

POLICY FRAMEWORK ON RETURN TO WORK FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE STAFF IDENTIFIED AS CASES OR FOLLOWING CLOSE CONTACT WITH A POSITIVE COVID-19 CASE

Updated 24 January 2022

Deputy Chief Medical Officer

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The Scottish Government

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Dear Colleagues,

UPDATE ON SELF-ISOLATION FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE STAFF

We are writing to share an updated Policy Framework to the self-isolation guidance for Health and Social Care Staff, as a result of changes to the COVID-19 self-isolation guidance for the general population.

Since 6 January 2022, as announced by the First Minister (5 January 2022), the following has applied to health and social care staff.

- All index (positive) COVID-19 cases, can exit self-isolation on day 7 regardless of vaccination status, if they have a negative Lateral Flow Device (LFD) test on day 6 and day 7 (taken 24 hours apart) and do not have a fever (for the previous 48 hours without the use of anything to reduce a fever).
- Unvaccinated or partially vaccinated contacts (0-2 doses) will be asked to take a PCR test and regardless of result will be asked to isolate for 10 days, from exposure to the case.

From 17 January 2022 the following also applies to health and social care staff:

- Fully vaccinated staff (those who have had two doses and a booster 14 days prior to the last exposure to the case), identified as either household or non-household contacts will be expected to take daily LFD tests for seven days, from exposure to the case and if the LFD tests are negative and they remain well, will not have to isolate. They can also end further contact testing at the end of the 10 day period.

As health and social care workers continue to provide health, care and support to individuals whom are at higher risk of COVID-19 infection, there will continue to be additional safeguards in place for these settings. All health and social care providers/employers and their staff should follow the updated policy as detailed in **Annex A** for COVID-19 self-isolation.



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

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6 January 2022

Updated 17 January 2022

Updated 24 January 2022

Addresses

For action

Chief Executives NHS Boards and Local Authorities,
Chairs,
HR Directors,
Testing SPOCs,
Nurse Directors,
Medical Directors,
Chief Social Work Officers,
Chief Officers HSCPs
Registered Care Home Providers
Supported Housing Providers
Care at Home Providers
Directors of Public Health

For information

Infection Control Managers,
Employee Directors,
Representatives,
Workforce
Senior Leadership Group
Members
ARHAI Scotland
Public Health Scotland
Care Inspectorate
Scottish Care
COSLA
Coalition of Care and Support Providers
Scotland (CCPS)
All Health and Social Care Staff

Enquiries to:

Scottish Government
Directorate for Health Workforce

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We would like to continue to remind the sector that it is critical that staff receive their vaccines and booster due to our current understanding of the characteristics of the Omicron variant:

- It has increased transmissibility compared to previous variants that have emerged.
- Having your 1st and 2nd dose of the vaccine offers limited protection against symptomatic disease from this variant.
- Receiving a booster dose of the vaccine is known to increase protection from Omicron substantially.¹

Early identification of cases is even more important with the Omicron variant and as you are aware, we are strongly encouraging all health staff to take a LFD test daily and all social care staff to undertake a LFD test each working day and weekly PCR tests where required. Routine daily LFDs and weekly PCRs are not generally required from day 11 to 28 after staff have been identified as a case, as outlined in Annex A.

All staff are reminded to record LFD results (positive, negative and void) on the portal [Welcome - COVID Testing Portal \(service-now.com\)](#).

This Framework replaces the previous framework ([First Tier \(scot.nhs.uk\)](#)) from the 24th December 2021.

Yours sincerely



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For all adult social care queries

¹ [Investigation of SARS-CoV-2 variants: technical briefings - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

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Annex A: Policy Framework

1. Purpose & Introduction

- a) This revised policy document sets out the conditions that allow Health and Social Care staff who are isolating as a COVID-19 index case to leave isolation in seven days, in line with the general population advice.
- b) The document re-affirms the guidance that is currently in place which allows Health and Care Staff who are close contacts (household and non-household) to return to work when certain conditions are met.

