

Coronavirus Easing of Restrictions Guidance Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

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1. SHARED VANS

Why are we returning to shared vans?

In line with the easing of restrictions across the UK and within the devolved nations and in conversation with our union partners to agree the approach to returning to more normal working methods. We have agreed to return to shared vans and LGVs as follows:

The return to Shared Vans and LGVs will therefore commence from (taking account of any individual and operational issues which must be jointly resolved in each unit beforehand) as follows:

- England – week commencing 19 July 2021
- Northern Ireland – 11th October 2021
- Wales - 7 August 2021
- Scotland - 9 August 2021

I am Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) or have another concern and do not wish to return to van sharing, will I have to?

We fully understand the concerns that some of our colleagues will have. Whilst many colleagues are keen to return to van sharing, others, for health or other reasons, may have concerns. Colleagues should speak to their manager and work through the [Persons Specifically At Risk Assessment](#) identifying the best way forward and managers will take advice from the People Case Advise Team (0345 604 2787) to gain advice where needed. Where required we will explore or continue with any temporary adjustments.

What if my colleague is not double vaccinated or will not tell me if they are not double vaccinated? Do I still need to share a van or work closely with them in other situations?

Currently, employees do not need to share vaccination status information. If you have concerns, please speak to your manager but we expect an environment of trust between colleagues. When using shared vans please continue to follow the Safe Working Instruction (SWI) / Shared Van Risk Assessment.

[Shared Vans Risk Assessment and Safe Working Instructions](#)

What are the appropriate safety controls and Safe Working Instructions (SWI) required for van sharing?

Following the easing of restrictions in England on 19 July 2021 and Northern Ireland on 11th October 2021 and the recent joint statement with the CWU on changes to our operating procedures, we are now reviewing our risk assessments to ensure that these changes are reflected. A new shared van risk assessment and associated safe working instruction is now available only to reflect the reintroduction of shared vans. There is no change to shared vans in the other nations.

[Shared Vans Risk Assessment and Safety Working Instruction](#)

Unit risk assessments will be updated and issued in the next few days and further communications will follow on what you need to do.

Do we have to immediately go back to van sharing, or will there be time to prepare and implement this change?

It is important that managers, reps and colleagues understand the changes and implement them as soon as they are able

What would be deemed a suitable reason for someone not to van share and what evidence is required?

Colleagues should speak to their manager and work through their concerns to identify the best way forward and managers will take advice from the People Case Advise Team (0345 604 2787) to gain advice where needed. There may be circumstances where an occupational health referral or letter from a colleague's General Practitioner may support us in making the right temporary arrangements for the colleague. In most cases we would expect a conversation and agreed way forward to resolve any concerns.

If a colleague is anxious about van sharing do, they have to share a van?

We fully understand the concerns that some of our colleagues will have. Whilst many colleagues are keen to return to van sharing others for health or other reasons will have concerns. Colleagues should speak to their manager and work through those concerns using specific stress risk assessment if required to identify the best way forward and managers will take advice from the People Case Advise Team (0345 604 2787) to gain advice where needed. Where required we will explore or continue temporary adjustments.

How will vehicles be kept clean? Will employees be provided with wipes to clean touchpoints?

We will continue to provide hand sanitiser and sanitising wipes for colleagues to clean common touch points in vehicles before and after use. Property and Facilities Solutions will continue to offer the cleaning protocols that have been in place as we have throughout the pandemic. In addition, disposable gloves continue to be available.

How will we ensure standards are maintained in line with guidance?

We all have a responsibility to maintain high levels of hygiene standards. Managers will work with colleagues to ensure standards are maintained including having First Class Safety conversations.

At what point would we re-introduce controls?

We will continue to make any decisions with the health and safety of colleagues as a priority.

Where HSE or local health boards identify clusters or variants of concern we will follow the local advice which could include; pausing van sharing, re-introducing social distancing or mandating face coverings.

We will continue to support colleagues with health or other concerns encouraging them to speak with their manager who will work with the colleague and take reasonable steps to identify workable solutions to concerns.

For how long would we make adjustments such as not sharing vans, adjustments to duties etc for those who are vulnerable, pregnant, anxious? Is there a review point in mind?

