

# Reducing the spread of respiratory infections, including Coronavirus: HR FAQs for Employees (updated December 2022)

## Contents:

1. **Section 1:** General guidance relating to sickness, staying at home to avoid contact with other people, testing and absence queries
2. **Section 2:** Guidance for Temporary Workers & Day Rate Contractors

THE LATEST INFORMATION ON REDUCING THE SPREAD OF RESPIRATORY INFECTIONS, INCLUDING COVID-19 WILL ALWAYS BE ON NHS site  
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

This document provides advice to all employees. Section 2 provides specific advice to Temporary workers and Day Rate Contractors (DRCs). Temporary workers and DRC are advised to follow the guidance set out by the NHS, their Nation's government, and/ or their direct employer (where applicable). Please liaise with your line manager regarding any absence where possible.

1. General guidance relating to sickness, staying at home to avoid contact with other people, testing and absence queries	
<p><b>1.1 What action should be taken if an employee is displaying symptoms of respiratory infections, such as Coronavirus?</b></p>	<p>Free testing is no longer available for most people. Across all 4 nations, if you have tested positive for Coronavirus, government guidance suggests you should stay at home for at least <b>5 full days</b> (from the day after you took the test). You should only return to work when you no longer have a high temperature (if you've had one) or feel well enough to return to work <b>after</b> this point. Managers are no longer required to report positive test result cases of Coronavirus to AskHR.</p> <p>If you have symptoms of a respiratory infection, such as Coronavirus, and you have a high temperature or do not feel well enough to go to work, you should stay at home until you no longer have a high temperature (if you've had one) or until you no longer feel unwell. Please consider the welfare and safety of your colleagues when attending the workplace as there may be colleagues who are at higher risk of becoming seriously unwell from Coronavirus. There is no requirement to self-isolate for close contacts.</p> <p><b>Recording in PeopleCloud</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If you have symptoms and/or need to self-isolate, contact your line manager and they will <b>record your absence as "Sickness Absence" &amp; "Pandemic Influenza" in PeopleCloud.</b></li> <li>In situations where branches have to close temporarily due to the coronavirus, AND individuals are unable to work from home AND there is no other reason for absence as covered in this document, the absence should be recorded by line managers for each impacted employee in PeopleCloud as <b>"Other Paid Absence"</b> and then <b>"Pandemic Leave (Branch Closure)"</b>. This is paid leave and not classified as sickness.</li> </ul> <p>If the line manager is absent, the senior manager can record the required absence in PeopleCloud.</p> <p><b>Returning to a normal routine</b></p> <p>The NHS provides some useful resources for those who have had Coronavirus which can be found <a href="#">here</a>.</p>
<p><b>1.2 What support is there for employees whose immune system means they are at higher risk?</b></p>	<p>There are no longer active restrictions in place for people previously identified as clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV), but the government has introduced new guidance for immunosuppressed individuals (those with a weakened immune system due to a particular health condition or because they are on medication or treatment that is suppressing the immune system).</p> <p>If you have been advised by the NHS that you are in one of these groups, the government suggest you have all of the vaccines you are eligible to receive and continue to follow any condition-specific advice you may have been given by your specialist. We would also encourage you to speak to your manager about this so we can explore further avenues of support, such as a referral to OH, should you wish to, in order to understand any reasonable adjustments that could be considered to support you best in the workplace. In addition, you may wish to visit the <a href="#">Workplace Adjustment intranet site</a> and capture any needs and support using the <a href="#">"Adjustments Passport"</a> i with your manager.</p> <p>If managers have any general questions regarding this following reviewing the FAQs, please raise a new Service Request to AskHR (choosing self-service category: Coronavirus &gt; Ask a question).</p> <p>The government have produced the following guidance for people whose immune system means they are at <a href="#">higher risk</a>.</p>
<p><b>1.3 What is the current advice for those who are pregnant?</b></p>	<p>If you are pregnant, you could be at higher risk of severe illness if you catch Covid-19. Further advice from the NHS for pregnant colleagues can be found <a href="#">here</a>.</p> <p><b>The New and Expectant Mothers Risk Assessment</b> should be completed by colleague and manager to help assess that it is safe and appropriate to remain in the workplace, considering the Covid safety measures that have been implemented. Please save a PDF version of the assessment as soon as it is completed. Where the assessment identifies any health concerns or underlying conditions, a referral to <a href="#">Occupational Health</a> should be undertaken.</p> <p>Where a referral is undertaken, the manager should include with it the PDF version of the completed risk assessment, along with any relevant additional health information (such as a GP/midwife letter) the colleague wishes to share. The Occupational Health team will take account of the risk of exposure in the colleagues' role together with their health information and risk assessment in order to assess the situation and provide any recommendations for maintaining safe attendance in the workplace.</p> <p>The New and Expectant Mothers Risk Assessment should be refreshed <a href="#">every month</a> or earlier if the COVID risk/employee's health changes, which should also prompt consideration of a further OH review.</p> <p>If managers have any questions regarding this following reviewing the FAQs, please raise a new Service Request to AskHR (choosing self-service category: Coronavirus &gt; Ask a question).</p>
<p><b>1.4 What is Long Covid?</b></p>	<p>For some people, Coronavirus can cause symptoms that last weeks or months after the infection has gone. This is sometimes called post-COVID-19 syndrome or "Long COVID", which includes symptoms such as extreme tiredness (fatigue), shortness of breath, chest pain or tightness, problems with memory and concentration ("brain fog"), difficulty sleeping (insomnia), heart palpitations, dizziness, pins and needles, joint pain, depression and anxiety, tinnitus, earaches, feeling sick, diarrhoea, stomach aches, loss of appetite, a high temperature, cough, headaches, sore throat, changes to sense of smell or taste and rashes.</p> <p>You should contact a GP if you're worried about symptoms 4 weeks or more after having Coronavirus. Your doctor will talk to you about the care and support you might need. If the symptoms are having a big impact on your life, you may be referred to a specialist rehabilitation service or a service that specialises in the specific symptoms you have.</p> <p>We advise managers of those with "Long COVID" to do the following:</p> <p><b>Step 1: Remain in touch with the colleague when there is any absence from work and highlight the support available to them (e.g. EmployeeCare)</b>  <b>Step 2: Discuss with the colleague preparations or considerations which may be needed for any return.</b></p>

