoors, which enables you to spend time with your grandchildren. We recognise that grandparents and other relatives often provide informal childcare for young children, and this can be very important. Although you should try to maintain social distance from people you do not live with wherever possible, it may not always be practicable to do so when providing care to a young child or infant. If this is the case - and where young children may struggle to keep social distance – you should still limit close contact as much as possible, and take other precautions such as washing hands and clothes regularly.'

If you have formed a support bubble with your grandchildren's household, which is allowed if either you or they live in a 'single adult household', then there can be close contact and social distancing is not necessary.'

9. Financial Wellbeing

Q9.1 – Where can I find information on financial support?

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

10. Compassionate Leave

Q10.1 – Where can I find information on compassionate leave and bereavement?

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

Q10.2 – 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.

11. Annual Leave

Q11.1 - 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.

Q11.2 - Employee asks whether the rules on the carry forward of annual leave will be relaxed?

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 31 December 2020

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

Q11.3 – Employee asks what will happen about Bank Holidays?

Information on bank holidays is now available on [MyConnect](#)

Q11.4 – 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 2021 annual leave to use in 2020.

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

coronavirus (COVID-19) Frequently Asked Questions



Q11.5 - Employee has a holiday pre-booked abroad

In England on 5 November 2020 new rules on foreign travel come into force.

The advice of UK and worldwide governments on quarantine periods is likely to affect travel for some time and is likely to be changeable. Network Rail information may be subject to change as a result. Employee should be asked to check and follow Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO), insurance and holiday company advice, which will now be significant, before they travel. If they choose to travel, then they will need to comply with any government quarantine requirements either abroad or in the UK on return. If they become covid symptomatic during that period, they should follow NHS advice.

Developments in the coronavirus pandemic remain uncertain around the world. No travel is risk-free. If you are planning travel abroad in the weeks and months ahead, even if you are returning to a place you've visited before, follow this checklist for [England](#).

Regional variations may be in place and are published by the devolved administrations. Follow these links for [Scotland](#) and [Wales](#). Information for Northern Ireland is expected.

The FCO has issued a travel advisory note against cruises [here](#)

Employee 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.

Managers should not prevent employees from taking the holiday but to be clear about possible implications of any quarantine period.

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](#)

Q11.6 - Employee is planning to book a last-minute holiday abroad

In England on 5 November 2020 new rules on foreign travel come into force.

Employee should be advised to consider any implications of any government quarantine restrictions. If such restrictions mean an individual cannot work on their return from holiday, 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.

Updated government guidelines on travel can be found [here](#)

coronavirus (COVID-19) Frequently Asked Questions



Q11.7 - Can I travel to an 'airbridge' or 'travel corridor' country without having to quarantine from work on return?

In England on 5 November 2020 new rules on foreign travel come into force.

The government has advised that from 10 July 2020 people arriving from selected destinations will be able to enter England without needing to self-isolate, unless they have been in or transited through non-exempt countries in the preceding 10 days.

A test cannot replace the need for quarantine due to infection incubation periods.

The government has now released a list of 'travel corridor' countries where, unless you have visited or stopped in any other country or territory in the preceding 10 days, passengers arriving from the listed countries and territories will not be required to self-isolate on arrival into England. The government advises that the list is under constant review and can be found at :

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-travel-corridors>

The government states that you will have to comply with coronavirus requirements in the country you travel to. This may include self-isolating or providing your details to local authorities.

The exempted countries and territories will be kept under constant review, so that if the health risks increase self-isolation immediate measures can be re-introduced to help stop the spread of the disease into England.

Employees should follow the usual authorisation process for booking annual leave. Employees may find the attached guidance from the government useful in preparation for any travel, including checking travel insurance, travel company advice, and contingency arrangements for money:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-advice-novel-coronavirus>

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-essential-international-travel-guidance>

Employees should follow the usual checks for any symptoms of COVID-19, such as a raised temperature, persistent new cough or anosmia (loss of sense of smell and/or taste) before returning to the workplace.

Employees should note that government advice on travel is changeable and Network Rail will continue to review against it. This may result in short notice changes to travel guidance. Additionally, employees should note that overseas governments may impose their own quarantine requirements at short notice.

Employees do not need to quarantine if they have not travelled themselves. If a household member returns from travel and is required to quarantine, this does not affect anyone in the household who has not travelled, unless the returning person, a household member or the employee becomes symptomatic or tests positive for coronavirus.