This will be on a case by case basis using relevant risk assessment and case circumstances.

Can drivers still use their private cars to reach a delivery point?

No. The procedure for allowing private cars to be used as a temporary measure has been removed from Monday 11th October. Where drivers are unable to share due to personal conditions such as anxiety or stress, managers must work through those concerns on an individual basis using the Stress Risk Assessment.

[Link to Stress Risk Assessment](#)

2. SOCIAL DISTANCING

Do we still have to socially distance?

No. All social distancing restrictions have now been removed. We will continue to monitor the situation and where there are spikes in Coronavirus infections social distancing maybe reintroduced.

3. FACE COVERINGS

Do I still have to wear a face covering?

In England since Monday 19 July 2021 face coverings are no longer required by law and they are no longer mandated in our units in England. However, we **strongly** recommend that they continue to be worn, especially in shared vans and other close proximity activities and communal areas. In Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland face coverings remain mandated and must be worn in all Royal Mail Group indoor premises and customer premises. We will communicate any changes to the wearing of face coverings as appropriate.

In what situations would we mandate mask wearing?

Currently in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland masks continue to be mandated in our units and strongly recommended in England. We will continue to monitor infection levels and issue further communications as required.

Where do we stand if people are not comfortable working with those who choose not to wear a mask (in England currently, and at later dates in the devolved nations)?

Colleagues should speak to their manager and work through those concerns to identify the best way forward and managers will take advice from the People Case Advise Team (0345 604 2787) to gain advice where needed. There may be circumstances where an occupational health referral or letter from a colleague's General Practitioner may support us in making the right temporary arrangements for the colleague.

4. SELF-ISOLATION, TESTING, VULNERABLE COLLEAGUES AND ENFORCEMENT VISITS

I am Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) how can I protect myself when restrictions ease?

Clinically Extremely Vulnerable people are advised to follow the same guidance as everyone else. However, as someone who is at a higher risk of becoming seriously ill if you were to catch COVID-19, you should think particularly carefully about precautions you can continue to take and discuss these with your manager.

Do I still need to self-isolate?

As long as they have no symptoms, fully vaccinated adults (having two vaccinations) and under-18s will no longer have to self-isolate if they are identified as a close contact of someone with Covid. Instead, PCR tests will be used to test if someone is positive although guidance is different across the nations. [Click here for information on accessing a PCR test.](#)

The summary of changes communicated for England, Wales and Scotland is [here](#). A flowchart by nation is also available [here](#). Changes are now effective for Wales and Scotland, with changes for England being introduced from 16 August 2021.

Please note the rules in England for colleagues already self-isolating - if you are fully vaccinated (two vaccinations) and your self-isolation period began before 16 August and was due to end after 16 August, you will be able to leave self-isolation on 16 August. Currently in other nations you should continue to self-isolate.

New guidance for Northern Ireland from 16 August 2021 following a review:

- Fully vaccinated (two vaccinations) people who are a close contact of a Covid case will no longer have to self-isolate
- You will still be advised to take a PCR test on day two and eight
- If you test positive, you must continue to self-isolate, even if you do not have symptoms.

Further guidance and FAQs are available [here](#) and please look out for updated communications as guidance is changing regularly.

Can you still be asked to self-isolate even though you are double vaccinated?

Some colleagues will be asked to self-isolate by NHS test and trace even if they have been double vaccinated. Examples of this are:

1-Returning from travel abroad from some countries

2-They have a strain linked to variant of concern

3-Due to colleague's health status

4-There may be other situations which still require self-isolation even after you have been double jabbed.

Do we have workplace testing?

Testing is available for people without coronavirus symptoms. Tests can be accessed in several ways:

All employees are encouraged to participate in Lateral Flow Device Testing. Tests are available twice weekly, those opting to take part will be provided with the test kits at their workplace for their convenience and support, enabling them to test in the privacy and comfort of their own homes.

Alternatively, kits can be obtained through an online home ordering and delivery service, by 'Pharmacy-Collect', collection from test centre sites, by community testing offered by all local authorities and through testing on-site at schools and colleges.

