

Frequently Asked Questions on new Covid-19 health measures at the border and impacts on Defence

Background

We recently published a [Defence Advice Note](#) on the new COVID-19 border health measures and effects on delivering Defence tasks. This provides direction and guidance to personnel in Defence who will be impacted by this policy, and how any use of the exemptions will work in practice.

The new border control measures will, by default, apply to all Defence personnel and activities, as they are essential public health measures intended to prevent the reintroduction of COVID-19 cases from abroad as the UK increasingly controls the spread of the disease at home.

While there are limited exemptions that may be relevant for Defence Personnel, these should be used sparingly and the threshold for approving; only where there are **exceptional** reasons should exemptions be authorised. The use of exemptions will need to be approved by the 2* activity risk owners (who may choose to delegate to 1*, but no lower) and each instance will be recorded centrally.

FAQs

What are the new border restrictions?

The measures include: mandatory requirements for all arrivals to the UK to self-isolate in suitable accommodation for 14 days (or until departing the UK if earlier), and to provide their travel and contact details in the UK to support contact tracing. These measures are expected to come into effect on 8 June. Further details can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/uk-border-control>

What does this mean for Defence activity and its personnel?

Alongside the rest of Government, it is important that Defence supports these efforts and the default position will be that these requirements will be followed. Senior leaders will be considering the impact of these measures upon Defence activities and considering mitigations where appropriate. There are a limited number of exemptions for Defence and these will only be applied in exceptional circumstances, e.g. where there would be a clear impact to critical Defence activity. There are wider exemptions which may also be relevant to Defence personnel including limited exemptions relating to compassionate return or medical reasons.

Further internal guidance is available on the [Defence Advice Note](#) pages, and further guidance on potential non-Defence exemptions can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/uk-border-control>

Why may Defence personnel be exempt from these requirements / What are essential Defence activities?

The requirement to deliver essential Defence activities has not gone away during the pandemic. In many cases, particularly where we have personnel with niche skills or capabilities, it would not be possible to continue delivering key tasks if the requirements were implemented each time they return to the UK. The threshold for making this decision will be set high and the default position is that personnel will abide by the requirements. In making a decision to exempt an individual from the requirements of the legislation, senior commanders and managers will give

consideration to other mitigations which should be implemented in order to safeguard public health.

Am I exempt from self-isolation?

Most personnel will be expected to comply in full with both the regulation to provide data and to self-isolate. If you feel your work on return to the UK constitutes essential Defence activity, you should engage with your chain of command / line management to seek an exemption in accordance with the [Defence Advice Note](#)

What about contractors or Visiting Forces?

As for Defence personnel, the default position is that contractors and Visiting Forces will abide by the requirements set out in the legislation. However, the Defence exemption may apply where the individual is undertaking essential Defence activities. The use of an exemption will remain subject to senior level approval.

What about visits from personnel from countries not covered by the Visiting Forces Act?

If the visit is crucial for the delivery of essential Defence activity and cannot be achieved another way, then please contact the COVID Overseas Team at DCMC-COVID19-Overseas@mod.gov.uk for further guidance

Will VIP visits be exempt?

If the visit is crucial for the delivery of essential Defence activity and cannot be achieved another way, then this can be authorised by an appropriate 1*/2* within MOD. If it is not essential, then it should not be happening without isolation being completed.

What happens with visiting forces who are undertaking training in the UK but not with MOD?

Where this training can be justified as being necessary for the delivery of essential Defence activities, for example if it is necessary to ensure NATO partners are SQEP, then this can be signed off by a suitable MOD 1*/2*.

Will I be asked on arrival in the UK if I am self-isolating?

Border Force colleagues will ask for evidence that you have completed the Passenger Locator Form on-line and may ask arriving travellers about their arrangements for self-isolating. Where a traveller claims they are exempt, Border Force staff will ask for evidence. Please ensure you can show your letter to them (either electronically or a hard copy). If you have ID confirming you are an MOD employee, they may also ask to see that, but it will not be mandatory to provide this, as there will be personnel who do not have this.

FOR END OF TOUR/OVERSEAS ASSIGNMENTS

Will Service and civilian personnel returning from Ops be tested for COVID-19 upon arrival in the UK?

There are no current plans to routinely offer testing to personnel returning to the UK. In accordance with current Government direction, eligibility for testing is limited to individuals showing symptoms of COVID-19 and essential workers: Armed Forces personnel are only classified as essential workers if they are critical to the delivery of key Defence and national security outputs or the response to the pandemic.