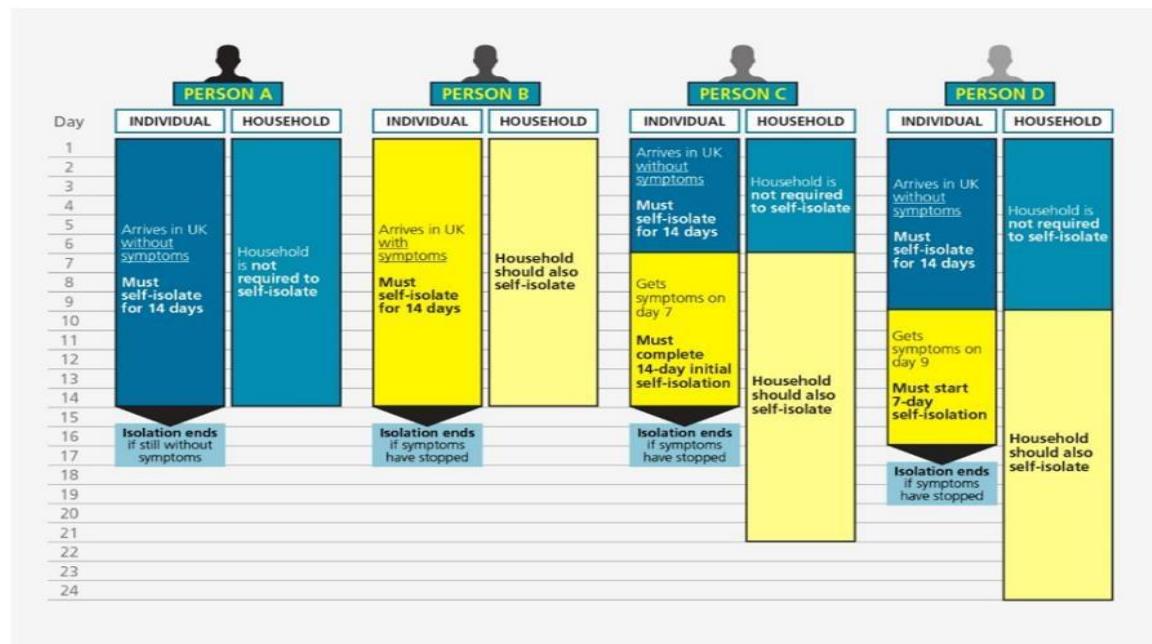
You may find this infographic useful if returning from a country that is not exempt

coronavirus Questions

(COVID-19)

Frequently

Asked



Q11.8 - What if a quarantine is imposed whilst I am away?

In England on 5 November 2020 new rules on foreign travel come into force.

Exceptionally, if a quarantine period is imposed after leaving the country for a holiday and is not known before taking the holiday, work from home, if you can for the required quarantine period starting from the last day the employee was in the non-exempt country. 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.

A test cannot replace the need for quarantine due to infection incubation periods.

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.

Q11.9 – Am I exempt from quarantine rules as a Network Rail Employee?

No. Quarantine applies to Network Rail employees returning from abroad. There is a DFT exemption which applies to High Output and some Supply Chain areas, in the course of critical work only. This exemption does not apply to Network Rail employees travelling for personal reasons.

The exemption now applies to anyone travelling from Denmark into England but is still not valid in Wales or Scotland

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Q11.10 - 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

NEW! Q11.11 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.

From 15 December 2020, passengers arriving into England from countries not featured on the government's travel corridor list will have the option to take a test after 5 days of self-isolation, with a negative result releasing them from the need to isolate.

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.

Under the 'Test to release for international travel' strategy, passengers arriving into England by plane, ferry or train should book their test before they travel; must complete a passenger locator form; and will still need to self-isolate for 5 days before taking a test – rather than taking it at their port of arrival.

