

## Quarantine on returning to or entering the UK from abroad

### Guidance on how to manage employees during 14-day quarantine period for use by Local Authorities / other public sector bodies

#### 1. Introduction

- 1.1. Any policies implemented from this guidance should be discussed and where possible agreed with Trades Unions. These are temporary measures to meet nationally imposed restrictions which may alter in line with further national measures. They do not form a precedent for the future.
- 1.2. This guidance note has been developed in line with the 5 June [LGA Joint Circular Covid 19: Quarantine on Returning to or Entering the UK](#).

#### 2. Current Rules and Measures

- 2.1. As at 8 June 2020 the Foreign Office advice remains unchanged – **people should not travel abroad other than for essential purposes**. Employees should be reminded of this government advice.
- 2.2. From 8 June 2020 any person entering or returning to the UK from abroad is required to provide contact details and remain at the contact address provided for a period of 14 days from the date of entering the UK.
- 2.3. Fines will be imposed for persons refusing to provide contact details or refusing to self-isolate.
- 2.4. Persons returning from Ireland, Isle of Man or the Channel Islands (Common Travel Area) will not be required to provide details or self-isolate providing they have remained in the CTA in the previous 14 days before the date of entry into the UK.
- 2.5. A list of travellers exempt from these border rules can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-travellers-exempt-from-uk-border-rules/coronavirus-covid-19-travellers-exempt-from-uk-border-rules>
- 2.6. Since 3 July 2020, the Government produced a list of countries which are subject to an “air corridor”, meaning that there is no requirement for people to quarantine on their return to the UK. This list of countries may alter frequently, and at short notice subject to the prevalence of coronavirus in each country, a rise in the rate of infection or local outbreaks. The list of countries is updated regularly and can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-travel-corridors>.

#### 3. Green Book Terms and Conditions



3.1 Paragraph 10.9 of the Green Book reads:

*“An employee who is prevented from attending work because of contact with infectious disease shall be entitled to receive normal pay. The period of absence on this account shall not be reckoned against the employee’s entitlements under this scheme”*

This provision applies to employees who are required to self-isolate due to contact or potential contact with an infected person. This provision also applied to employees who found themselves unavoidably quarantined following a return from foreign travel at the beginning of the coronavirus crisis and prior to the government advice to avoid all but essential travel.

3.2 This provision will not apply to employees travelling abroad with full knowledge of the current rules on quarantine when re-entering the UK. This fact must be communicated to the workforce.

3.3 The provision will apply however in circumstances where an employee has travelled to a country subject to an air corridor and the status of the air corridor is amended or removed during the stay, requiring a quarantine period which was not known about at the point the outward journey commenced. If the position changes prior to outward travel and the employee still travels paragraph 10.9 will not apply.

#### 4. Approving Annual Leave

4.1 Approval of annual leave is still at the employer’s discretion and should follow the normal principles of ensuring service delivery, however this will involve new considerations and employees will need to provide information they have not previously had to disclose.

4.2 Managers should ensure that when employees submit an annual leave request, they disclose whether or not they are travelling abroad. This information is required to ensure that employees do not return to work following travel abroad without the employer’s knowledge therefore putting the health safety and welfare of colleagues at risk.

4.3 When approving leave consideration should be given as to whether the employee is required to adhere to any period of quarantine in the country they are travelling to as well as the UK rules on returning.

4.4 Special consideration should be given to the reason for travel and whether there are any extenuating circumstances. The following situations may require additional flexibility in arrangements:

- Travel abroad for a family funeral or the serious illness of a close family member (local policy definitions of a close family member apply)
- Holiday booked prior to the quarantine being envisaged where cancellation would result in financial loss for the employee
- Pre-booked holidays where the tour company have rescheduled for a fixed date where cancellation by the employee will result in a financial loss

4.5 When approving annual leave requests including foreign travel employers should be mindful of the impact of the coronavirus crisis on individuals. The lockdown restrictions and work demands have placed additional mental health pressures on employees and the need for annual leave and rest periods is more important.

4.6 In extreme circumstances it may not be possible to approve the leave request at the time because of the additional pressure the additional quarantine period places on the service. Employees should be encouraged to speak with their manager at the earliest opportunity



and prior to booking travel abroad in order that a mutually convenient time and quarantine options can be agreed.

## **5. Options for Employers during a Quarantine Period**

5.1 It is important that employees are aware of the employer's policy on how the quarantine period will be treated prior to seeking approval for their annual leave. Individual arrangements must be agreed with the employee prior to sign off of annual leave requests.

5.2 The employer should consider all options for the employee to work from home during the 14-day quarantine period. This will include considering redeployment for 14 days for employees who cannot undertake their normal role at home.

5.3 WME recommend that LAs in the region take all reasonable steps to find work of some kind (taking account of the individuals skills and experience, and their wishes) for all employees during a quarantine period to reduce any disparity between different groups of workers. This work can be planned for prior to the leave commencing. Whilst any work available may not be similar to the normal contracted duties this approach reduces disparity between different section of the workforce, reduces the possibility of abuse of the sickness absence scheme and associated actions which may follow, and allows for some meaningful work to be carried out whilst employees are being paid. Only where all options for homeworking have been exhausted should other measures be implemented.

5.4 WME recommend that LAs within the region follow the NJC Circular guidance and offer a combination of any or all of the following options to ensure minimal financial impact on the employee:

- Additional annual leave from the employee's entitlement
- Flexi leave/TOIL
- Unpaid leave
- Special leave
- Option to make up some or all of the 14 days over a period of time to avoid a drop in pay
- Spreading the deductions for any unpaid leave over a longer period to minimise the financial impact in any one month (similar to an annual leave purchase scheme)

5.5 Employers must apply the options consistently and fairly and take account of any individual contractual arrangements which may put them at a disadvantage i.e. term time only contracts or other particular groups who may suffer a detriment should blanket rules be imposed.

5.6 Any employee required to travel for the purposes of work who is then subject to a quarantine period must receive normal pay.

## **6. Sickness during the Quarantine Period**

6.1 Should an employee become sick during the quarantine period, for any reason, they should report the absence in the normal way and sick pay will be applied. The employee will be paid sick pay only for the days on which they would be unable to work due to sickness absence.

6.2 Employees falling sick at any time during the quarantine period may be required to undergo a test for coronavirus. The employer may require this under Part 3 paragraph 4.2 of the Green Book and a refusal to undergo a test may be considered a failure to follow a reasonable instruction.

- 6.3 Employees must follow all sickness absence reporting procedures. The frequency of contact between the employee and manager will depend on the reason for absence, but should ensure that the point at which the employee would be fit to work is identified, and where applicable sick pay arrangements should cease during the 14 day quarantine period if the employee is fit to work but cannot resume work due to ongoing quarantine.

## **7. Dealing with Breaches or Inappropriate Conduct connected with Quarantine Rules**

- 7.1 Employees should be reminded that failure to provide information to enable the employer to manage annual leave requests, both from a service and health and safety perspective, will result in the matter being considered a failure to follow a reasonable instruction. This may lead to disciplinary action and/or a refusal of the annual leave request
- 7.2 Employees who knowingly provide false information to the employer, breach the government rules or who return to work during a period they should be in quarantine may be subject to disciplinary action and the matter may be considered as gross misconduct.
- 7.3 Abuse of the sick pay arrangements may be considered gross misconduct and subject to disciplinary action.