	<p><b>Step 3: Ensure you hold a return-to-work conversation when they do return</b>  <b>Step 4: Continue to review and provide support during the early days after their return to work</b>  <b>Step 5: Hold regular ongoing wellbeing conversations and review support and any adjustments regularly.</b></p> <p>We would encourage you to discuss an occupational health referral and seek the individual's consent, where a colleague is identifying symptoms likely to be Long Covid. Additionally, they may wish to access the support available through our EmployeeCare. It is likely that where absence occurs, a phased return to work is likely to be appropriate and advice on this can be sought from Occupational Health (with the individual's consent.)</p> <p>The NHS provides some useful resources for those who have suffered with Covid-19 which can be found <a href="#">here</a>.</p>
<b>1.5</b> <b>Can I take leave to have the vaccination/booster jab?</b>	<p>If you are contacted regarding a vaccination/booster appointment, we would encourage you to discuss with your line manager how you are able to work flexibly to support this appointment. Managers should equally be flexible where employees can't arrange to make medical appointments outside of their normal working hours and facilitate a reasonable amount of paid time to attend appointments without making up the time. We also recognise that wait times for vaccinations/boosters can be significant at the moment, even when pre-booked, and this will be outside of the employee's control. Talk to your manager about the time you'll need to take in line with the <a href="#">Time Off Policy</a>. If you are unwell following the vaccination and unable to work, sickness absence should be recorded in PeopleCloud with a reason code best reflecting the symptoms exhibited.</p>
<b>1.6</b> <b>Can I claim back LFTs on expenses?</b>	<p>Free testing is no longer available to most people. LFTs can be purchased from a number of different retailers should employees still wish to use these. Nationwide is not able to reimburse employees who choose to purchase LFTs.</p>
<b>1.7</b> <b>Can sickness absence due to Covid/Covid symptoms be considered as an absence prompt and managed in line with the Ill Health Capability Policy?</b>	<p>Any new episode of sickness absence due to Covid/Covid-symptoms from 1 July 2022 may be considered as an absence prompt/spell of sickness as in line with the Ill Health Capability Policy. Should formal action later be considered as a result of concerns relating to high levels of frequent short-term sickness absence or to poor performance as a result of ill health where Covid is a contributing factor, the HR Case Management Team will review this with the business to consider the full circumstances of the case.</p> <p>If we believe that there is a need to manage your absence or ill health under the Ill Health Capability Policy, it does not mean that we doubt your absence or ill health is genuine. We aim to take formal action only in cases where sickness absence or ill health is having an unacceptable impact on our business and where informal attempts to address this have not been effective or are inappropriate.</p>
<b>Section 2: Guidance for Temporary Workers &amp; Day Rate Contractors</b>	
<b>2.1</b> <b>What action should be taken if a temporary worker has tested positive for Coronavirus</b>	<p>We will continue to pay you for a single period of up to 5 working days, to cover any initial period of Coronavirus sickness absence. Once these days have been used, you may be eligible for statutory sick pay (SSP) for your period of absence.</p> <p>If you're unable to attend work due to Coronavirus, contact your manager who will inform the Workforce Supply Management (<a href="mailto:workforcesupplymanagement@nationwide.co.uk">workforcesupplymanagement@nationwide.co.uk</a>). Please keep them informed to avoid any misunderstandings resulting in you not being paid.</p> <p>The latest advice on how to access NHS 111 support is here: <a href="https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/">https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/</a></p>