



26 July 2021

Dear colleagues,

COVID-19 continues to present an unprecedented challenge for social care. Our priority is for everyone who needs it to get the care they need throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

From 19 July 2021, health and social care staff who have been notified as **a close contact of a case of COVID-19 only** (i.e. not tested positive for COVID) may be able to continue working in their role, but I want to highlight the very important points set out below. Further information can also be found in the newly published PHE [guidance](#).

The aim of this policy is to support the sector to manage staff shortages in exceptional circumstances. These guidelines mean employers may be able to allow staff to return to work, not to 'compel' staff to return to work, on the basis that in certain circumstances, those workers may have a reasonable excuse not to comply with a self-isolation duty. This approach should only be introduced if there is a likelihood that staff absence creates a significant risk to the health or safety of service users and their specific activities are critical to the ongoing provision of care.

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

- The staff member must be fully vaccinated, defined as having received both doses of an MHRA approved vaccination, with 14 days having elapsed since the final dose.
- The staff member should undertake a PCR test and self-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 or until completion of the identified self-isolation period, whichever is longer, 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 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.
- The staff member should not work with clinically extremely vulnerable patients, as determined by the organisation.

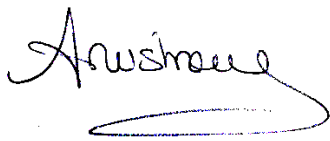
**This policy does not apply to staff members who have tested COVID positive.** If a staff member has tested COVID positive, they must self-isolate for 10 days where notified by NHS Test & Trace, or 14 days if they have been admitted to hospital, in line with the [stay at](#)

[home guidance](#). This applies even if the staff member is fully vaccinated. Vaccination reduces, but does not eliminate, the risk of acquiring and transmitting infection.

The above applies to frontline care workers in all adult social care settings, including care homes, domiciliary workers and care settings for working age adults. The measure also includes frontline health staff and those working for independent healthcare providers, palliative and end of life care services, and hospices.

I hope this clarifies our position and I thank all providers again for your ongoing support in the response to COVID-19 pandemic.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Armstrong', with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Claire Armstrong, Director, Adult Social Care Delivery  
Department of Health & Social Care