2. Index Cases (staff who have tested positive for COVID-19)

- a) This will apply to Health and Social Care staff who test positive (regardless of vaccination status and regardless of symptoms) either through work place LFD/PCR testing or PCR testing due to symptoms. If a member of staff tests positive through LFD they no longer need to take a PCR test to confirm their positive status. A person with an LFD positive test should be managed as a confirmed positive case of COVID-19.
- b) Staff, should take a PCR test if they have [symptoms of COVID-19](#), and have not already received a positive LFD test. If a member of staff has symptoms and has already tested positive on LFD (e.g. in the preceding couple of days) they should be treated as COVID-19 positive and do not require a confirmatory PCR.
- c) In line with guidance for the general population staff cases need to isolate for 10 days, but they can shorten isolation and can return to work from day 7 of their self-isolation, if they have two consecutive negative LFD tests taken 24 hours apart (day 6 and day 7), and do not have a fever for 48 hours (a temperature of 37.8C degrees or above, without the use of anything to reduce a fever). For clarity, as an example, if a staff member tests positive on day 6 but negative on day 7 and 8, they can return to work from day 8. Day 1 is the date of symptom onset (or date of positive LFD or PCR test, if asymptomatic).
- d) Following two consecutive negative LFD tests between Day 6 and Day 10 prior to returning to work, staff, who have been diagnosed as cases should pause their standard work place testing (which is to take daily LFD tests prior to work on working days for social care staff and daily for NHS staff) for 28 days from day 1 (date of symptom onset or test date if asymptomatic). If they are also required to PCR test weekly, they should also pause this for a period of 90 days.
- e) All staff should stop testing after day 10 irrespective of their Day 10 LFD result and pause routine testing for 28 day as above. The likelihood of a positive LFD test in the absence of a high temperature after 10 days is low, hence further testing is not advised.
- f) It is not recommended that staff continue daily LFD from Day 11. But if the member of staff does continue LFD testing from Day 11, and it is positive they should stay at work if they have not had or do not have a fever (a temperature of 37.8C degrees or above) within the previous 48 hours.

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- g) If a person newly develops the main COVID symptoms (fever, new persistent cough, loss of, or change in, sense of smell or taste) in the 28 day period, they should do a PCR test. Note that this applies to NEW symptoms not ongoing cough, or taste/smell changes.
- h) Staff should **only** return to work in the following circumstances:
- On Day 7 to Day 10 - once they have had two consecutive negative LFD tests taken 24 hours apart
 - After Day 10 – if they have not had 2 consecutive negative LFDs 24hrs apart by Day 10, they should return to work on Day 11 irrespective of LFD test results (they do not need to test after D10)
 - Both points are conditional on not having had or currently having a fever (a temperature of 37.8C degrees or above) within the previous 48 hours.
- i) Staff who can return **should not** work with [individuals on the highest clinical risk list for the remainder of the 10 day period.](#) The highest clinical risk groups include individuals on chemotherapy, those who are immune-suppressed such as pre/immediately post-transplant, those who have profound immune-deficiency. This does not apply to staff working with other individuals who are not eligible for the vaccine (such as neonates and young children or people who are exempt such as by having allergic reactions) but any such return needs to be risk assessed by the line manager. This list is not exhaustive and local line managers may determine other groups as fitting within the high clinical risk category. In these circumstances, staff can however be asked to return to work in roles to care for and support people who are not deemed at high clinical risk.
- j) If a case is subsequently identified as a contact in the 28 days since their own symptom onset (or positive LFD or PCR if asymptomatic), they do not need to isolate or do any routine workplace LFD testing for the rest of the 28 days or PCR testing for the remainder of the 90 days since their Day 1. They can continue working irrespective of vaccination status. If new symptoms arise, they must follow the self-isolation guidance for index cases as above.

3. Fully vaccinated contacts

- a) This applies to all Health and Social Care staff who are identified as contacts (both household and non-household) of a positive COVID-19 case and are fully vaccinated (usually two doses and a booster dose at least 14 days prior to last exposure to the case).
- b) If a member of staff is a contact of a case, they should take an LFD test. If this test is negative and provided they have no COVID-19 symptoms or fever they can attend work ([Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): General advice | NHS inform](#)) with the agreement of their line manager according to a risk assessment.
- c) However as an additional safeguard, they will also need to take daily LFD tests for the remaining 10 days of their intended isolation period and report these to their line manager. If an LFD test is positive, or the individual develops COVID symptoms within the 10 day period (in which case they should do a PCR test, if LFD is not already positive), they must follow the self-isolation guidance for index cases as detailed in Part 2 of this guidance. This includes re-setting their Day 1 to the date of the positive test or onset of main COVID symptoms. Staff are reminded to record LFD results (positive, negative and void) on the online portal [Welcome - COVID Testing Portal \(service-now.com\)](#)

