



Contact Tracing and Self-Isolation

Frequently Asked Questions

- **Note:** Throughout this document we refer to 'settings' – this relates to educational and childcare settings, including early years settings, schools, children's social care, 16-19 academies and further education (FE) providers. NHS Test and Trace continue to deliver contact tracing of students and adults in education and childcare settings as they do in the rest of society.
- Individuals who record a positive PCR test result [may now take LFD tests on day 6 and day 7 of their self-isolation period](#) and those who receive two negative test results are no longer required to complete 10 full days of self-isolation. The first LFD test must be taken no earlier than day 6 of the self-isolation period and tests must be taken 24 hours apart. Everyone who leaves self-isolation on or after day 7 is strongly advised to limit close contact with other people in crowded or poorly ventilated spaces, work from home, and minimise contact with anyone who is at higher risk of severe illness if infected with COVID-19.
- All eligible staff in education and childcare settings, and all students and pupils aged 5 and above identified as a close contact are strongly advised to participate in [Daily Testing of Contacts of COVID-19 \(DTCC\)](#). Individuals are asked to take seven daily LFD tests if they are identified by Test and Trace as a close contact of a confirmed positive case. It is strongly advised that the daily LFD test is taken before leaving the house for the first time each day.

Why are individuals who test positive for COVID-19 no longer required to self-isolate for 10 days?

Analysis by UKHSA suggests that a 7-day isolation period alongside two negative lateral flow test results has nearly the same protective effect as a 10-day isolation period without LFD testing for people with COVID-19. Studies also demonstrate that LFD tests are just as sensitive at detecting the Omicron variant, as they are for Delta variant. The new approach reflects latest evidence on how long cases transmit the virus for, supports essential public services and supply chains over the winter, while still limiting the spread of the virus. It complements our new approach to the Daily Testing of Contacts of COVID-19, which relies on the public to take responsibility to test on a regular basis.

Why are under 5's eligible for day 6 and day 7 LFD testing but not eligible for Daily Covid Contact Testing?



Daily Testing of Contacts of COVID-19 requires individuals to take 7 daily LFD tests whilst asymptomatic. The latest public health advice from UKHSA suggests that there are limited public health benefits from any form of regular asymptomatic testing on children aged under 5.

LFD testing on day 6 and day 7 where an individual has tested positive is deemed reasonable for all ages, and therefore includes under-5s who have tested positive; this means they can leave self-isolation and return to their education or childcare setting if they have had negative results from two consecutive LFD tests (per the guidance for all positive cases). This will be at the discretion of a parent or guardian, but those who do not receive negative LFD results will need to complete a 10-day self-isolation period.

What if a parent doesn't want their child to undertake LFD testing on day 6 and day 7?

LFD testing on day 6 and day 7 for positive individuals remains advisory and can be completed on a voluntary basis. This will enable an individual who has tested positive for Covid to end self-isolation on or after day 7 of their self-isolation period, provided they have received two consecutive negative LFD test results taken 24 hours apart.

If a person testing positive or their parent or guardian does not wish to or cannot participate in voluntary day 6 and day 7 LFD testing, they must continue to self-isolate for the full 10 day self-isolation period.

What is the advice for healthcare workforces working in education settings (such as SEND settings)?

Health and Social Care workers should follow guidance for their sector on taking LFD tests on day 8, 9 and 10. The full guidance is available here: [COVID-19: management of staff and exposed patients or residents in health and social care settings - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-management-of-staff-and-exposed-patients-or-residents-in-health-and-social-care-settings) (www.gov.uk).

What is the advice for SEND settings?

Children and young people who usually attend a SEND education or childcare setting and who have tested positive for COVID-19 may end self-isolation and continue to attend the setting as normal after 7 days, following two negative LFD test results taken 24 hours apart on day 6 and 7. The first of these LFD tests should be taken no earlier than 6 days.

