

Penderels Trust: Coronavirus COVID-19

Frequently Asked Questions for Personal Assistants

We have been living with the Covid-19 pandemic for a long time now and the situation continues to change with new variants being identified and better vaccination protection. However, we recognise that there is still a lot of uncertainty around the situation, particularly if you are employed as a personal assistant providing care and support for an individual employer.

We have put together this information to help answer some of the most common questions we are currently receiving.

This is based on the information as of the date at the bottom of this page and we regularly update this document to make sure it is as up-to-date as possible. For up-to-date Government information for employees, please visit:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/covid-19-guidance-for-employees>

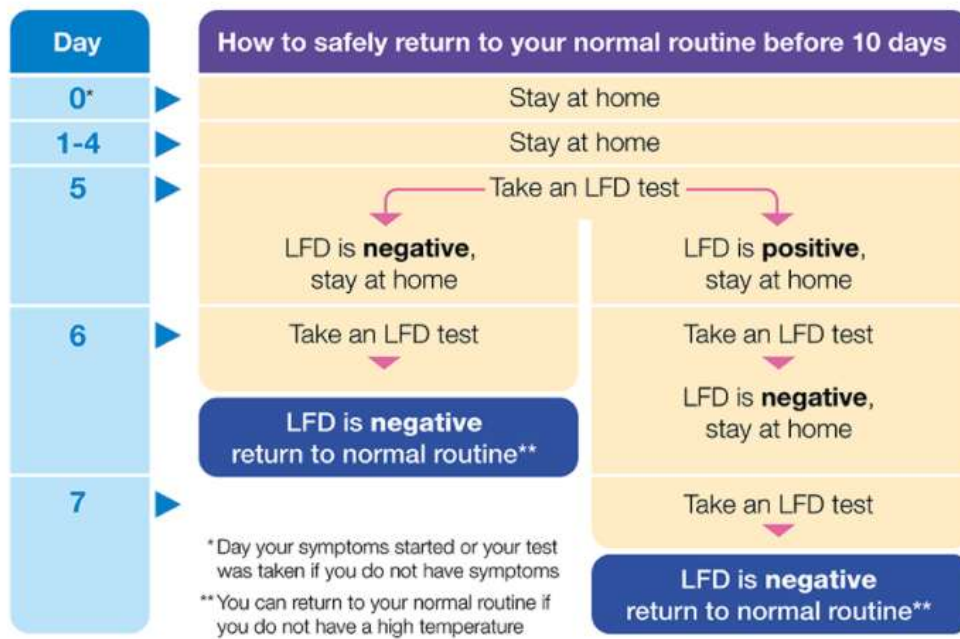
End of Self-Isolation Periods

As of Thursday 24th February 2022, members of the general public are no longer legally required to self-isolate if they test positive for Covid-19. However, the official public health advice remains that anyone who tests positive on a Lateral Flow Device (LFD) test should stay at home and avoid contact with others. As a worker in social care, government guidance is that you should not go to work until you have had two consecutive negative Lateral Flow Device (LFD) tests, taken at least 24 hours apart and only from 5 days after symptoms started.

PCR tests are no longer available free of charge in England.

Please see the flow chart below for easy-to-follow guidance on how to safely return to your normal routine after testing positive.

How to safely return to your normal routine before 10 days



- Countries you are allowed to visit and the conditions of visiting e.g. whether you have to go into quarantine on your return is changing frequently. For more information, please visit <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-travel-corridors#stay-up-to-date>

The following are the most common questions we are receiving from people who work for an individual employer who receives a direct payment for their care and support.

Q: Now restrictions have been lifted, do I still need to wear Protective Personal Equipment (PPE)?

The removal of restrictions on 19th July 2021 means that it is not now a legal requirement for PAs to wear PPE. However, Government guidance reminds employers that they still have a duty to protect workers against risks in the workplace. This means it may still be appropriate to continue with health and safety measures such as continuing lateral flow tests and wearing PPE including masks.

Although there are now no specific rules for people who are clinically vulnerable, if you or your employer are at higher risk of becoming seriously ill if you catch Covid-19, you may wish to think about any additional precautions you might wish to continue to take. More guidance on this can be found in this link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>

Q: I've heard that PPE will be provided free to people who work in social care until March 2023. How do I or my employer get hold of stocks?

A new PPE portal has been set up by Department of Health and Social Care to allow social care workers including PAs to access free PPE. If you (or your employer) are already registered with your Local Authority or Local Resilience Forum to receive PPE, they will contact you and get you registered on the new portal.

If you are not already registered, please find your local authority via this link: [Personal protective equipment \(PPE\): local contacts for providers - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/local-authorities-and-local-resilience-forums/about-us/personal-protective-equipment-ppe-local-contacts-for-providers) and follow the steps to get registered.

Some local authorities are continuing with their local arrangements as they have lots of stock of PPE. You can carry on receiving it in this way and don't need to do anything else until advised otherwise.

