

Mr. M. Lynch
General Secretary
RMT

25th August 2021

Dear Mick,

Changes to Government Guidance on Self Isolation

I refer to the discussion at the Rail Industry Coronavirus Forum (RICF) last week concerning the change to Government guidance on self-isolation.

As you will be aware the Government Guidance changed from Monday 16 August 2021 with people who are double vaccinated no longer being legally required to self-isolate if they are identified as a close contact of a positive COVID-19 case. The rationale for this change is based on the majority of UK adults having now had the opportunity to receive both doses of the Covid-19 vaccine.

In applying the Government guidance and recognising the industry workforce age profile, there has already been a significant reduction in the number of employees required to self-isolate since 16th August.

As requested on the RICF call, I agreed to write to set out the default employer approach being applied for those contacted by NHS Test & Trace as having come into contact with someone who has tested positive for Covid-19. However, the detailed application of these arrangements is a matter for each individual employer to determine.

Fully vaccinated people (have had 2 doses and it has been two weeks since the second dose):

- Those who are under 18 or fully vaccinated no longer have to self-isolate
- The person no longer has a legal duty to self-isolate and therefore does not have to inform their employer – but they are encouraged to do so
 - The employer does not need to verify vaccine status or store this health data
- NHS Test & Trace continues to still contact the individual to make them aware and will verify their vaccine status
- Employees are strongly recommended to take a PCR test

Unvaccinated people (one dose or second dose within two weeks):

- They must self-isolate for the required time
- This remains a legal duty and the same as currently applied before August 16th

In summary - the Government guidance remains as follows:

1. Anyone who develops Covid-19 symptoms, regardless of vaccine status, must self-isolate and take a PCR test until the result is known.
2. If you are contacted by NHS Test & Trace and not fully vaccinated, you must legally self-isolate for the required period of time
3. If you are instructed to self-isolate, you must inform your line manager/roster clerk/resource control

4. If you are double vaccinated, points 2 & 3 do not apply, but you should continue to exercise caution and follow government guidelines

The default employer position if an employee advises they need to self-isolate would be that company sick pay/pay arrangement would be based on the specific personal circumstances of the individual case. Employers are expected to use their discretion and company sick pay/pay should not be unreasonably withheld.

Similarly, the employer would be expected to again apply their discretion as to whether it is appropriate for the absence to be recorded for MFA purposes.

For the avoidance of doubt, in line with Government guidance, where an employee receives a positive PCR test and would require to self-isolate, in these circumstances, company sick pay would be payable in all such cases.

I trust the above is helpful and would again reiterate that the detailed application of these arrangements is a matter for each individual employer to determine.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Andy Meadows', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Andy Meadows
Rail Industry Coronavirus Forum Chairman