Am I exempt from self-isolation?

Returning from operations will in most cases not exempt personnel from the Regulations. Exemptions would normally only be considered for those required to undertake work essential to Defence activities within the first 14 days of arriving back in the UK. If you believe you are exempt under these Regulations you must engage with your chain of command.

Are R&R breaks in the UK exempt from the requirement to self-isolate?

Where temporary return to the UK for rest and recuperation for an individual is considered essential to the delivery of the mission, the operational commander may consider an exemption from a long or arduous operational posting where appropriate. In deciding whether to apply an exemption, alignment with the FCO's approach, the risk of importing COVID-19 to the UK, and the operational environment should all be considered.

What information do I have to provide on the Passenger Location Form?

You will be required to provide personal information, details of your journey and details of where you will be staying and how you can be contacted during your self-isolation period.

How do I provide this information and where is it recorded?

The process for collecting and recording this information is being developed. It is expected that this will be an online form that can be completed up to 48hrs prior to arrival in the UK or can be completed at the border. Facilities will be made available at ports of entry for those unable to complete the form in advance to do so on arrival.

Do I need to return to my unit before entering self-isolation?

You must contact your UK parent unit prior to departure from Theatre to confirm your onward movement. They will notify you of all relevant arrangements, including weapon returns, dismounting administration and travel bookings. Once back in the UK you must also contact unit HR and inform them that you have returned to the UK and the details of the location where you elect to self-isolate. You should confirm the contact details of your parent unit HR before departing theatre.

Who is responsible for me when I am self-isolating?

Upon return from Ops, responsibility transfers back to their UK parent unit.

Where can I self-isolate?

You can self-isolate at any appropriate address. For most personnel this is likely to be your home address or next of kin address, but you can also self-isolate with other family or friends.

Can I self-isolate with my immediate family?

Yes. Personnel returning from Ops can self-isolate with their immediate family members. In accordance with Public Health England guidance, other members of the household are not required to self-isolate unless any member of the household starts to show symptoms of coronavirus. Specific direction as to necessary isolation periods and how to minimise the risk for vulnerable personnel can be found [here](#).

If you have travelled back to the UK with your family and have been granted an exemption to the border measures, you should note that this exemption would not apply to your family.

What if I'm returning from the end of assignment/operations overseas back into the UK and going into Single Living Accommodation

You would be required to self-isolate for 14 days upon arrival into the UK unless you have to carry out essential work that cannot be done from home within 14 days of your arrival back to the UK. If this is the case, you may be granted an exemption from the requirement to both self-isolate and provide your own data in relation to your onward travel (subject to 1*/2* authorisation). You would have to raise this with your Chain of Command if you felt you should be granted an exemption.

What if I'm returning from the end of assignment and return from overseas with family going into own accommodation / Service Families Accommodation

You and your family that have also returned with you, would be required to self-isolate for 14 days upon arrival into the UK. You could self-isolate at more than one location (i.e. if you stayed in a hotel before moving into your own accommodation / Service Families Accommodation). However, Personnel should note the following:

- a. **A Proxy will be required to take over your SFA.** For the SP and their family to move directly into their SFA and comply with regulations, a proxy will need to be nominated to accept the property in advance of their return, together with their personal effects (see below). This will enable the family to move in immediately and to self-isolate in their own home.
- b. **Return of Personal Effects.** The removals contractor will endeavour to return the PE between the acceptance of the property by the proxy and the arrival of the SP into the country. A proxy will need to be in attendance to oversee the move in of personal effects. This will not always be possible and a limited number of Get You In Packs are available from DIO, but these will need to be requested in advance. Personnel are reminded that they should have transit insurance for their personal effects.
- c. **Personnel moving into their own house.** Personnel moving in to a private house will need to make arrangements for a proxy to oversee the move in of personal effects if personnel wish to be able to self-isolate in their own house.
- d. **Returning to the UK.** Currently most hotels are only open to support NHS staff or key workers, so the usual process of arriving into the UK and staying in a hotel before travelling onto SFA may not be possible. Also, the provision of hire cars are limited in some

areas. Although this should be highlighted by local travel offices, personnel should factor this into their travel plans.

- e. **Alternative SFA locations for quarantine may be possible.** Provision of fully equipped 'contact houses' might be an option, subject to availability. Contact houses are managed locally, so individuals will need to engage with unit welfare offices in the first instance to establish availability. Separately, the [Services Cotswold Centre](#) has short term accommodation available. Details and a booking form are at the link.
- f. If you have to carry out **essential work** that cannot be done from home within 14 days of your arrival back to the UK you may be granted an exemption from the requirement to both self-isolate and provide your own data in relation to your onward travel (subject to 1*/2* authorisation). Please note these exemptions would not extend to your family.