[Click here](#) for more information or visit the GOV.UK website.

If we have Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) employees should we consider temporary alternative arrangements?

There may be situations where we need to agree or continue temporary alternative arrangements. Colleagues should speak to their manager and work through those concerns to identify the best way forward. Managers will take advice from the People Case Advise Team (0345 604 2787) to gain advice where needed. There may be circumstances where an occupational health referral or letter from a colleague's General Practitioner (GP) may support us in making the right temporary arrangements for the colleague.

What is the advice for colleagues who are pregnant?

All pregnant women should have a workplace risk assessment in place which is regularly reviewed to assess and manage any risks. More information is available [here](#).

If you are 28 weeks pregnant and beyond, or if you are pregnant and have an underlying health condition that puts you at a greater risk of severe illness from COVID-19 at any gestation, you should take a more precautionary approach. This is because although you are at no more risk of contracting the virus than any other non-pregnant person who is in similar health, you have an increased risk of becoming severely ill and of pre-term birth if you contract COVID-19.

You should continue to adhere to active control measures in place both in the workplace and in public. Any adjustments identified through risk assessment should be made as required and on a case by case basis. Further advice is available via the government website [here](#).

Please always speak to your manager with any concerns.

If an employee has worked less than 12 months in the business, does the joint statement around supporting people apply to them getting paid if they are self-isolating or are not able to attend work due to feeling unwell?

With effect from 3 May 2021 where an absence was/is related to coronavirus, our normal approach to sick pay has applied to all RM Group Ltd employees; employees with less than a year's service receives statutory sick pay.

For employees who have completed 12 months service will they receive full pay if they are self-isolating or are not able to attend work due to feeling unwell?

With effect from 3 May 2021 where an absence was/is related to coronavirus, our normal approach to sick pay has applied to all RM Group Ltd employees.

Will CEV members have any absence discounted in line with our agreement and LTB of 2 July 2021?

Yes, we will continue to support all colleagues, including CEV colleagues in relation to any Covid-19 related absence. We continue to expect most coronavirus related absences to be discounted from the normal attendance procedure. However, where coronavirus absences are for an excessive duration or repeat in nature, this may need to be reviewed.

What do we do if we are visited by an Enforcement Officer? (e.g. Health and Safety Executive (HSE), Officers, EHO (Environmental Health Officers), Police, Fire Authority, Trading Standards Officers)

As a reminder, here are the key actions in the event of a scheduled or unscheduled visit.

1. Ask the officer to provide their warrant/ ID pass to confirm their position.
2. Invite them to enter the premises and undertake the normal site induction and messaging.
3. Explain the existing coronavirus controls measures which are in place.
4. Escort the officer around the premises and answer their specific questions.
5. Make available requested documents (e.g. risk assessments) relevant to the inspection / investigation when asked.
6. Inform your SHEBP immediately of the visit, the Site Safety Representative, and Area CWU/CMA Unite Representative of any visit or approach without delay – they are able to support as required (and the Site Safety Representative may wish to accompany you throughout any visit).

5. CLEANING, FACILITIES & CSP CASH HANDLING

What is the PFS cleaning schedule and are we still operating deep cleans for where we have had confirmed cases?

Yes, we continue with the existing protocols.

What is the current position with our on-site gyms?

Many of our on-site gyms have been able to safely re-open. Before any gym can reopen, a full risk assessment must be completed by the gym manager, in consultation, and receive full sign off from the site person in control (PiC) and SHE Advisors (this may be completed virtually via phone or Skype). The risk assessment document has been produced by the gym management company in line with government guidance as well as any additional RMG control measures in place. It may also be appropriate to involve and update local trade union safety representatives and gym committees where these are in place.

When gyms cannot satisfy the requirements of the risk assessment, they will remain closed until they can, in line with government guidance. A copy of the completed risk assessment must remain on site in case of further inspection. The standards agreed in the risk assessment will need to be maintained on an ongoing basis to enable the gym to remain open.

Is it safe to use shared water fountains and water dispensers at this time?

The guidance remains unchanged - all drinking fountain facilities **must** remain decommissioned and out of use.