All individuals should continue to follow [national guidance](#) and are advised to limit contact with individuals who are at higher risk of severe illness if infected with COVID-19. Healthcare staff who work in or attend SEND settings may be following guidance for NHS and social care workers due to their wider work in other healthcare settings.

If you cannot test for any reason, you should remain in self-isolation until the end of the full 10-day period.



What if I test positive during the self-isolation period, for example on day 6?

If you are self-isolating because you have tested positive for COVID-19, you can leave self-isolation following two consecutive negative LFD test results on day 6 and day 7 taken at least 24 hours apart. Any positive test “resets” the count and you must isolate until you have two negative results separated by 24 hours to trigger early release from self isolation. If the test on day 6 is positive but two subsequent consecutive daily LFD tests taken at least 24 hours apart are negative, you can leave self-isolation on the day of the second negative test. For example, negative test results on day 7 and day 8 will enable you to leave self-isolation on day 8.

How can you ensure a positive case has received 2 negative LFD results before leaving isolation?

We are trusting the public to be responsible and follow this guidance, in the same way we do for the new guidance on Daily Testing of Contacts of COVID-19.

Why don't individuals identified as a close contact have to self-isolate?

As we learn to live with Covid-19, the government is keen to ensure that we minimise the disruption that self-isolation has on children and young people's education. The evidence is clear that being out of education causes significant harm to educational attainment, life chances, physical and mental health.

The introduction of Daily Testing of Contacts of COVID-19 helps to protect the public by identifying asymptomatic cases early and helping to stop chains of transmission whilst allowing individuals to continue attending their setting, which is reducing the detrimental impact of self-isolation on children and young people.

What does someone who is identified as a close contact of a positive Covid case have to do?

Eligible individuals identified by NHS Test and Trace or a public health official as a close contact of a positive case of COVID-19 are strongly advised to participate in Daily Testing of Contacts of COVID-19 and may continue attending their setting provided they do not display symptoms of COVID-19.

Individuals who are exempt from self-isolation and eligible for Daily Testing of Contacts of COVID-19 are defined as:

- Children and young people aged between 5 years and 18 years 6 months
- fully vaccinated adults
- those who are medically exempt from vaccination

Children aged under 5 years old and identified as close contacts are not advised to take part in Daily Testing of Contacts of COVID-19. If a child under 5 is identified as a close contact, they are not required to self-isolate and should not start daily testing. If they live in the same household as someone with COVID-19 they should limit their contact with anyone who is at higher risk of severe illness if infected with



COVID-19 and arrange to take a PCR test as soon as possible. They can continue to attend an education or childcare setting while waiting for the PCR result. If the test is positive, they should follow the guidance set out in [Stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-or-confirmed-coronavirus-covid-19-infection) If they are displaying symptoms of COVID-19 they should remain at home.

18-year-olds will be given the opportunity to get fully vaccinated before being treated as adults. But 6 months after their 18th birthday, they will be subject to the same rules as adults, therefore if they choose not to get vaccinated, they may need to self-isolate if identified as a close contact.

Individuals who are exempt from self-isolation and have tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 90 days who are identified as a close contact of someone with COVID-19 are also able take part in Daily Testing of Contacts of COVID-19. If the LFD test is positive, they should also take a confirmatory PCR even if it is within the 90 days.

Can I refuse a close contact admission into my education or childcare setting if they do not participate in Daily Testing of Covid Contacts?

Participation in Daily Testing of Contacts of COVID-19 for eligible individuals is on a voluntary basis and strongly encouraged.

Individuals identified by NHS Test and Trace or a local public health official as a close contact who choose not to or cannot participate in Daily Testing of Contacts of COVID-19 may continue to attend their setting provided they are exempt from self-isolation requirements and do not display any symptoms of COVID-19.

In exceptional cases, settings may take the decision to refuse a person admission if, in the setting's reasonable judgement, it is necessary to protect other pupils and staff from possible infection with COVID-19. The decision would need to be carefully considered in light of all the circumstances and current public health advice.

