

Coronavirus Guidance - Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

General

What is the current situation on Coronavirus in the UK?

For the UK in general, Public Health England (PHE) states that this is a rapidly evolving situation. They are monitoring it carefully. The current risk to the UK population is moderate, according to PHE.

What are the symptoms?

PHE England states on their website: "Typical symptoms of coronavirus include fever and a cough that may progress to a severe pneumonia causing shortness of breath and breathing difficulties. Generally, coronavirus can cause more severe symptoms in people with weakened immune systems, older people, and those with long term conditions like diabetes, cancer and chronic lung disease."

How does it spread?

According to Public Health England, because it's a new illness, it is not known exactly how it spreads from person to person. But, similar viruses spread by cough droplets or sneeze droplets. These droplets fall on people in the vicinity. They can be directly inhaled or picked up on the hands and transferred when someone touches their face.

What guidance are you providing to colleagues?

We take your health and safety very seriously. Please use the guidance in this Q&A and from Public Health England. We are doing so in line with guidance from Public Health England. With all mail handling and other roles, we are recommending;

- Good hand hygiene is maintained to minimise the risk of any infection.
- Disposable gloves are made available to anyone on request through their line manager
- Carry disposable tissues. Dispose of the tissue carefully - "Catch it, Bin it, Kill it"
- We already provide antiseptic wipes for handheld shared items including PDAs, finger scanners and also multi-use keyboards.

Other tips include:

- Always wash hands before eating
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands
- Do not share snacks from packets or bowls that others are dipping their fingers into.
- Regularly clean, not just hands, but commonly used surfaces and devices you touch or handle

Any employee with concerns should visit the appropriate health authority website if you think you have symptoms, or may have been exposed to the virus and are unsure of what to do:

England: [NHS 111 online](#)
Scotland: [NHS Inform](#)
Wales: [NHS Direct Wales](#)
Northern Ireland: [Public Health Agency](#)

Q1 What is the key preventative advice to reduce the risk of coronavirus?

The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to the virus. You can access the latest NHS guidance to help avoid catching or spreading coronavirus [here](#).

Q2 How should I report that I am self-isolating?

Should you be self-isolating, or are responsible for looking after a child who has been advised to self-isolate, this must be reported to Angard on 0333 240 8502.

Q3 What happens with pay if I am self-isolating?

In addition to reporting self-isolation as above, you should report your absence via the [Angard website](#). This will allow us to assess your situation and allow us to pay Statutory Sick Pay, subject to you meeting the qualifying criteria and in line with the current Government advice.

Q4 What is the latest government advice re self-isolation for employees

The situation is constantly changing and you should check [this guidance](#) for the latest advice on this area.

You can access up to date guidance on what steps to take whilst self-isolating on the NHS website, available [here](#).

[Guidance to protect extremely vulnerable people](#) has been issued by the NHS who are writing, emailing or texting people that are extremely vulnerable due to certain medical conditions or the treatment they are undergoing. Employees that receive this contact from the NHS should fully comply with the instructions in the letter and keep their line manager informed.

Angard will keep in contact with employees who are self-isolating.

Q5 Should I be self isolating?

Any employee with concerns should visit the NHS 111 Website - <https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19>.

Employees can and answer a set of questions to help them determine if they should self-isolate or not. The advice for Northern Ireland is to call 111.

Please do not contact Angard for advice in this area, follow the NHS guidance above.

Q6 What is the key advice for 'vulnerable' employees?

[Guidance to protect extremely vulnerable people](#) has been issued by the NHS who are writing, emailing or texting people that are extremely vulnerable due to certain medical conditions or the treatment they are undergoing. **Employees that receive this contact from the NHS should fully comply with the instructions in the letter and keep Angard informed.**

The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to the virus. You can access the latest NHS guidance to help avoid catching or spreading coronavirus [here](#).

Be aware of what close contact is - NHS guidance on what "close contact" with someone with a confirmed case of coronavirus means is available on their Q&A site: [click here](#).

