



**St Helens and Knowsley NHS Trust  
Lead Employer COVID -19 FAQs  
Updated 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2022**

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**General**

**1. What should I do if I have COVID symptoms?**

The main symptoms of 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 full list of symptoms associated with COVID-19 can be found [here](#)

For most people, COVID-19 will be a mild illness. However, if any member of staff has any of the symptoms listed above, even if those symptoms are mild:

- they are advised to stay at home and carry out a LFD at home
- if at work, they should inform their employer or line manager and return home as soon as possible

There are several other symptoms linked with COVID-19. Any of these symptoms may also have another cause. If staff members are concerned about their symptoms, they should seek medical advice.

**The advice on when staff who test positive for COVID-19 (on LFD/LAMP) can end their self-isolation period has changed.**

Anyone who receives a positive LFD test result should stay at home and avoid contact with other people.

Health and social care staff with COVID-19 should not attend work until they have had 2 consecutive negative LFD test results (taken at least 24 hours apart), they feel well, and they do not have a high temperature. The first LFD test should only be taken from 5 days after the day their symptoms started (or the day their test was taken if they did not have symptoms) - this is described as Day 0. If both LFD tests results are negative, they may return to work immediately after the second negative LFD test result, provided they meet the criteria below:



- the staff member's symptoms have resolved, or their only symptoms are cough or anosmia which can last for several weeks
- if the staff member works with patients or residents who are especially vulnerable to COVID-19 (as determined by the organisation), a risk assessment should be undertaken, and consideration should be given to redeployment until period 10 days after their symptoms started (or the day their test was taken if they did not have symptoms)
- the staff member must continue to comply with all relevant infection control precautions and personal protective equipment (PPE) must be worn properly throughout the day
- Staff can resume twice weekly asymptomatic LFD screening on returning to work.

If the LFD test is positive on day 10 the staff member can return to work on day 11 if they meet of the following criteria:

1. The staff member is not themselves severely immunocompromised. Severely immunocompromised staff must have a single negative LFD before they can return to work. Managers can undertake a risk assessment of staff who test positive between 10 and 11 days, with a view to them returning to work depending on the work environment.

Any staff member admitted to hospital with COVID-19 symptoms will be subject to the guidance for isolation for patients within [Infection prevention and control in adult social care: COVID-19 supplement - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

There is additional [guidance on reducing the spread of COVID-19](#). Household contacts of the staff member should also follow this guidance.

Please liaise with your Host Organisation to ensure that the above guidance is in line with the isolation guidance set by them. In the event that the guidance is different, please follow the guidance issued by your Host Organisation.

## 2. What is the single source of advice to follow?

[This guidance](#) provided by Public Health England is provided by clinical experts and should be followed by those working in a health or social care setting.

Please refer to the following links for further information

- [GOV.UK: information on coronavirus and the situation in the UK](#)
- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

You will also find regular updates from HEE in relation to your training [by clicking here](#)

## 3. I am feeling unsettled and anxious, where can I go for advice?

To support our colleagues during this time, all staff have access to 24/7 online or telephone confidential counselling from the [Employee Assistance Programme](#) delivered by **Vita Health Group**. You can call anytime on 0300 131 2067 or [visit the website](#) and use access code STHKWELL.

**COVID – A free wellbeing support helpline:**



Call **0300 131 7000** – available from 7am-11pm seven days a week. This helpline provides confidential listening from trained professionals and specialist advice including coaching, bereavement care, mental health and financial help. There is also a 24/7 text alternative available – simply text **FRONTLINE** to **8525**

Family communication to support staff during COVID-19 including guidance for key workers on how to have difficult conversations with your children about your role as a key worker is available to you. For more information, [please click here](#).

Additionally, NHS Employers have information for staff wellbeing available [here](#).

#### **4. Should I be wearing a mask at work?**

The fight against Covid-19 continues and your well-being and safety remains paramount. Many of you will have recently rotated to a new host organisation or recently commenced employment and have commenced in your first specialty training placement. Please do take time to familiarise yourself with your host organisations local infection prevention and control guidance and protocols ensuring these are always followed.

This also includes adhering to PPE protocols. Should you have any questions in relation to PPE and infection control please contact your Host organisation in the first instance.

#### **5. How do I access the COVID-19 vaccine?**

The vaccination/s will need to be undertaken locally as part of the host's responsibility. Please speak to your Host Organisation in the first instance.

### **Quarantine**

#### **6. If I have been a close contact of COVID-19, do I have to self-isolate for 10 days?**

If a staff member is providing care to or is in close contact with an individual with COVID-19 infection and is wearing the correct PPE appropriately in accordance with the [UK infection prevention and control \(IPC\) guidance](#) and [How to work safely guidance](#), they will not be considered as a contact for the purposes of contact tracing and isolation. This applies regardless of the vaccination status of the staff member.

If there has been a breach of recommended PPE during the care episode, then the staff member would be considered a contact and should follow the advice below.

Staff members who are a contact of a confirmed COVID-19 case and not wearing the correct PPE as above should inform their line manager or employer immediately if they are required to work in the 10 days following their last contact with the case.

