## **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) - for managers and employees Version 8 HMPPS**

An employee’s decision to travel abroad during the COVID-19 pandemic must be made based on the government guidance in place at the time and in the knowledge that this might change at short notice.

All employees are expected to follow Government guidance on [international travel](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-abroad-from-england-during-coronavirus-covid-19), [the rules for travel to England from abroad](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/red-amber-and-green-list-rules-for-entering-england) government advice regarding [travel to countries or territories on the red list.](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/red-list-of-countries-and-territories) There are different rules to follow forentering [Scotland](https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-international-travel-quarantine/), [Wales](https://gov.wales/arriving-wales-overseas) or [Northern Ireland](https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-international-travel-advice).

Employees who choose to travel overseas must ensure that they are familiar with requirements around testing and quarantine. They should consider the risk that they might not be able to return to work when planned and agree with their manager the approach that would be taken to any unexpected leave requirements.

Under revised government travel guidance individuals who are travelling from a country not on the ‘red’ list will still have to quarantine at home or the place they are staying for 10 days if they do not qualify under the fully vaccinated rules. Managers should refer to[the rules for travel to England from abroad](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/red-amber-and-green-list-rules-for-entering-england) for further information.  Employees may be able to end quarantine early if through the [Test to Release scheme](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-test-to-release-for-international-travel). In addition, managers can consider asking the employee to use the test to release scheme to end their quarantine period. For example, where the employee is an essential worker who is needed in the workplace and they are having to work from home or have been granted paid special leave during the quarantine period. In these circumstances the Department will reimburse the cost of the test. The scenarios below apply regardless of the reason for not being vaccinated.

**Q1. I have asked my manager for one week’s annual leave to go on holiday and as I am not fully vaccinated, I must quarantine on return. Do I have to take annual leave to cover the quarantine period also? Can my request for annual leave be refused?**

In deciding whether to allow annual leave, your manager should take account of the impact of your annual leave and absence due to quarantining on business delivery. If the impact cannot be supported, managers can refuse annual leave in accordance with the department’s annual leave policy.

All employees are expected to follow Government guidance on [international travel](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-abroad-from-england-during-coronavirus-covid-19), [the rules for travel to England from abroad](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/red-amber-and-green-list-rules-for-entering-england) and [travel to countries or territories on the red list.](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/red-list-of-countries-and-territories) There are different rules to follow for [entering Scotland](https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-international-travel-quarantine/), [Wales](https://gov.wales/arriving-wales-overseas) or [Northern Ireland](https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-international-travel-advice).

Before going on holiday, you should discuss and agree with your manager how you will cover the quarantine period on your return to the UK. You may be able to work at home (or in a quarantine hotel if applicable/possible) during this time either in your current role or be able to identify suitable alternative duties and/or training.

If working at home or from a quarantine hotel is not possible, you will need to use annual or flexi leave or agree a period of special leave without pay, or a combination of these, to cover the quarantine period.

**Q.2. I am currently on special leave with pay. On return from my holiday overseas I am required to quarantine, will I continue to receive special leave with pay for the quarantine period?**

You should discuss with your manager whether you can work at home (or in a quarantine hotel if applicable), or undertake suitable alternative duties and/or training

during the quarantine period. You may already have had these discussions but should revisit regularly where you are on special leave with pay.

Where this is not possible you will need to use annual or flexi leave or agree a period of special leave without pay, or a combination of these, to cover the quarantine period. You may be able to access the [Test to Release Scheme](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-test-to-release-for-international-travel) to enable you to reduce your quarantine period - this will be at your own expense

All employees are expected to follow Government guidance on [international travel](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-abroad-from-england-during-coronavirus-covid-19), [the rules for travel to England from abroad](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/red-amber-and-green-list-rules-for-entering-england) and [travel to countries or territories on the red list.](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/red-list-of-countries-and-territories) There are different rules to follow for [entering Scotland](https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-international-travel-quarantine/), [Wales](https://gov.wales/arriving-wales-overseas) or [Northern Ireland](https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-international-travel-advice).

**Q.3. What happens if I am contacted by the NHS Test and Trace service while I am quarantining as a result of travelling abroad?**

If you are contacted by the NHS Test and Trace service while already quarantined because you have returned from abroad, you should follow the [NHS test and trace: how it works](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/nhs-test-and-trace-how-it-works) advice.

If you are already working from home to cover your quarantine period, then you should continue to do so if you remain fit for work.

If you have taken annual or flexi leave or are on special leave without pay to cover the quarantine period, you will be allowed special leave with pay from the date you are first contacted by the NHS Test and Trace service.

**Q.4. What should an employee do if someone in their household is self-isolating because they have returned from an overseas destination?**

An employee who lives in a shared or family household does not have to quarantine because a member of that household has returned from overseas. The employee can continue to attend the workplace if they can’t work from home.