What does self-isolation mean?

You cannot have visitors, including friends and family, unless they are providing essential care. You should not leave the property except in exceptional circumstances, such as to obtain medical supplies or other essential items which cannot be delivered. You will need to avoid contact with others in the household (unless they travelled with you) and minimise the time you spend in shared areas. Further guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/uk-border-control>

Can I do exercise in self-isolation?

Aside from any gardens/grounds that form part of the premises you cannot leave your place of isolation to exercise. You must not use any exercise equipment/facilities that are shared with other households. For those in Service Accommodation, limited individual exercise outside, while maintaining strict social distancing, and only in areas immediately adjacent to accommodation and not accessible to the general public, is permissible. This must not go beyond what would be considered equivalent to exercising in the garden of a private dwelling.

Are there any reasons why I can leave self-isolation?

You can only leave the place where you are self-isolating if:

- you need urgent medical treatment
- you need support from social services
- you need food and medicine and cannot get them delivered or get a friend or family member to bring them
- you're going to the funeral of a close relative, or for other compassionate reasons
- there's an emergency, for example there's a fire at the place you're staying.

If one of my immediate family members is classified as vulnerable or a key worker, can I choose to self-isolate for 14 days in service accommodation?

Yes, where necessary service personnel can choose to self-isolate in service accommodation. For service personnel not already accommodated in SLA, surplus service accommodation will be provided; however, this may not be at your parent unit or other location of your choice.

If I choose to self-isolate in service accommodation, how will this be booked?

Booking Service accommodation for self-isolation post deployment is an individual responsibility. You will need to contact your UK parent unit to organise this.

Can I choose to self-isolate in a hotel?

Service and civilian personnel can choose to self-isolate in a hotel, at their own expense. As you are not required to stay in a particular location for Service reasons, you are not entitled to accommodation at public expense. Existing regulations permit public funding for hotel accommodation prior to a move into SFA.

If I choose to self-isolate in service accommodation or a hotel do I need to inform the Service or my Line Manager

If you choose to self-isolate at a location that is not recorded on JPA or HRMS as your permanent home address or residence at work address you are to advise your UK Parent Unit HR Staff or your Line Manager of your temporary location.

If I self-isolate in service accommodation or a hotel am I eligible for LSA?

Service personnel choosing to self-isolate in hotel or service accommodation are not Involuntarily Separated (INVOLSEP) and are not eligible for LSA. Personnel are only INVOLSEP if they are directed to undertake self-isolation at a location away from their permanent home address or residence at work address for service reasons.

If I choose to self-isolate in service accommodation or a hotel am I entitled to MT?

No. As there is no Service requirement to self-isolate in any particular location, Service personnel are not entitled to MT. Notwithstanding this, service personnel remain eligible upon return from operations, to travel at public expense from the Airhead to either their Parent Unit or, when unit circumstances permit, their recognised private residence.

Will I have to spend two weeks of my POL in self-isolation?

No. You will not be considered to be on leave during this period as you will not be able to enjoy normal day-to-day activities in the way other people living in the same area can.

Will I be classed as on duty during self-isolation?

No, you will be off-duty except during any time when you are working from your place of isolation. You will be move and tracked Temp – Isolation to enable the Service to identify your status correctly.

Should I enter my POL dates onto JPA before I depart Theatre?

Yes, service personnel should input their POL dates onto JPA before departing theatre. The start date inputted onto JPA for POL should be 14 days after the day the service person is expected to arrive in the UK.

What should I do if I begin to show symptoms of COVID-19 when self-isolating?

In accordance with [Public Health England](#) direction, individuals who begin to show the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 are to self-isolate for a minimum of 7 days from when their symptoms started. If you live with others and you are the first in the household to have symptoms of COVID-19, then they must stay at home for at least 7 days, but all other household members

who remain well must stay at home and not leave the house for 14 days. You must also contact your unit and make them aware that you are unwell. Civilian personnel should inform their line manager and ensure it is logged on HRMS as sick absence (coronavirus).

What do I do after 14 days?

If you do not have any coronavirus symptoms after 14 days, you can stop self-isolating. You will then need to follow the government guidance for the nation you live in or are staying in.

