

COVID-19 Briefing: UK Government updates 'Plan B' strategy – 13 December 2021

Summary

With the Covid-19 Omicron variant spreading much more easily than previous variants, the UK Government has announced additional Covid-19 testing and vaccination strategies to support 'Plan B'.

This document summarises the key changes that members should be aware of and the necessary actions that members should take. This advice applies to England.

CONSTRUCTION REMAINS OPEN AND SITE OPERATING PROCEDURES REMAIN ADVISORY

New Lateral flow Device testing and isolation rules

From Tuesday 14 December 2021, people who are fully vaccinated and identified as a contact of someone with COVID-19 – whether Omicron or not – should take an NHS rapid lateral flow test every day for 7 days to help slow the spread of COVID-19.

- Those who test positive or develop symptoms will need to self-isolate
- Unvaccinated adults must continue to self-isolate for 10 days if they are a contact of someone with COVID-19 and are not eligible for this new daily testing policy
- Free lateral flow test kits can be ordered through NHS [Test and Trace](#), or picked up at local pharmacies,

Anyone whose rapid test comes back positive or who develops COVID-19 symptoms should self-isolate and take a confirmatory PCR test to verify the result. If the PCR result comes back positive, contacts must self-isolate for 10 days from the day they took the positive rapid test or developed symptoms. They do not need to continue taking rapid tests during that 10-day isolation period.

If the PCR result comes back negative, contacts can leave self-isolation but should continue to take rapid tests for the remainder of the 7 days.

Daily rapid testing applies to all contacts who are:

- Fully vaccinated adults – people who have had 2 jabs
- All children aged 5 to 18 years and 6 months, regardless of their vaccination status (under 5's are exempted from self-isolation and do not need to take part in daily rapid testing)
- People who can prove they are unable to be vaccinated for clinical reasons
- People taking part, or have taken part, in an approved clinical trial for a COVID-19 vaccine

Date of implementation: 14 December 2021.

Get your vaccine or booster now

All adults in England will be offered a booster jab by the end of the year. Devolved administrations in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland have also agreed to accelerate vaccinations.

- Bookings through the [National Booking System](#) will be prioritised at most sites, unless it is a pop up or walk-in only site.
- The National Booking System will now be stood up for over 18s and will take a short time to operationalize
- From 13 December 2021 adults over 30 will be able to book online, and from 15 December 2021 all over 18s will
- Starting 13 December 2021, some centres will allow walk in appointments for over-18s

New vaccination sites will be set up across the country, including mobile pop-up sites. Opening times for vaccination sites will be increasing to 7 days a week, with more appointments early in the morning, in the evening and at weekends.

Date of implementation: 13 December 2021.

Working From Home Advice

The Government is asking all those who can work from home to now do so. The Government is not prescribing who should and should not work from home, instead allowing employers to decide in consultation with staff, dependent on their work and personal situation. The advice has been issued for office-based workers not site staff.

Members will need to assess which staff can practically work from home and advise accordingly, the decision as to whether to ask staff to work from home or continue to attend their place of work should depend upon the work type and ability to fulfil their role, the individual's physical and mental health and wellbeing as well as any contractual terms. Where staff are required to attend in person, members may wish to re-introduce or advise staff to undertake daily lateral flow testing to help mitigate transmission.

Date of implementation: 13 December 2021.

Face Coverings

Face coverings will become mandatory in almost all indoor public settings and shops (including builders merchants, show homes), although this does not extend to construction sites and offices. Members should familiarise themselves with the list of locations where these are required – [available here](#). Face coverings are not mandatory in hospitality settings where food and drink is consumed onsite, which also extends to site canteens. The NFB is strongly recommending that members review the Construction Leadership Council's face covering advice, which explains the appropriate use of face coverings in relation to construction sites and includes the industry's recommendations to non-mandatory use, which the NFB helped to formulate – [available here](#).

Date of implementation: 10 December 2021.

COVID Omicron contact rules – from self-isolation to daily testing, a win for the NFB

The NFB is very pleased to report that the Government has indicated that it will in due course remove the requirement for those who come into contact with an Omicron-positive person to self-isolate for ten days and instead replace that condition with daily LfD testing instead. This is a significant announcement as the NFB had directly spoken to the Construction Minister on 29 November 2021 regarding the risks of loss of workforce due to self-isolation rules. This will mean that members will be at much less risk of having large numbers of COVID-negative staff unavailable for work. **The NFB will issue new guidance to members as soon as the new daily testing regime replaces this rule, however, in the meantime, it is still the law that if contacted by NHS Test and Trace and told to self-isolate for ten days, staff must do so.**

Boosters appear to improve protection against Omicron

Pharmaceutical companies Pfizer and BioNTech have released the results of a small study which indicates that an additional booster is likely to provide greater protection against Omicron than a double dose. Members may wish to encourage staff to take up the opportunity of a booster vaccination when called and ensure that their working hours and company policies allow employees the flexibility to attend their booster appointment. The BBC News report of the results of the study aforementioned is [available here](#).

COVID-Pass Introduction – though not for construction

'Plan B' contains provisions for the introduction of the NHS COVID-Pass as a condition of entry into a very select number of venues and events, none of which include construction. Specifically, this will apply to nightclubs, dancehalls and discotheques, other 'late night venues', indoor events with 500 or more unseated attendees, outdoor events with 4,000 or more unseated attendees and any events with 10,000 or more attendees indoor or outdoor, such as large sports and music events.

Subject to approval from Parliament, negative lateral flow tests will be needed to enter nightclubs and large events, except for those who are double vaccinated.

Members can find out more about the NHS COVID-Pass on the NHS website - [available here](#).

Date of implementation: 15 December 2021.

Additional Resources

- NFB advice on Omicron issued 29 November 2021 – [available here](#).
- CLC Face Covering advice issued 6 December 2021 – [available here](#).
- NFB HR Advice Line: 03450 578 160

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