Employees who do not have symptoms of COVID-19 are strongly encouraged to undertake twice weekly testing. Refer to the NHS guidance - [Regular rapid lateral flow coronavirus (COVID-19) tests](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing/regular-rapid-coronavirus-tests-if-you-do-not-have-symptoms/) for further information.

If the employee or anyone in their household displays coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms the household should follow the government guidance: [When to self-isolate and what to do](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-and-treatment/when-to-self-isolate-and-what-to-do/).

**Q.5. I am travelling abroad and I will be required to quarantine on arrival overseas and again when I return to the UK. Do I have to take annual leave to cover the quarantine periods?**

All employees are expected to follow Government guidance on [international travel](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-abroad-from-england-during-coronavirus-covid-19), [the rules for travel to England from abroad](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/red-amber-and-green-list-rules-for-entering-england) and [travel to countries or territories on the red list.](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/red-list-of-countries-and-territories) There are different rules to follow for [entering Scotland](https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-international-travel-quarantine/), [Wales](https://gov.wales/arriving-wales-overseas) or [Northern Ireland](https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-international-travel-advice).

Prior to travel you should discuss and agree with your manager your plans for travelling abroad, whether the business can support an extended absence and how you will cover both quarantine periods.

In deciding whether to allow annual leave, your manager should take account of the impact of your annual leave and absence due to quarantine requirements on business delivery. If the impact cannot be supported, managers can refuse annual leave in accordance with the department’s annual leave policy.

You will be required to use annual or flexi leave or agree to a period of special leave without pay, or a combination of these, to cover the period of quarantine on arrival overseas.

On return to the UK, you may be able to work at home (or in a quarantine hotel if applicable/possible) during the quarantine period, either in your current role or carrying out suitable alternative duties and/or training.

If working at home is not possible, you will need to use annual or flexi leave or agree a period of special leave without pay, or a combination of these to cover the quarantine period. You may be able to access the [Test to Release Scheme](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-test-to-release-for-international-travel) to enable you to reduce yourself isolation period - this is at your own expense. Employees who have been in or transited through the countries listed in the [red list countries and territories](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/red-list-of-countries-and-territories) cannot use the [scheme](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-test-to-release-for-international-travel).

Exceptionally, your manager may consider awarding you a period of paid special leave, for example if you have travelled on compassionate grounds.

**Q.6. I am considering booking a trip abroad, what should I do?**

Before travelling, all employees are expected to follow Government guidance on [international travel](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-abroad-from-england-during-coronavirus-covid-19), [the rules for travel to England from abroad](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/red-amber-and-green-list-rules-for-entering-england) and [travel to countries or territories on the red list.](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/red-list-of-countries-and-territories) There are different rules to follow for [entering Scotland](https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-international-travel-quarantine/), [Wales](https://gov.wales/arriving-wales-overseas) or [Northern Ireland](https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-international-travel-advice).

Travelling during a pandemic carries a level of risk, and before travelling overseas, you should discuss and agree with your manager how your travel plans might impact on your ability to return to work. For example, the potential need for additional time off for testing on return, self-isolation on arrival in the UK and changes, at short notice, to the situation in the country you are visiting or to FCDO / UK government guidance which might prevent you from travelling home.

In deciding whether to allow annual leave, your manager should take account of the impact of your annual leave and absence due to quarantine requirements on business delivery. If the impact cannot be supported, managers can refuse annual leave in accordance with the department’s annual leave policy.

In deciding whether to allow annual leave, your manager should take account of the impact of your annual leave and any associated absence (for testing, quarantine etc) on business delivery. If the impact cannot be supported, managers can refuse annual leave in accordance with the department’s annual leave policy.

Any requirement to take a test before travelling overseas or prior to or following your return to the UK and the cost of any hotel quarantine is at your expense.

**Q.7 My employee is required to regularly travel abroad and back to the UK for essential government business. What does this mean for them in terms of quarantine and testing?**

An exemption allowing travel applies to those certified by a department as meeting the criteria set out in  [[Coronavirus (COVID-19): Jobs that qualify for travel exemptions.](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-travellers-exempt-from-uk-border-rules/coronavirus-covid-19-travellers-exempt-from-uk-border-rules)The exemption list is subject to short notice change so it is advised that this is regularly checked.](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-travellers-exempt-from-uk-border-rules/coronavirus-covid-19-travellers-exempt-from-uk-border-rules)

You should issue a letter to the employee certifying that they fall within one of the categories and they should bring it with them when travelling to the UK. A sample letter can be found at Annex A.

Employees may need to take a COVID-19 test prior to travelling overseas. You should check the [Foreign Travel Advice](https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) for information on the testing requirements of the country being visited.

The employee may need to quarantine in the country being visited. You and the employee should check the guidance on [Quarantine while you are abroad](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-advice-novel-coronavirus) before each journey.