Can I use public transport in the UK to get to my place of quarantine?

Yes. So, for example, public transport from RAF Brize Norton to Heathrow to take an internal flight would be permissible.

FOR ROUTINE TRAVEL TO THE UK

Do I have to isolate if I'm coming back for compassionate reasons?

Yes. Although personnel returning to the UK on compassionate grounds (formally categorized as such by JCCC) will be exempted from self-isolation in order to visit the individual who is the subject of the compassionate case or to attend the funeral of a close family member.

I'm serving in an overseas location but need to come back to the UK to sort out a care package for an elderly relative? Can I have an exemption?

You would not qualify for an exemption from the requirement to isolate. However, so long as you remain in your planned place of isolation, you would be able to make the necessary arrangements from there. You are permitted to have more than one place of isolation, so long as you provide this information on arrival and update the address online as needed.

Do I have to stay in the UK for 14 days? I only need to visit one location for a few days before returning to my overseas posting.

You need to isolate while in the UK, though you would be allowed to break isolation for urgent medical reasons, to buy food, to attend a funeral or in an emergency. You would not need to stay in the UK for 14 days. You should check for any constraints imposed by the host nation on your return to your overseas posting.

My child is at boarding school. Will they have to isolate for 14 days?

Yes. The arrangements for isolation will vary from school to school. Some may ask parents to organise isolation prior to the start of term. This could be done at a guardian's house. Others may offer an isolation package 14 days before the start of term. Some schools may be able to offer an isolation package for the first 14 days of term for all overseas students. Parents will need to engage early with the school to establish what package is available. Further advice will be issued shortly about the potential additional costs incurred.

My child is required to isolate at her guardian's house. Her guardians are my elderly parents who are vulnerable. What should I do?

You need to find alternative arrangements for isolation. Support may be available from the school or other members of the family. Further advice will be issued shortly about the potential additional costs incurred.

I need to accompany my child to boarding school. Will I have to isolate for 14 days?

All personnel coming in to the UK have to comply with the law, so you would have to isolate. However, this doesn't mean that you have to stay in the UK for 14 days. You will still have to provide the required data on arrival and declare where you'll be isolating.

What about travel from the Republic of Ireland?

You do not have to self-isolate if travelling from the Republic of Ireland, the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man.

My parent is living alone with no other family than myself. He is shielding as he has COPD. Since lockdown, I have made a monthly visit to stock his freezer, cupboards, however, with the new restrictions, is this going to be possible? I work in a NATO post and travel back to the UK alone via the tunnel.

You will be able to continue to do this within the regulations, as long as you isolate at your parent's house when in the UK. You are permitted to break isolation to get food if it cannot be delivered by the supermarket or by other relatives or friends and you are not required to stay in the UK for 14 days. You should check for any constraints imposed by the host nation on your return following a visit to the UK.

Personnel returning from overseas on leave

Please check the Foreign Office guidance which as of 28 May advises against all but essential international travel. Further detail [here](#). If you were returning to see your family on leave, you would be required to self-isolate for the period you are in the UK or 14 days (whichever is less). So if you were only in the UK for 2 days, you would be allowed to break self-isolation to travel back overseas. Your family who you are visiting in the UK would not be required to self-isolate, but you should avoid contact with the people you're staying with and minimise the time you spend in shared areas.

Requirement for service person to attend a career course

If you are attending a career course which cannot be done remotely, you should consult your chain of command. The 2* risk owner (or delegated 1*) may provide an exemption if there would be ramifications to Defence of you not attending the course at this specific time. If you did have an exemption, this would be to break self-isolation for the time the course is taking place. For all the time within 14 days of your arrival into the UK that you are not attending the course, you would be required to self-isolate. If the course lasted less than 14 days, you do not have to stay in the UK for the duration of 14 days.

If you are a contractor, Civil Servant or military person transiting the UK from overseas for onward deployment to conduct essential defence activities

You would be required to self-isolate for the period in which you are in the UK. I.e if you arrived in the UK on a Thursday and your flight overseas was at 1500 the next day, you would be required to self-isolate for the intervening period. The exception to this would be if you had critical essential Defence business to do in this intervening period which could not be done at home or in a hotel. If this was the case, a 1*/2* could authorise an exemption.

I'm going on leave overseas. When I come home, I will have to isolate for 14 days. Does this count against my annual leave?

Yes. It is your choice to go on leave overseas, so any time spent in self-isolation will be treated as leave and should be factored in. The Foreign Office currently advise against all but essential travel overseas.