Water dispensers may be used however, they must have clear guidance displayed and sanitising wipes available at point of use.

It is important that we encourage employees to stay hydrated while at work. Employees may, if they so wish to, bring in their own water for consumption at work. However, for those employees that need to fill their empty water bottles at work please ensure they know how to refill safely.

If you do refill a bottle at work, the neck of the bottle must not touch the dispenser or tap. Sanitising wipes must be used to wipe the bottle and dispenser or tap if that happens. Please see the [link](#) for a poster on refilling bottles.

Water dispensers that have either been decommissioned or have not been used, must be re-commissioned to ensure legionella control, water quality and cleanliness of the asset. Sites should contact the National Service Centre on 0333 005 0312 and request that the water dispenser is re-commissioned as it has previously been taken out of service.

Are we able to accept cash at our Customer Service Points (CSPs) and is it still mandatory to wear a face covering?

We should continue to encourage contactless payment as much as possible. Hand sanitiser and optional use of gloves remain available when handling coins or bank notes.

It is no longer mandatory for customers and visitors to wear a face covering when entering a Customer Service Point in England. We are however requesting that customers and visitors continue to do so. An updated poster to display is available on the [SHE Coronavirus Document Library – Posters](#). Please replace any existing posters with this updated version.

6. OPERATIONS

What training and induction do we need to give to any casuals or new entrants?

Casual and agency employees and new entrants must be given a site induction on their first shift including local site information and working practices relating to Coronavirus. They should also be included with all future briefings to keep them informed of any changes to working practices.

Can we continue with driving training and driver coaching through Pertemps and Advanced Driver Coaches?

All the details on our revised driver training requirements are available by clicking on the [Link](#).

Can we use volunteers from other units to cover Covid-19 absence?

In units where there is a low number of cases proportional to the number of employees on site and there is no additional local council/health board local outbreak measures in place then volunteers can be brought into units. Volunteers should be shown the coronavirus signage and where hand sanitiser and other protective items can be obtained. Following any positive case offices receive enhanced cleaning and our units are COVID secure.

Local conversations should take place between unit managers and the SHE BP to discuss any local issues when transferring employees if managers are unsure.

In some cases, the unit may be given clear advice on employee movements by the HSE or council and we would expect units to abide by any requests from the authorities.

Are we changing the Ready For Delivery (RFD) Scanning in Deliveries?

When scanning the RFD scan on our Tracked products, this sends a message the customer letting them know the item is in the Delivery office and will be expected to be delivered on that day.

Unfortunately, due to the current limitations and absence levels in our operation, some parcels receiving the RFD scan are not being delivered on the day they are scanned.

In order to make sure our customers receive the correct messages the following changes should be made to the usual indoor scanning process for Delivery Offices:

- Only RFD scan Tracked parcels that you can commit to deliver today
- Ensure any Tracked items that you have scanned but are unable to take out receive a Delivery not Attempted scan

Royal Mail is changing Operational Delivery processes for the delivery of any parcels which cannot be posted through a letter box or that requires a signature, what do I need to do differently?

For non-signature parcels that aren't letter boxable (1C/2C, RM24/48, T24/48, International import)

1. Scan the parcel as delivered but do not press submit.
2. Leave the parcel on the doorstep, knock on the door and step back 2metres
3. When the customer comes to the door tell them they have a parcel there.
4. Witness the customer taking the parcel inside.
5. If the customer takes the parcel inside the Delivery Officer should press submit.
6. If the Customer refuses to take the parcel inside, then the Delivery Officer should retrieve the parcel, update the PDA status to "Undelivered - No Answer" and leave a "Something For You" card so that the parcel can be collected at a later point. Do not show the parcel as "Refused".

For signature parcels, including letter formats (Signed For, T24/48 with signature, International with signature)

1. Scan the parcel as delivered and press continue but do not enter the customer's name yet.
2. Leave the parcel on the doorstep, knock on the door and step back 2metres
3. When the customer comes to the door tell them they have a parcel there and inform them that we will not be collecting the usual signature, but we will require the customer's name and must witness the customer taking the parcel in.
4. Input the customer's name as normal and press proceed. When the signature box appears, input "XP1" but do not press done until the customer picks up the parcel.
5. If the customer takes the parcel inside the Delivery Officer should press done.
6. If the Customer refuses to take the parcel inside, then the Delivery Officer should retrieve the parcel, update the PDA status to "Not Delivered - No Answer" and leave a "Something For You" card so that the parcel can be collected at a later point. Do not show the parcel as "Refused".