Individuals should not attend their setting if:

- they are symptomatic
- they have tested positive with a PCR or LFD test

Individuals may return if a positive LFD test result is followed by a subsequent confirmatory negative PCR taken within 2 days or;

they have recorded a positive PCR test result, have completed 6 full days of isolation and have received two negative LFD test results taken on day 6 and day 7 of their self-isolation period.

At what point and how might a setting be asked to support with contact tracing?



Settings will not be routinely contacted by NHS Test and Trace. Individual positive cases and/or their parents/carers/legal guardians will instead be contacted by NHS Test and Trace or a public health official and their close contacts will be traced and asked to follow relevant public health advice.

Contacts in an educational setting will be traced if the positive case specifically identified an individual as having close contact.

In exceptional circumstances, settings may be contacted by local health protection teams in response to a local outbreak, as currently happens in managing other infectious diseases.

The [contingency framework](#) includes thresholds for escalation which advise setting leaders on when to seek further public health advice and guidance in response to a number of cases within the setting. If these thresholds are reached and a risk assessment suggests that transmission may be occurring within the setting, local public health teams might advise further contact tracing as part of outbreak management.

How will a child know who a close contact is?

NHS Test and Trace will contact those who test positive – or their parent or legal guardian – to identify close contacts. They will ask a series of specific questions to help the individual understand what is meant by a close contact, making it easier for them to be identified. Being in a setting with an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19 will not necessarily mean a person is identified as a close contact. We expect there to be a small number of close contacts on average for each case.

How will a setting know if a child, pupil or member of staff has tested positive?

Children and pupils, (or their parent/carer/legal guardian) and staff members who record a positive LFD or PCR test should let their setting know.

Staff, children, or pupils (or the parent/carer/legal guardian) are also expected to report the test result via the [Online Reporting System](#) for all negative, void and positive LFD test results.

Should settings inform other parents/carers/legal guardian that a child has tested positive or may be a close contact?

In the event of a person testing positive for COVID-19, settings should consider whether other staff and students need to be informed of a positive case, taking account of factors such as known vulnerability. Settings are best placed to decide how they wish to communicate this information, but should not disclose any information that could result in an individual being identified.

If a setting chooses to communicate information about a positive case, individuals should only be asked to stay at home for Covid-related reasons if:

- they are symptomatic
- they have tested positive with a PCR or LFD test.



Individuals may return if a positive LFD test result is followed by a subsequent confirmatory negative PCR taken within 2 days or;

they have recorded a positive PCR test result, have completed 6 full days of isolation and have received two negative LFD test results taken on day 6 and day 7 of their self-isolation period.

What if settings are asked by parents/carers/legal guardians or NHS Test and Trace to provide details of close contacts?

Settings should not provide any staff, children or pupils' personal information that would breach General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) or data protection legislation.

In exceptional circumstances, settings may be contacted by local health protection teams in response to a local outbreak, as currently happens in managing other infectious diseases.

In this scenario settings can share proportionate and relevant information as requested by local health protection teams without requiring consent from those individuals. The sharing of information in these exceptional circumstance does not require consent as it is enabled by specific legislation, but to support this, the existing privacy notices should continue to be in place and be easily accessible.

If a child knows their contacts' names but not the details, does NHS Test and Trace disregard those contacts, or ask the setting for details?

As with the process for adults, NHS Test and Trace will work with the positive case or, depending on the age of the individual, their parent/carer/legal guardian, to identify those who have been in close contact. We expect this to be a small number of individuals for each case on average. Contact tracers are trained in supporting people to identify close contacts and also work with local authorities to help trace contacts where needed.

What if the setting doesn't agree with the child or pupil (and/or their parent/carer/legal guardian) about the individuals identified as a close contact?

NHS Test and Trace are experts in supporting people to identify their close contacts. NHS Test and Trace will work with the person who has tested positive (or their parent or guardian) to identify close contacts, based on a series of questions.

In exceptional cases, settings may take the decision to refuse a pupil if, in the setting's reasonable judgement, it is necessary to protect other pupils and staff from possible infection with COVID-19. The decision would need to be carefully considered in light of all the circumstances and current public health advice.

