

## Revised quarantine guidance (August 2021)

### Introduction

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and its arms-length bodies have produced a suite of guidance for employers on workforce issues arising from the COVID-19 pandemic which has been [published and updated centrally](#).

Due to the exceptional circumstances, usual processes of co-production and consultation have not been possible, although the NHS Staff Council Executive trade unions had input in reviewing and updating the guidance.

This document is an update to the initial DHSC guidance on quarantining and has been produced by a joint working group of the NHS Staff Council Executive.

### Context

The [Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office \(FCDO\)](#) continues to provide advice in relation to overseas travel during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The requirements for re-entering England, including the conditions for quarantine, can be found on this [GOV.UK web page](#). Information on travel exemptions can also be found on the [GOV.UK website](#).

It is important to note that government information and requirements change frequently. Therefore, the above information should be reviewed regularly to ensure decisions are based on the most up to date position.

### Options

#### Annual leave requests

All requests for annual leave need to be submitted to the manager for approval, in line with local leave policies, who will take a number of considerations into account, such as:

- the impact of the request on maintaining service delivery
- the need for employees who may have worked hard during the crisis to have time for rest and recuperation.

As a result of the quarantine requirements, it remains imperative that when an employee submits a request for leave that involves travelling abroad, they are reminded of [the government's advice](#).

Where staff travel abroad, they will be doing so fully aware of the requirements to re-enter England and the advice from the [FCDO](#). Where applicable, they should be

advised of the requirement to quarantine for 10 days on their return and, travel should not be booked before an employee has agreed the duration of the leave required with their employer to ensure that they can comply the quarantine measures on their return.

Staff should also be reminded that government and FCDO advice can change with little or no notice, [as stated on Gov.uk](#), which may require an unanticipated 10-day quarantine period on returning to England. Staff who find themselves in this position should contact their employer as soon as practicable to inform them they will need to quarantine for 10 days. Employers should consider the leave and pay options for quarantine periods as set out below.

Some countries may also require travellers to quarantine on arrival, which would impact on the expected length of stay and should be taken into account by the employee when booking leave.

When considering a request for leave, employers should ensure their policy is clear, applied fairly and is reasonable in relation to individual circumstances. Any blanket approach to leave requests will need to be considered in the context of an equality impact assessment, taking into consideration the impact of a local policy on BAME, as well as overseas staff. Employers are encouraged to work in partnership with local trade unions to ensure that local policies are applied fairly and consistently.

### **Leave and pay options for quarantine periods**

Where a quarantine period is required, it could be covered by using one or a combination of the following options:

- the use of appropriate paid or unpaid leave to cover the quarantine period for example:
  - local special leave (paid/unpaid)
  - take additional paid annual leave (from their usual leave allowance)
  - take unpaid annual leave.
- working from home or place of quarantine where possible
- where unable to work from home or place of quarantine whether temporary reassignment of appropriate work would be possible so that they could do so
- making up some or all of the 10 days' leave over a period of time through working additional hours/shifts over their normal contracted hours
- taking previously accrued time off in lieu (TOIL).

There is no one-size-fits-all answer to this issue. Employers are encouraged to give sympathetic consideration to employees who are required to quarantine for unavoidable or extenuating circumstances, but who cannot work from home/place of quarantine. This may include:

- an employee who has extenuating circumstances such as a family funeral abroad
- an employee who has had a long period of separation from their family abroad due to the pandemic

- pre-booked holidays that cannot be cancelled without incurring financial cost (for example, insurers will not reimburse cost) that were arranged before quarantine could have been envisaged
- pre-booked holidays that the tour operator has not cancelled but has instead rescheduled on fixed dates which, if cancelled by the customer, would be at financial cost to them.
- sudden changes to government regulations on quarantine.

Employers should consider using a combination of some or all of the different types of leave options shown above.

Please note, anyone who has had to travel for the purpose of their job, and has to quarantine on their return, would be entitled to continue to receive normal full pay.

**NHS Staff Council Executive**

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