

# Update on rules of self-isolation

## Construction Leadership Council

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**\*Further updated 23 July 2021\***

This short briefing has been prepared as an update to industry in relation to COVID-19 and self-isolation. Following the relaxation of COVID-19 rules on 19 July 2021, and with awareness of the growth in cases of COVID-19, the CLC wants to support construction businesses to understand the rules and UK Government policy in this area.

### 1. When must a worker self-isolate?

Workers must self-isolate immediately if:

- they have any symptoms of COVID-19 (a high temperature, a new, continuous cough or a loss or change to sense of smell or taste)
- they have tested positive for COVID-19
- someone they live with has symptoms or tested positive
- they have been told by NHS Track and Trace that they have been in contact with someone who tested positive
- they have arrived in England from abroad from a 'red list' country, or from an 'amber list' country and not been fully vaccinated under the UK vaccination programme.

### 2. What does it mean to be a 'contact'?

A contact is a person who has been close to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19. You can be a contact any time from 2 days before the person who tested positive developed their symptoms (or, if they did not have any symptoms, from 2 days before the date their positive test was taken), and up to 10 days after, as this is when they can pass the infection on to others. A risk assessment may be undertaken to determine this, but a contact can be:

- anyone who lives in the same household as another person who has COVID-19 symptoms or has tested positive for COVID-19
- anyone who has had any of the following types of contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19:
  - face-to-face contact including being coughed on or having a face-to-face conversation within one metre
  - been within one metre for one minute or longer without face-to-face contact

- been within 2 metres of someone for more than 15 minutes (either as a one-off contact, or added up together over one day)

A person may also be a close contact if they have travelled in the same vehicle or plane as a person who has tested positive for COVID-19

### **3. What must workers do if they are told to self-isolate by NHS Test & Trace or a contact tracer?**

Workers must self-isolate if told to do so by NHS Test and Trace. This remains the law, regardless of vaccination status.

### **4. What must workers do if they receive an alert from the NHS COVID-19 app?**

If a worker receives an alert telling them they are a close contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, there is no legal requirement to isolate as the app is advisory rather than mandatory.

However the NHS and Government guidance is that individuals should self-isolate, as outlined above and that businesses should support workers to do so.

In some cases, NHS Test & Trace will advise on an isolation period and a worker will receive an alert on the NHS COVID-19 app, with the app recommending a longer period of isolation. NHS Test & Trace self-isolation periods are legally mandatory, any additional length of isolation recommended by the app is advisory.

### **5. What changes are expected on 16 August 2021?**

From 16 August, if a worker has been fully vaccinated they will be exempt from the requirement to self-isolate if they are a contact of a positive case. They will instead be advised to take a PCR test as soon as possible.

Workers will also be exempt from self-isolation from 16 August if they are under 18 and a contact of a positive case. As with adults, they will be advised whether a PCR test needs to be taken. Those who are not fully vaccinated will still be required to self-isolate.

If workers test positive they will still need to self-isolate regardless of their vaccination status or age.

### **6. Are there any exemptions from self-isolation for construction workers?**

There are some limited and exceptional circumstances whereby some critical workers may still work even if they are a close contact of someone that has tested positive for Covid-19.

These exemptions only apply to workers whose absence would be likely to lead to the loss or compromise of this infrastructure resulting in one or both of the following:

- major detrimental impact on the availability, integrity or delivery of essential services – including those services whose integrity, if compromised, could result in significant loss of life or casualties

- significant impact on national security, national defence, or the functioning of the state

Exempted workers must be fully vaccinated (defined as someone who is 14 days post-final dose) and will be exempted solely so that they can attend work. They will otherwise need to continue to self-isolate as directed by NHS Test and Trace. It applies to asymptomatic contacts only and not individuals who have tested positive or who have COVID-19 symptoms.

The exemption is highly limited and focused to prevent public harm from disruption to critical services. It is not intended to avoid all disruption to services that will result from the need for people to self-isolate. It will only apply to named individuals from a specific set of organisations.

Where employers believe the self-isolation of certain key employees as contacts would result in serious disruption to critical services, they should contact the relevant government department (see table below).

<b>Department</b>	<b>Main sectors covered</b>	<b>Contact details</b>
BEIS	Energy Civil nuclear	<a href="mailto:beisquarantine.exemptions@beis.gov.uk">beisquarantine.exemptions@beis.gov.uk</a>
DCMS	Digital infrastructure	<a href="mailto:dcms.coronavirus@dcms.gov.uk">dcms.coronavirus@dcms.gov.uk</a>
Defra	Food production and supply Waste Water Veterinary medicines Essential chemicals	<a href="mailto:emergencies@defra.gov.uk">emergencies@defra.gov.uk</a>
DfT	Essential transport	<a href="mailto:cv19pmo@dft.gov.uk">cv19pmo@dft.gov.uk</a>
DHSC	Medicines Medical devices Clinical consumable supplies	<a href="mailto:covid19.criticalworker@dhsc.gov.uk">covid19.criticalworker@dhsc.gov.uk</a>
Home Office	Emergency services Border control	<a href="mailto:covid19operationsandpolicy@homeoffice.gov.uk">covid19operationsandpolicy@homeoffice.gov.uk</a>
MoD	Essential defence outputs	<a href="mailto:spo-covidteam@mod.gov.uk">spo-covidteam@mod.gov.uk</a>
MHCLG	Local government	<a href="mailto:lgresponse@communities.gov.uk">lgresponse@communities.gov.uk</a>

They should provide information on:

- the number of people who it is proposed would leave self-isolation
- the roles those individuals need to perform
- the impact failure to do this would have and when this impact is likely to materialise (for example, is it already an issue or likely to materialise in the coming days)

The relevant department will work with the Cabinet Office and the Department of Health and Social Care to agree the roles and workplaces that are likely to meet the criteria set out above on a daily basis. The relevant department will then determine whether individual cases meet the criteria set out above. Decisions will be made rapidly on a case-by-case basis and kept under review.

Where a specific case meets the criteria, the employer will receive a letter from the relevant department setting out the named critical workers designated and telling them what measures they and those workers need to follow.

Unless employers have a letter from a government department on which the workers are specifically named, this policy does not apply and employees should self-isolate as directed.

In some exceptional cases there may be critical roles in sectors not listed in the table above which meet the criteria. These will be agreed on a case-by-case basis. Where employers think this applies, they should contact the government department with responsibility for their sector.

## **7. What is Government policy on workplace testing and home testing?**

Businesses who introduced workplace testing (under the Government scheme) were able to order free rapid flow tests until midnight on 19 July 2021. The Government funded element of the workplace testing scheme has now come to an end, and businesses who had introduced this scheme will have to engage a private provider or ask employees to use home-based testing.

Currently, employees are able to order free rapid flow tests for themselves and their household on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk). It is also possible to pick up free rapid flow tests at pharmacies and other community organised locations and test sites ([see here](#)). The Government has announced that funding for free rapid testing at home will continue until at least the end of August 2021.