Before returning to the UK, some employees may need to provide proof of a negative coronavirus (COVID-19) test depending on their vaccination status and where they are travelling from. You should refer to [Coronavirus (COVID-19): testing for people travelling to England](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-testing-for-people-travelling-to-england) for further information including on [exemptions from testing for people in certain jobs](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-travellers-exempt-from-uk-border-rules/coronavirus-covid-19-travellers-exempt-from-uk-border-rules).

Employees should also refer to the [Entering the UK](https://www.gov.uk/uk-border-control) guidance and [the rules for travel to England from abroad](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/red-amber-and-green-list-rules-for-entering-england) for further information.. There will be different rules to follow for [entering Scotland](https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-international-travel-quarantine/), [entering Wales](https://gov.wales/arriving-wales-overseas) or [entering Northern Ireland](https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-international-travel-advice). Tests may need to be booked in advance of travel through a [test provider](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/providers-of-day-2-and-day-8-coronavirus-testing-for-international-arrivals#book-a-travel-test-package). They may need to provide evidence of a negative test unless their [job means that they are exempt.](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-travellers-exempt-from-uk-border-rules/coronavirus-covid-19-travellers-exempt-from-uk-border-rules)

Following arrival in the UK, some employees may also need to test for COVID-19 during any quarantine period.  Managers and employees should refer to the [Entering the UK](https://www.gov.uk/uk-border-control) guidance for further information.

The department will meet the cost of any tests required, reimbursing in line with the Travel & Subsistence policy.

**Q.8. I am not able to return to the UK from abroad as I have been unable to provide a negative test, following non work-related travel. What should I do?**

Employees are expected to follow Government guidance on [international travel](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-abroad-from-england-during-coronavirus-covid-19), [the rules for travel to England from abroad](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/red-amber-and-green-list-rules-for-entering-england) and [travel to countries or territories on the red list.](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/red-list-of-countries-and-territories) There are different rules to follow for [entering Scotland](https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-international-travel-quarantine/), [Wales](https://gov.wales/arriving-wales-overseas) or [Northern Ireland](https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-international-travel-advice).

Travelling during a pandemic carries a level of risk, and before travelling overseas, you should discuss and agree with your manager how your travel plans might impact on your ability to return to work. For example, if you are unable to provide a negative test and cannot return home.

You can use annual or flexi leave or agree with your manager a period of unpaid special leave, or a combination of these, to cover the additional time-off required until you are able to return home.

If you have tested positive or are displaying symptoms of COVID-19 you should follow Government [Foreign travel advice](https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice). Managers should refer to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Supporting Attendance guidance for further information on managing and recording the absence.

**Q.9 I am not able to return to the UK as scheduled as a member of the group I went abroad with has not been able to provide a negative test result. What should I do?**

All employees are expected to follow Government guidance on [international travel](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-abroad-from-england-during-coronavirus-covid-19), [the rules for travel to England from abroad](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/red-amber-and-green-list-rules-for-entering-england) and [travel to countries or territories on the red list.](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/red-list-of-countries-and-territories) There are different rules to follow for [entering Scotland](https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-international-travel-quarantine/), [Wales](https://gov.wales/arriving-wales-overseas) or [Northern Ireland](https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-international-travel-advice).

Travelling during a pandemic carries a level of risk, and before travelling overseas, you should discuss and agree with your manager how your travel plans might impact on your ability to return to work. For example, if you or a member of your party are unable to provide a negative test and cannot return home.

In these circumstances you should consider whether it is possible for you to travel back independently from the affected member of your group. If this is not possible, you can use annual or flexi leave or agree with your manager a period of unpaid special leave, or a combination of these, to cover any additional time-off required.

**Q.10. I have been working remotely overseas for personal reasons, as a temporary arrangement during the COVID-19 pandemic. I am due to return soon, will I get special leave with pay during the quarantine period?**

Where you are required to quarantine following your return to the UK, you can work at home (or from a quarantine hotel if applicable) in your current role or undertake suitable alternative duties and/or training.

Where this is not possible, you should use annual or flexi leave or agree a period of special leave, or a combination of these. Special leave will usually be unpaid but your manager may grant paid special leave in exceptional circumstances and on a case by case basis. This may depend on the agreement put in place prior to working remotely overseas.

If you have to quarantine in a hotel, you will need to meet the cost of the hotel and any related expenses. It would be in very exceptional circumstances that these costs would be met by the department.

Employees who have been in or transited through the countries listed in the [red list countries and territories](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/red-list-of-countries-and-territories) cannot use the [scheme](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-test-to-release-for-international-travel).

**Q11.  I have been working remotely overseas for personal reasons as a temporary arrangement during the COVID-19 pandemic. I am due to return soon, will the department meet the costs of the tests required to return to the UK?**

No, any costs related to testing prior to return to the UK should be met by the employees.  It would be in very exceptional circumstances that these costs would be met by the department