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- d) After the 10 day period as a contact, staff should continue to take an LFD test prior to work on working days for social care staff and daily for NHS staff each working day, as per their workplace testing requirements and can continue to work if they have a negative result.
- e) Those who are participating/have participated in a formally approved COVID-19 vaccine clinical trial are treated as equivalent to those vaccinated through the NHS vaccination programme and similarly, a risk assessment will determine their return to work. [See NHS Inform for more information on COVID-19 vaccination status for clinical trial participants.](#)
- f) An exemption from self-isolation exists for contacts who have been diagnosed as a COVID case in the past 28 days, and they are advised to follow the testing guidance for positive cases (as per point 2 j)).

4. Contacts that are not fully vaccinated

- a) This applies to all Health and Social Care staff who are identified as contacts (both household and non-household) of a positive COVID-19 case and are not fully vaccinated (usually two doses and a booster dose at least 14 days prior to last exposure to the case).
- b) If a staff member is not fully vaccinated and is a contact of a case, they should take a PCR test, as soon as possible, upon finding out they are a contact. They should not attend work and should complete their 10 day self-isolation period. There is currently no option for staff who are not fully vaccinated and are identified as a contact to exit self-isolation early.
- c) If a member of staff develops symptoms or tests positive during their 10 day isolation period as a contact, they should follow guidance for index cases as detailed in Part 2 of this guidance and re-set the self-isolation period.
- d) After the contact self-isolation period, provided staff have not become a case, they should continue with their workplace testing regime which includes taking an LFD each day prior to attending work for social care staff and each day for NHS staff.
- e) An exemption from self-isolation exists for contacts who have been diagnosed as a COVID-19 case in the past 28 days, even if they are not fully vaccinated and they must follow the testing guidance for cases. (as per point 2 j)).

5. Mitigations for staff returning to work in health and social care settings

- a) If a member of staff meets the conditions to exit self-isolation early, as outlined in paragraph 2 or 3 (depending on the scenario), they are expected to return to work. In addition to the conditions for returning to work as detailed above, which includes daily LFD testing and not working with individuals on the highest risk list, the member of staff should:
 - record the results of the daily LFD <http://www.covidtestingportal.scot/> and inform their manager of the result.

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- as always, adhere to infection prevention and control appropriate to the setting in which they work.
 - correctly wear personal protective equipment (PPE) in accordance with the National Infection Prevention and Control Manual: Winter (21/22), Respiratory Infections in Health and Care Settings Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) Addendum (scot.nhs.uk). This includes wearing face masks in accordance with the [face mask guidance for hospitals and primary care and the use of face mask guidance for social care settings including adult care homes](#)
 - remain vigilant for symptoms and test and self-isolate if they arise.
- b) It is important for staff to note that these exemptions are in place to enable staff to return to work during their potentially infectious period (for cases) or their post-contact period (for contacts) of risk. They should however continue to follow advice as set out on NHS inform on [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Self-isolation guidance for individuals with possible coronavirus infection | NHS inform](#) including avoiding crowded places, social events and care home or hospital visiting for the remainder of their 10 day periods.
- c) In an outbreak situation the local Health Protection Team can override exemptions from case and contact isolation as per the Scottish Government guidance on Management of Public Health Incidents. This policy does not signal any change to IPC guidance issued by ARHA. [National Infection Prevention and Control Manual: Home \(scot.nhs.uk\)](#)

6. When and how is this policy to be applied?

- a) This policy will be applied when staff members are confirmed as having Covid-19 (index cases) or when they are contacts of Covid-19 positive cases. Any amendments to this policy apply from the date it is updated (as shown in the header).
- b) Health and Social Care employers (including NHS, primary care and independent contractors and social care providers) no longer need to demonstrate that they are in an 'in extremis' position before asking staff to return to work.
- c) Responsibility for asking staff to return to work and ensuring that the guidance is implemented in full lies with the individual line manager. Staff are expected to return to work if they meet the conditions as outlined in this policy.
- d) The policy framework does not supersede or provide advice on matters that are governed by Part 1 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, and any legislation or guidance made under, or about, that Act, occupiers liability or other legal obligations on health and social providers to ensure that premises are generally safe for patients, residents, visitors and staff. It is important that health and social care providers seek independent advice on those matters, and if necessary, what the impact of COVID-19 may be, to ensure they are complying with any such legislation or obligations.