The PPE portal has a customer services department that can be contacted by telephone if preferred. Telephone numbers are included on the link above for each area.

Q: My employer doesn't want me come to work until I've had the Covid-19 vaccine. When will that be?

All adults and children aged 5 and over are eligible to have the vaccination. You should book via this link: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/book-coronavirus-vaccination/>

You should let your employer know you've booked your vaccination.

Q: I've read that workers in care homes must have the vaccination to be able to work. Does that apply to PAs as well?

From 14th March 2022, the need for any care worker to have the vaccination has been removed, this includes those who work in CQC-registered care homes. The rule for compulsory vaccinations never applied to PAs.

Q: Am I eligible for the Autumn 2022 Covid-19 booster jab?

Yes. Everyone who works as a frontline social care worker including PAs are eligible to have the booster jab. You should take your eligibility (key worker) letter with you as evidence of your job. A copy of the key worker letter can be found on the home page of our website (www.penderelstrust.org.uk).

Booster jabs can be booked online via:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/book-coronavirus-vaccination/book-or-manage-a-booster-dose-of-the-coronavirus-covid-19-vaccine/>

Q: I have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive with Covid-19, do I need to self-isolate?

From Thursday 24th February 2022, anyone who tests positive is not legally obliged to self-isolate. However, the public health advice is still that anyone who is positive should stay at home and avoid unnecessary contact with others. As a worker in social care, you should not go to work until you have taken two consecutive negative Lateral Flow Device (LFD) tests at least 24 hours apart and no sooner than 5 days after symptoms started.

Q: I need to self-isolate, will I get paid Statutory Sick Pay (SSP)?

Even though it is not a legal requirement to self-isolate, as a social care worker you should not go to work and it is still public health advice to stay at home so you may still get paid SSP, if you are eligible (earn over £120/week). You must be off work for four days or more in a row to be paid SSP.

Q: I am self-isolating. Do I need to provide my employer with a fit note from the doctor or NHS 111?

If you are self-isolating, you will not be able to go to your doctor and are being asked not to call NHS111 unless you really need to. You do not need to provide evidence for your employer to claim SSP for you but you can get an isolation note from NHS online by following the link here <https://111.nhs.uk/isolation-note/>. If you are self-isolating and then become sick, you should let your employer know (by telephone not in person).

Q: I'm self-isolating but I don't earn enough to be eligible for SSP, what do I do?

If you are affected by Covid-19, you can apply for Universal Credit and can receive an advance without physically attending a job centre. Please visit <https://www.understandinguniversalcredit.gov.uk/coronavirus/> for more information.

Q: Should I still be doing regular lateral flow tests (LFT)?

Not anymore. As of Wednesday 24th August 2022, the Government has said adult social care workers, including PAs, no longer need to take regular tests as long as they feel well. If you have symptoms of Covid-19, you should take a test and follow the advice as before.

Q: My employer is self-isolating and has told me not to come to work. Will I still get paid?

Yes, you should still be paid.

It would be a good idea to talk through the options with your employer (over the phone not in person).

Are you able to do other tasks for them such as getting essential shopping, doing the gardening or walking the dog?

They can ask you take annual leave but you don't have to agree to this.

Q: I've got a cold but I don't think it's Covid-19 and want to keep working. My employer wants to send me home. Do I have to go home?

You are not legally obliged to isolate as of 24th February 2022 but as a social care worker you should not go to work and public health advice is that you should stay at home for 7 days. You should take a lateral flow test. If it is negative, you can return to work provided you feel well enough and your employer is happy for you to do so. If it is positive, you should not go to work. You can return to work after you have taken two negative lateral flow tests, the first one should be no sooner than 5 days after your symptoms started or you had a positive test, and the second test should be at least 24 hours later. You don't have to legally self-isolate in general, but it is recommended that you stay at home.

Q: I want to know why having the vaccine is important. Do you have any information?

If you want to know more about why having the Covid-19 vaccine is important, this short video produced on behalf of Department of Health and Social Care explains it.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e6UHLcmC1vo&feature=youtu.be>

This video is primarily aimed at staff working in a care home but the explanation is relevant to those working in the community too.

Q: I don't want the vaccine. Can I be made to have it?

The short answer is no. The UK government cannot make anyone have a vaccination against their will. It is against their human rights.

Q: Can my employer end my employment if I refuse to have the vaccine?

This is a very difficult situation as there are many factors to consider. We would advise your employer to speak to their employer's liability insurance provider before making any decisions on your employment.

Please note that Statutory Maternity Pay, Statutory Paternity Pay, Statutory Shared Parental Pay and Statutory Adoption Pay are not affected.

For general employment advice about coronavirus, please visit www.acas.org.uk/coronavirus

Please visit our website www.penderelstrust.org.uk and go to our Coronavirus section on the home page for more useful information.

