

July 19 Re-opening Guidance

With the vast majority of restrictions in England set to end on July 19th, care services across the country will have to adapt to a new world. Wales is due to review its restrictions on 15 July, while Scotland is expected to move to level 0 on 19 July and lift most legal restrictions on 9 August. Northern Ireland is due to ease some Covid measures on 26 July. Boris Johnson is looking to revoke nearly every COVID-19 mandate, apart from some related to travel and isolation. Some of the changes will be welcomed, whilst others may cause alarm or concern. This document will lay out some of the recent changes to critical areas of care and offer professional advice from care experts.

Currently, the five key areas care services need to consider are:

- Testing
- PPE
- Visiting
- Track and Trace
- Isolation of staff

Testing

- Testing will still be mandatory for unvaccinated people and vaccinated people before and after international travel. Testing in the workplace will continue at the discretion of the employer (Need to double-check this)
- The government has also cut down the time between jabs from 12 weeks to 8 weeks. Rather than waiting nearly three months in between doses, people will be able to book their second jab within eight weeks of receiving their first.
- Testing may not need to be carried out on a daily basis for staff who are double jabbed, but some form of testing regime is recommended.

PPE

- The rules around the mandatory wearing of masks will be ditched from July 19th in all environments, including care services and hospitals. However, services may choose to encourage staff and visitors to continue wearing masks if they'd like.
- Funding for additional PPE to continue until March 2022.
- Our community recommends services continue to wear appropriate PPE, especially when delivering personal care or supporting a resident closely.

- Masks can reduce personal contact and be negative for hard of hearing and people with dementia too so we recommend doing what is best for your service user's wellbeing.

Visiting

- Restrictions on the number of named care home visitors will be removed.
- Social distancing restrictions will also be dropped in every setting except for airports, where passengers will be told to socially distance to separate arrivals from green, amber and red list countries from each other.
- Services could query the vaccination status of visitors and recommend masks and PPE if necessary. Services need to consider creating their own policies around testing, social distancing, and masks whilst moving around the service.

Track and Trace

- Track and trace will still be used in its current form, and businesses will be allowed to ask customers to prove their vaccination or testing status using the NHS app.
- Isolation will still be mandatory for those who receive a positive COVID-19 test. From 16 August, those who are double jabbed or under 18 years of age who come into contact with someone who has tested positive will not have to isolate.

“In theory the change to isolation rules does apply to both staff and residents. However, we would recommend an increase in testing regime to compensate. Outbreak rules are likely to remain the same.” -Care expert

Isolation of staff

- Staff will still be expected to isolate if they receive a positive COVID test. They will also be expected to isolate if they come into contact with someone who has tested positive. However, from 16 August those who are double jabbed or are under the age of 18 will not have to isolate if they come into contact with someone who has tested positive. Staff who are unvaccinated will still need to isolate if they come into contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19.
- Additionally, Sajid Javid, the health and social care secretary, told the Commons that schools should expect to stop sending home “bubbles” of children from 19 July.

- With regard to the use of agency staff, we spoke to Charles Armitage, founder of Florence Flex. Florence provides temporary staffing solutions for the care sector. Mr. Armitage had this to say about the use of agency staff: "Data from Florence's platform has shown a significant increase in requirement for agency staff over the past 6 weeks. This is alongside a 80% increase in workers reporting a requirement to self isolate following potential exposure to COVID-19. These changes are tracking directly with increasing COVID-19 infection in the community and are often leaving care managers short staffed with little notice."
- Our care experts also weighed in on whether services should consider the use of agency staff.

"Lots of staff right now are contracting Covid even with 2 jobs, so there may be a need for agency staff if services can't cope without, the use of staff will likely be at manager's discretion."

Looking ahead

Further announcements are due from the Government, but services will need to review all relevant policies around visitors, PPE, social distancing and testing and ensure staff are fully aware.

Also do consider the likely impact of relaxed restrictions on unvaccinated staff and residents and ensure that all risk assessments are undertaken in regard to which staff work with whom. Managers should consider that relaxed restrictions may also mean more staff off sick and consider use of agency if sickness levels amongst team members increase exponentially.

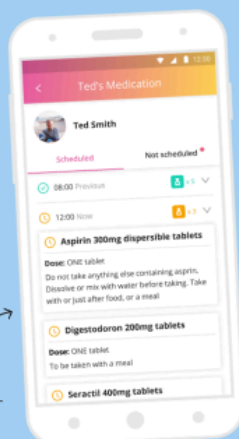


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