For Special Delivery Guaranteed parcels, including letter formats:

1. Scan the parcel as delivered and press continue but do not enter the customer's name yet.
2. Leave the parcel on the doorstep, knock on the door and step back 2metres
3. When the customer comes to the door tell them they have a parcel there and inform them that we will not be collecting the usual signature, but we will require the customer's name and must witness the customer taking the parcel in.
4. Input the customer's name as normal and press proceed. When the signature box appears, input "XP1" but do not press done until the customer picks up the parcel.
5. If the customer takes the parcel inside the Delivery Officer should press done.
6. If the Customer refuses to take the parcel inside, then the Delivery Officer should retrieve the parcel, update the PDA status to "Not Delivered - No Answer" and leave a "Something For You" card so that the parcel can be collected at a later point. Do not show the parcel as "Refused".

What is the advice on delivery and collection to care homes Wales Scotland and Northern Ireland?

Where the current practice is to deliver to each door in a care home, the DOM should contact those care homes to agree to leave the mail at a central point. If the care home does not agree, then deliveries should be made in the normal way.

What is the advice on Delivery to and Collection from Care Homes in England?

New government regulations come into effect in England only on 11th November 2021 relating to care homes registered with the Care Quality Commission. All delivery and collections staff need to be informed of the forthcoming regulations, so they understand the impact. Our approach will be to avoid going inside the care home and make the delivery/collection outside at the front door instead. Key actions are required by all Delivery Managers. Please see the [managers guidance](#) and the [staff brief](#).

A Post Office where P739 items are left for collection is closed, what do we do with P739 items?

Where a Post Office is closed, use the parent delivery office "When You Were Out" cards until the Post Office re-opens. Items should be returned to the main office Customer Service Point for collection

If when I got to a collection point such as a Post Offices/Businesses and it is closed upon arrival (many with notices up stating due to Coronavirus), how do I report this on my collection scanner?

Use Code 20 – Emergency for all cases where the premises are advising they are closed due to Coronavirus – for other collections use normal business as usual codes.

Vehicle Cleaning

Where a confirmed case of Coronavirus has been identified, Regional Public health bodies will provide advice on that affected employees case and the need for cleaning of specific areas within their workplace including equipment and any vehicle use.

- RM Fleet central booking helpline should be advised as soon as a positive test case has been confirmed by the operational site, of the vehicle that requires cleaning. The booking can be contacted - RM Fleet on 0345 2660005 (select option 3)
- The vehicle must remain quarantined until the specialist clean has been undertaken.
- RM Fleet will arrange a clean / sanitisation of the vehicle by an approved sub-contractor at the RM location.
- An RM fleet approved sub-contractor will confirm a booking date for the vehicle to be sanitised.
- The sanitisation process has been approved by RM Safety.
- Additionally, all general debris & rubbish (coffee cups, something for you cards, sandwich bags) will be removed from the vehicle and doubled bagged, the bags will be left at the RM site for disposal via normal procedures.
- Other items such as clothing or RM equipment will be single bagged at left at the RM location for inspection after 72-hour quarantine.
- Line managers should make a note in the vehicle logbook of the date the vehicle was sanitised.

Where vehicle cleaning is identified (this will not be undertaken unless against a Positive Coronavirus diagnosis (following testing) has been completed), RM Fleet will arrange for the vehicle(s) in which the affected colleagues who have driven the vehicle to be cleaned.

The vehicle must be left in quarantine until the specialist clean has been undertaken.

Note1: no vacuuming or brushing of surfaces will be undertaken so as not to cause any virus particles to become air borne.

Note 2: Removal of debris in the vehicle is part of the standard daily check.

Note 3: the process is to sanitise and kill any virus in the vehicle, it is not a valet process