

Management of COVID-19 Sickness Absence

A [flowchart](#) is provided at the end of this document to support with correct management of sickness absence for colleagues with [symptoms of a respiratory infection](#).

LFD Testing

National changes to COVID-19 testing came into effect on 1 April 2023. There is no requirement for the majority of colleagues to use LFD tests when they have [symptoms of a respiratory infection](#). **This is UK Government guidance and is the reason that free LFT tests are no longer available for NHS workers.**

The only exception to this is for patient-facing colleagues who **primarily work on areas focussed on treating severely immune-compromised patients**, such as haematology/oncology or renal medicine wards. This includes non-clinical patient-facing colleagues who primarily work on such wards. UHNM will therefore make tests available for employees in these areas as per the national guidance.

UHNM Guidance for Management of COVID-19 Sickness Absence

Based on this new testing guidance, the Trust, in agreement with Staff Side, has made amendments to the management of sickness absence for those colleagues with [symptoms of a respiratory infection](#). **This is amended guidance in effect from 25 October 2023 and replaces all previous versions of the guidance.**

UHNM colleagues who are not patient-facing or not primarily working in an area focussed on treating severely immune-compromised patients

Colleagues whose job is not patient-facing or not primarily working in an area focussed on treating severely immune-compromised patients, who have [symptoms of a respiratory infection](#), and who have a high temperature or do not feel well enough to go to work, should report their absence to Empactis. **These colleagues do not need to test for COVID-19.**

This absence should be categorised by the line manager based on the symptoms that are preventing the colleague attending work, such as cold or flu symptoms. Employee Relations can help with identifying the correct absence type as required. These absences will count towards formal sickness management triggers.

Where a colleague uses an LFD test for non-work related reasons, (for example because they live with a high risk family member) and this is positive for COVID-19, the national guidance states that they must remain at home for 5 days regardless of their role.

An absence does not need to be reported to Empactis if the colleague feels well and is able to work from home. If the requirement to remain at home for 5 days leads to an absence from work because the role cannot be worked from home, the colleague should report their absence to Empactis. This absence should be categorised by the line manager as Sickness, S15 Chest and Respiratory, S15013 Covid-19. This absence will not count towards formal sickness management triggers.

UHNM colleagues who are patient-facing and who primarily work in an area focussed on treating severely immune-compromised patients

Colleagues whose job is patient-facing and who primarily work in an area focussed on treating severely immune-compromised patients, who have [symptoms of a respiratory infection](#), should take an LFD test as soon as possible and consult the [Staff Isolation Tool](#). LFD tests are available from the Ward Managers of these designated areas.

If the result of this LFD test is negative, they can attend work if they are well enough to do so.

If the result of this LFD test is negative, and they are too unwell to attend work or have a high temperature, the colleague should report their absence to Empactis. This absence should be categorised by the line manager based on the symptoms that are preventing the colleague attending work. Employee Relations can help with identifying the correct absence type as required. These absences will count towards formal sickness management triggers.

If the result of this LFD test is positive, the colleague should follow the advice given in the [Staff Isolation Tool](#). This absence should be categorised by the line manager as Sickness, S15 Chest and Respiratory, S15013 Covid-19. This absence will not count towards formal sickness management triggers.

For colleagues who have had a formal sickness meeting triggered by COVID-19 since 23 June 2023

Where a formal sickness meeting has been held due to a short-term COVID-19 related absence, the line manager should review the case. If the formal sickness meeting would not have happened had the employee not had a COVID-19 related absence, managers should meet with colleagues and reset to the stage in place before the COVID-19 absence occurred.

There is no change to management of long covid, which should continue to be managed in line with the long term sickness absence guidance.

Quick Reference

A [flowchart](#) is provided at page 3 to help with decision making.



Flowchart for colleagues who have symptoms of a respiratory infection