Individuals should not attend their setting if:

- they are symptomatic
- they have tested positive with a PCR or LFD test



Individuals may return if a positive LFD test result is followed by a subsequent confirmatory negative PCR within 2 days or;

they have recorded a positive PCR test result, have completed 6 full days of isolation and have received two negative LFD test results taken on day 6 and day 7 of their self isolation period.

What is the legal basis for settings sending pupils home to self-isolate in exceptional circumstances?

As with other diseases, the law allows a setting, in principle, to send particular pupils or groups of pupils home, or forbid them from attending on a temporary basis if, in the setting’s reasonable judgement, this is a necessary measure to protect other pupils and staff from serious infectious disease. This power does not depend on the specific regulations or guidance about COVID-19, though public health advice and the broader picture on COVID-19, including the impact of the pandemic on children’s education and wellbeing, will be important factors for the setting to take into account when making a decision.

Who needs to self- isolate while waiting for their PCR test result?

Whether someone needs to stay at home until they receive their PCR test result is as follows:

Reason for taking PCR test		Required to isolate while waiting for their result?
Confirmatory PCR test following positive at home LFD		Yes
Has Covid-19 symptoms		Yes
Identified as a close contact with no COVID-19 symptoms	Vaccinated adult or under 18 years and 6 months old	No
	Unvaccinated adult	Yes – and must continue to isolate even if negative for their isolation period

Those required to stay at home until they receive their test result because they have symptoms of COVID-19 should follow the [guidance for people with COVID-19 symptoms](#).

Should siblings of positive cases (or household contacts) isolate?

Self-isolation of close contacts is no longer required, meaning that children and pupils can attend their setting unless they have symptoms or a positive test result. We strongly encourage all eligible individuals to participate in Daily Testing of Contacts of COVID-19



A staff member in my setting has tested positive, what should I do?

Staff member testing positive: Staff members who record a positive PCR test will be contacted by NHS Test and Trace and instructed to self-isolate. Staff members should let their employer know if they test positive and are due to attend work during their self-isolation period.

Individuals who receive a positive confirmatory PCR test will be contacted by NHS Test and Trace who will work with the individual to identify and notify any known close contacts and provide relevant public health advice.

If a staff member receives a positive result from an unassisted LFD test, they should also let their employer know and must book a confirmatory PCR test as soon as possible.

Individuals who record a positive PCR test result may now take LFD tests on day 6 and day 7 of their self-isolation period and those who receive two negative test results, are no longer have required to complete 10 full days of self-isolation. The first LFD test must be taken no earlier than day 6 of the self-isolation period and tests must be taken 24 hours apart.

Staff member identified as a close contact: There is no legal requirement for staff to share their vaccine status with their employer, however staff are legally required to tell their employer if they are required to self-isolate.

Role of the setting in identifying a positive case: Where a staff member is identified as having been in close contact with the person who tested positive, they should be advised to take part in Daily Testing of Contacts of COVID-19. Individuals should also self-isolate unless one of the following applies:

- They are fully vaccinated
- They are below the age of 18 years and 6 months
- They have taken part in or are currently part of an approved COVID-19 vaccine trial
- They can evidence that they are unable to be vaccinated for medical reasons

Where a staff member has tested positive for Covid-19, settings do not need to routinely contact the NHS Self Isolation Service Hub to provide details of close contacts. However, to ensure eligible individuals identified as a close contact can access [Test and Trace Support payments](#) you may consider providing staff details to the NHS Self Isolation Hub when:

- a staff member who was in close contact with the person testing positive has indicated they are not exempt from self-isolation, but the person testing positive was unable to provide that person's details to NHS Test and Trace.



- it is particularly difficult for the person testing positive to identify or provide details of some members of staff they were in contact with, for example temporary workers such as supply staff, peripatetic teachers, contractors or ancillary staff.

The self-isolation hub can be contacted by calling 0203 7436715.

