

Exemption from isolation – social care staff

Local policy (Cambridgeshire and Peterborough)

Circumstances where exemption from isolation may be permitted

In exceptional circumstances, fully vaccinated frontline NHS and social care staff, if identified as a close contact of a positive case, may be allowed to leave self-isolation in order to attend (including travelling to and from) work. This should only be considered in exceptional circumstances where there is a risk to health or safety, or the safety of providing continuing clinical or care services resulting from staff absence. The decision to allow staff to attend work should be made on a case by case basis, and only after a risk assessment by an individual(s) nominated by the organisation's management, and authorisation by the organisation's local Director of Infection Prevention and Control and/or the lead professional for health protection and/or Director of Public Health relevant to the organisation.

This exemption should not apply if the staff member has a household member who has tested positive and is in their isolation period.

Ongoing restrictions for staff who are exempted from isolation

In these very limited circumstances, staff will remain under a legal duty to self-isolate as a close contact. However, they will be considered as having a 'reasonable excuse' not to self-isolate for a period where it is necessary for them to undertake specific patient or client-facing tasks. They will continue to receive isolation reminders.

Additional required mitigations

In order to mitigate the increased risk associated with this exemption, the following mitigations must be implemented:

- The staff member should be fully vaccinated, defined as having received both doses of an MHRA approved vaccination, with 14 days having elapsed since the final dose at the time of last contact with the positive case.
- The staff member should undertake a PCR test and should isolate until they receive the result. They should only attend work if this result is negative.
- They should undertake daily LFD tests for at least 7 days (and to a maximum of 10 days/ completion of the identified isolation period) prior to starting work each day. Test results should be reported to NHS Test and Trace via the web portal and to their duty manager. Any staff member who has a positive LFD test during this period should not attend work and should arrange a PCR test as soon as possible.
- If the staff member develops any COVID symptoms during the 10 days from their last exposure to the case, they should stay at home and immediately arrange a PCR test.

- Staff working during this 10-day period should comply with all relevant infection control precautions and PPE should be properly worn throughout the day. Any breaches should be reported immediately to their line manager.
- The staff member should not work with clinically extremely vulnerable patients, as determined by the organisation.
- It is recommended that the staff member should not take breaks or eat meals with other staff.
- They can only leave their place of self-isolation to undertake work activities, including travel to and from work. They can travel to work by their normal route but should wear a face covering for their journey if within an enclosed space with other individuals.
- Outside of work activities, the individual must follow current advice for self-isolation. Employers should continue to manage the health and safety of their staff under the relevant legislation.