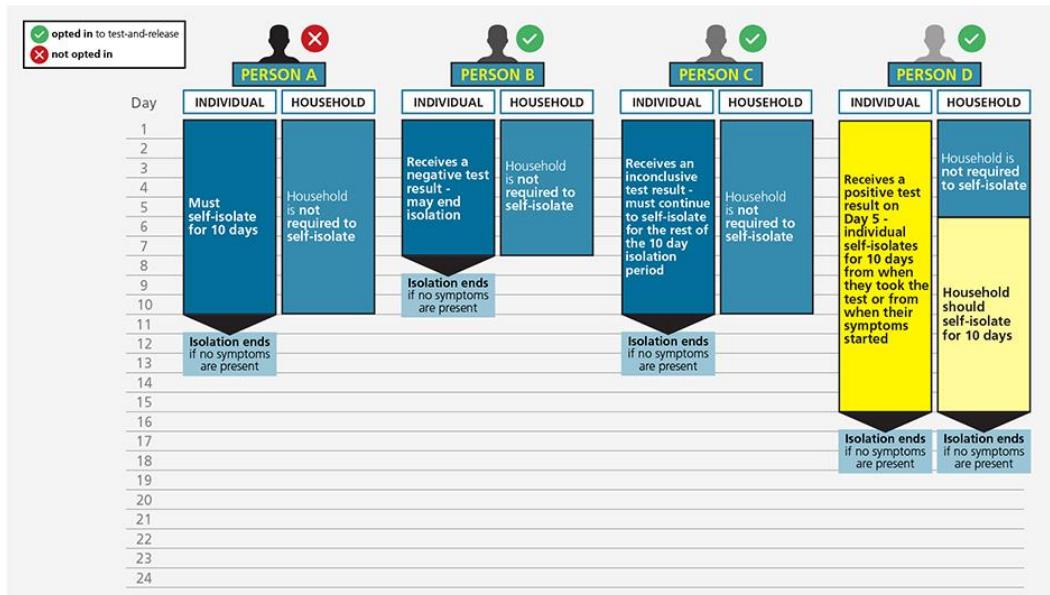
Employees are advised that this option is entirely a personal matter.

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.

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

The following infographic explains Test and Release:

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Q11.12 - 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.

12. Key Workers

Q12.1 - Employee asks whether they would qualify as a critical / Key worker?

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.

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

[Key Worker Letter](#)

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

Information can be found at:

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

Government advise for key workers in Scotland can be found here:

[Key Workers in Scotland](#)

13. Volunteers and Reservists

Q13.1 - 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

Q13.2 – NHS Volunteers

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

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

14. Business Meetings, Business Travel and Personal Travel

Q14.1 - 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 have 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:

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

Q14.2 - 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 secure face to face meeting can be arranged. You can discuss this with your local HR on a case by case basis.

Q14.3 - Do I continue with Disciplinary and Grievance meetings?

Disciplinary and grievance meetings should all be undertaken remotely through teams or conference calls.

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](#)

Q14.4 - 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>

Q14.5 – 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](#)

Q14.6 - 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.

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Q14.7 - 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.

Q14.8 - 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.

15. Recruitment, Secondment and Onboarding

Q15.1 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.

Q15.2 Can we carry out face to face (f2f) interviews?

Interviews should be carried out virtually where possible to continue to protect both our employees and candidates. If you and your team aren't working remotely, f2f interviews can be carried out in the exception that:

- a full national lockdown is not imposed
- you comply with the government tier approach and social distancing guidelines

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- you comply with the government social distancing guidelines
- 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

Q15.3 What are the guidelines to carry out right to work checks during COVID restrictions?

- All checks can be carried out over video calls
- 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'
- Candidates should bring the original RTW document on their first day of employment and show this to their line manager. The line manager can verify they have seen the original document at that point, complete and send the RTW verification document to onboarding.

Q15.4- 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.

Q15.5- 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.

Q15.6 – How do we manage secondments through COVID-19?

A set of Secondment Principles have been created to help support secondments during the COVID restrictions. [Click here to view](#)

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Q15.7- What is our current position with face to face (f2f) medicals?

Offers made to candidates where a f2f medical is required has now recommence for new starters. NRSS are working with Optima Health (OH) to coordinate the backlog of medicals for new starters, returning signallers and frontline workers and have arranged for these individuals to be prioritised. OH have developed COVID-19 secure [guidelines](#) to protect people to socially distance when attending a face to face medical.

Q15.8- 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.

Q15.9 - 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 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.

16. Leavers

16.1 – 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](#)

16.2 - 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.

16.3 - Can I request to be furloughed?

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

16.4 - I have resigned but the job I was due to go to has now been withdrawn or my start date is likely to 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.

17. Training

Q17.1 -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.

Q17.2 – 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.

Q17.3 – 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 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 secure training areas.

Q17.4 - 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](#).

18. Suppliers and Contractors

Q18.1 - 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.

19. First Aid and Equipment

Q19.1 – 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](#)

Q19.2 - 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 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.

Employees are not required to wear a face covering at their desk or work station, unless explicitly risk assessed to do so. This remains under review.

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>

Q19.3 - 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

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Q19.4 – 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

Q19.5 How do I store hand sanitiser safely?

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.

Q19.6 - 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.

Q19.7 - 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.

Q19.8 Where can I find guidance on using digital thermometers?

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

The personal thermometer order form can be found [here](#)

Q19.9 Where can I find guidance on infrared thermometers?

Guidance on infrared thermometers can be found on [MyConnect](#)

20. Personal Data

Q20.1 – 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](#)