In the event of a person testing positive, settings should also consider whether other staff, children or pupils need to be informed of a positive case of COVID-19 in the setting, taking account of factors such as known vulnerability. Settings are best placed to decide how they wish to communicate this information but when informing individuals of a positive case, settings should not disclose any information that could result in an individual being identified.

In exceptional circumstances, settings may be contacted by NHS Test and Trace if deemed necessary by local health protection teams in response to a local outbreak, as currently happens in managing other infectious diseases.

What about responding to a positive case in specialist SEND settings?

SEND settings should follow the guidance for [Special schools and other specialist settings: coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#).

In line with other settings, fully vaccinated adults and those aged between 5 years and 18 and 6 months identified by NHS Test and Trace as a close contact are strongly advised to take part in Daily Testing of Contacts of COVID-19 provided they are able to do so. If an individual is symptomatic, they should stay at home.

Settings will need to conduct their own health and safety risk assessments, taking into account the level of risk, known vulnerabilities and specific needs of students and staff within the setting. A student, their parent/carer or staff members may wish to take additional protective measures whilst awaiting test results - where this is practical. Any decision to take additional precautions should be carefully considered based on the specific circumstances of each individual and their needs. Any decision to take additional precautions should be a collaborative decision taken between all relevant parties i.e. the student, their parent/carer and the setting and should always be in the best interests of the individual.

Those identified as a contact of someone with COVID-19 but not required to self-isolate, can help protect others by following the guidance on [how to stay safe and help prevent the spread](#). Additionally, Public Health England (PHE) [Stay at home guidance](#) details some further actions that close contacts may wish to take in addition to getting a PCR test.

For those who work in a health or social care setting and have been identified as a close contact and are exempt from self-isolation, there is [additional guidance](#) that should be followed to reduce the risk of spread of COVID-19 in these settings.



What about young people and adults over the age of 18 years 6 months who are unable to be vaccinated for medical reasons?

Those who are not able to get vaccinated for medical reasons are exempt from the requirement to self-isolate if they are identified as a close contact of a positive COVID-19 case.

What happens when a child or pupil cannot attend their setting because they are reliant on a household member who is self-isolating to transport them?

Parents/carers/ legal guardians should make alternative arrangements wherever possible to ensure that the student can continue to attend their setting. Where they cannot do so, education settings and local authorities may help families to agree alternative travel arrangements which mean that a pupil or student who is not required to self-isolate is able to continue to attend.

Setting leaders have discretion to grant leaves of absence in exceptional circumstances. If a leave of absence is granted, the setting should provide remote education to the affected pupil or student (where applicable).

For schools, any absence must be recorded in the setting's attendance register in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.

What should settings do if they think they might have an outbreak?

The DfE [contingency framework](#) guidance sets out the measures that all education and childcare settings should have in place to manage transmission of COVID-19 day to day.

NHS Test and Trace App

Who is the NHS COVID-19 App for?

The NHS COVID-19 app remains an important part of the country's COVID-19 response. The app complements the overall Test and Trace service by automating some aspects of contact tracing. The app is intended for use by individuals aged 16 and over and may be used staff in education settings if they choose to do so.

I have been identified as a close contact by the App, do I need to self-isolate?

Fully vaccinated adults and individuals under the age of 18 and 6 months in England are no longer legally required to self-isolate if identified as a close contact. We strongly encourage eligible individuals to take part in Daily Testing of Contacts of COVID-19 and follow relevant public health advice. The app has been updated to reflect this guidance.

I've been notified by the App, what do I do?

The NHS Covid-19 App complements rather than replaces existing contact tracing processes.



If an app user receives a notification that they have been in close contact with somebody who has tested positive, it is important they follow the advice they are given. Fully vaccinated adults and individuals under the age of 18 and 6 months in England are no longer legally required to self-isolate if identified as a close contact. We strongly encourage eligible individuals to take part in Daily Testing of Contacts of COVID-19 and follow relevant public health advice.