If the staff member develops symptoms of COVID-19 during this period, follow the guidance detailed in question 1 above.



The majority of health and social care staff who are contacts will be able to continue in their usual role. The following apply to staff who are contacts of a confirmed COVID-19 case;

- the staff member should not have any of the [COVID-19 symptoms](#)
- the staff member should take a LFD test at home and can continue to work as normal if the LFD test is negative.
- The staff member should continue to undertake twice weekly LFD tests
- the staff member should comply with all relevant infection control precautions and PPE should be worn properly throughout the day
- if the staff member works with patients or residents who are especially vulnerable to COVID-19 (as determined by the organisation), a risk assessment should be undertaken, and consideration given to redeployment during the 10 days following their last contact with the case

## **Pregnancy**

### **7. I am pregnant, what should I do?**

Please ensure that you and your Host Organisation complete the COVID-19 risk assessment as early as possible which can [be found here](#).

You should also complete a pregnancy Risk Assessment at each trimester during your pregnancy which can be found [here](#)

You can also find all of the latest guidance from Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists [by visiting their website](#).

Further guidance from the lead employer for all pregnant trainees can also be [accessed here](#) under "COVID Risk Assessment"

## **Pay, Sickness, Absence and Self-Isolation**

Effective from the 7th July 2022, the Department for Health, and Social Care's (DHSC) Covid-19 staff terms and condition guidance has been withdrawn. This means that any Covid-19 related absences will be managed in accordance with the 'Attendance Management Policy' and usual sickness provisions will apply.

### **8. I am unwell due to Covid-19 and have had an episode of sickness absence. Will my pay be affected?**

Any Covid-19 related sickness episodes on or following the 7th July 2022 will be paid in line with with your contractual sickness entitlement.

### **9. I have been unwell with Covid19 after 7<sup>th</sup> July 2022, will this count towards absence triggers?**



Any Covid-19 related sickness episodes on or following the 7th July 2022 will be considered towards any stage or level sickness monitoring periods if you are symptomatic and too unwell to attend work resulting in a period of sickness absence.

**10. I have tested positive for Covid-19 but I am not symptomatic and I am fit to work. How will this absence be recorded, and will this affect my pay?**

Where staff members are covid positive but not symptomatic and would be fit for work, the absence will be treated as 'authorised leave' and alternative work should be sourced for you. Please refer to Q...for further guidance regarding isolation requirements.

Please note, should you begin to feel unwell during this time and are unable to work in any capacity whilst you are testing positive for Covid-19, then your absence will be amended to Covid-19 related sickness and will be managed in line with the attendance management policy.

**11. I went of sick with Covid-19 prior to the 7th July 2022 and I have been in receipt of full pay, will this continue?**

Yes, any Staff members who had a Covid-19 sickness episode prior to the 7th July 2022 will continue being managed under the previous Covid-19 provisions. This means that these absences will not be counted towards stage or level monitoring periods and will still receive full pay.

However, from the 1st September 2022, staff who were in receipt of Covid-19 sick pay as a result of being unwell prior to the 7th July 2022 and continue to be unwell, will be transitioned back to their normal contractual sick pay entitlements.

From the 1st September 2022, all staff, regardless of their reason for sickness absence will be paid in line with their contractual sick pay entitlements.

Staff who are impacted by this change will be contacted by their Line Manager to discuss in the coming weeks.

**12. I had a period of sickness absence due to Covid-19 prior to the 7th July, will this period of sickness absence count towards a trigger?**

No. Any Covid-19 sickness absences prior to the 7th July 2022 will not count towards stage and level triggers.

**13. I have had a reaction to the Covid-19 vaccination and needed to take a period of sickness leave, will this count towards a trigger?**

Yes. Any sickness absence episodes after the 7th July 2022 relating to Covid-19 will count towards stage or level monitoring periods in line with the Attendance Management policy.

**14. I have been off sick with Covid-19 absence prior to 7th July 2022, when will this affect my pay?**

Staff who were in receipt of COVID-19 sick pay because of being unwell prior to 7 July 2022, and continue to be unwell, will be transitioned back to their normal contractual sick pay entitlements from the 1st September 2022 unless they have already returned to work.



If you are currently on a period of long term sickness absence due to Covid-19, a member of the Lead Employer team will be in touch with you to arrange a meeting with you prior to 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2022.

**15. I have planned surgery and have been told that I must isolate for 48 hours before this. How should this be recorded?**

If you are required to isolate prior to surgery, your Host Organisation should explore alternative working arrangements which will allow you to work from home for the period outlined. Where all options have been explored and this is not operationally feasible, the absence should be recorded as paid 'Authorised Leave'.

Please note, this is not applicable for surgery relating to non-clinical reasons (cosmetic surgery) and where this is a requirement, please refer to the 'Special Leave' policy.

**16. My child has tested positive for Covid-19 and I am unable to access childcare, how is this managed?**

If your child tests positive for Covid-19 and you have no childcare from the 7th July 2022, your absence will be recorded in line with the 'Special Leave' policy.