



**THE CABINET OFFICE
LONDON SW1A 2AS**

27 July 2021

Dear Colleagues,

You will be aware that as of August 16th, individuals with two vaccinations will not need to self-isolate if contacted by NHS Test and Trace. Before this date, in order to protect the delivery of essential services, arrangements are now in place to enable employers in the funeral sector, where there is an immediate threat of serious disruption to a critical public service, to apply for named critical workers to be considered to have a reasonable excuse to leave self-isolation to attend work. This will only apply to workers who are fully vaccinated (defined as someone who is 14 days post-second dose) and is solely for the purpose of going to work.

Firstly, this is not an exemption. The reasonable excuse provision in the current regulations is likely to apply to designated critical workers given the need to prevent significant harm to public welfare as a result of disruption to a critical service. This will only apply to a very narrow cohort of critical workers. The criteria are deliberately restrictive in order to maintain self-isolation as an effective tool against the spread of COVID-19.

This reasonable excuse provision may apply to critical staff working in crematoria, burial grounds and cemeteries, coffin manufacture, embalming and funeral directors. It does not apply to all staff working in these settings, only those without whom there is an immediate and significant disruption to essential services and where all other mitigations have been exhausted.

Conditions of application and how to apply

If an individual within your business is told to self-isolate if contacted by NHS Test and Trace, and you believe that without their attendance at work there will be a significant harm to public welfare as a result of disruption to your services, you may apply for them to be considered to have a reasonable excuse to leave self-isolation.

Employers of these critical workers should consider other steps that could be taken first should workers be required to self-isolate, including:

- Providing cover with other existing staff or temporary staff;
- Deferring non-urgent tasks; and
- Making reasonable alternative provision.



If you wish to apply for a staff member to be considered, you will need to fill out the accompanying form with the following details and email it to funeral.sector.requests@cabinetoffice.gov.uk and copy to ccs.control@cabinetoffice.gov.uk:

- Sector, Company Name & Company Registration Number
- Name of isolating worker, their role and tasks they will be leaving self isolation to do, location of their workplace
- Date the employee was informed they need to self isolate by NHS Test & Trace, date of isolation beginning & date of isolating ending
- Assessment of impact of worker self isolating
- Mitigations already taken in the workplace to mitigate impact of worker being off
- If approved, confirmation that the employer will facilitate worker(s) to follow all conditions of return
- Name & job title of person who populated the form
- Email address decision to be returned to

Please note that there are strict thresholds that need to be met for approval. We will endeavour to process applications as quickly as possible but speed will critically depend on the number of applications received and we therefore seek your help to only submit requests for cases that clearly meet the criteria and once all other options have been exhausted.

Successful applications

Where it is agreed that the threshold is met, we will write to let you know at the email address provided on the form. The following conditions will apply:

- The individual would have to self-isolate until a negative PCR test result. It may be reasonable if strictly necessary to go to work before receiving the results of the PCR test, but only if they have taken a Lateral Flow Device (LFD) test just before doing so and received a negative result.
- The individual would take daily LFD tests, report the results daily to the line manager and self-isolate immediately if they test positive.
- The individual would have to self-isolate if they show any Covid-19 symptoms, no matter how mild and get a new PCR test. They would then need to self-isolate and could only go to work if the new PCR test was negative.
- The individual would only leave self-isolation to attend - and travel to and from – work for specific, named purposes.
- The individual could, if strictly necessary, travel on public transport or with others to and from work but would have to wear a face covering at all times.
- Social distancing should be optimised and, wherever possible, maintained at all times in the workplace. Face coverings should be worn at all times.
- Individuals would be advised to avoid breaks/meals with other staff and other social contact in enclosed spaces with other staff.
- Measures need to be taken to ensure affected workplaces are Covid secure.



It will be the responsibility of employers to ensure, where applicable, that these controls have been met.

Unsuccessful applications

If it has not been agreed that the threshold is met, then the individual will have to self-isolate for the full isolation period and therefore cannot attend work. Alternative mitigation measures should be put in place in the workplace.

We remain immensely grateful for all the work that you are carrying out to provide these critical services in a time of great pressure. We will look to review the operation of these arrangements with you next week.

PETER TALLANTIRE