New advice for the public and those who may be more at risk than others is being shared regularly.

Employees should continue to be disciplined with hand hygiene advice and contact their own GP with concerns. An employee's GP will have the medical information on which to advise the employee on any recommendations specific to them.

Q7 What is the current advice for returning travellers?

Please see Advice for returning travellers, [here](#)

Q8 Can you catch Coronavirus from parcels and letters?

Public Health England (PHE) has advised that people receiving parcels are not at risk of contracting the coronavirus. This complements the highly publicised guidance from PHE for people to wash their hands more often than usual using soap and hot water.

The Government published advice to businesses on gov.uk on Tuesday 25th February, available here. It states that “there is no perceived increase in risk for handling post”.

The World Health Organisation has also advised that coronaviruses do not survive long on objects, such as letters or packages.

Q9 What is the company’s position on Social Distancing?

Royal Mail supports Public Health England’s [social distancing guidance](#). We have introduced and communicated temporary changes to operational processes. They include staggered meal breaks, cancellation of WTLLs and changes to doorstep deliveries. You can get more detail at PHE and NHS websites. Further information will be provided next week. Social distancing is everyone’s responsibility so please do all you can to follow the PHE guidance.

Regulations issued in Wales and effective 7th April 2020 mean the 2m social distancing rule will apply to any workplace, including homes, where work and repairs are being undertaken, and outdoor spaces.

Q10 Is it safe to use shared water fountains and water dispensers at this time?

There is a risk of contracting coronavirus from shared water dispensers via cross contamination. Good hygiene practices need to be followed at all time in communal rest facilities. You should never allow your mouth to come into contact with the dispensing tap of a water fountain, so in this current pandemic we are requesting all units cordon off the use of these drinking fountain facilities.

We encourage all employees to stay hydrated and advise they purchase or bring in from home enough bottled water/drinks to last the length of their delivery rather than refilling at work. For unit based employees we recommend that sites purchase disposable cups to use in conjunction with water coolers. Plastic cups should be disposed of as general waste and are not recyclable. Re-useable bottles should not be refilled using any water dispensers.

Q11 Is it safe to handle mail without hand sanitiser?

Yes. PHE has advised that people receiving parcels are not at risk of contracting the coronavirus. They should continue to wash their hands more often than usual using soap and hot water. The hand soap that we provide is effective for hand washing and good hand hygiene.

Q12 Why don’t we have hand sanitiser?

The hand soap that we provide is effective for hand washing and good hand hygiene. It is also possible to order sanitiser or gel. However, there are long lead times for these products. We are trying to get it. But, so is everyone else.

Q13 The hand wash in our dispensers does not contain alcohol, will it be powerful enough to kill any virus? If not, can we get hand sanitiser gel?

The hand soap that we provide is effective for hand washing and good hand hygiene. We are not currently providing hand sanitiser or gel.

Q14 Do we have enough soap?

Yes. We have enough soap. If you need more soap, please speak to your manager, who can contact the PFS Helpdesk. It will coordinate a replenishment service via the local Cleaning Team.

Q15 Should we wear gloves?

No. PHE guidance is that you do not need to wear gloves. However, gloves are available, if you choose to wear them. If you want gloves, please speak to your manager.

Q16 Do we have enough gloves?

Yes. If you want gloves, please speak to a manager.

Q17 How can I order gloves and antiseptic wipes?

Disposable gloves are available to order, please speak to you line manager.

Royal Mail procurement have advised that demand for antiseptic wipes has outstripped supply and following a period of increased buying we have now exhausted all our supplier's stocks of wipes. This remains a priority for us and our expert procurement team are working on ways to remedy this.

As Royal Mail suppliers are no longer able to fulfil orders, existing supplies of antiseptic wipes should be used only where essential.

Regular hand washing is the most effective way to reduce the chance of contracting and spreading any virus. There are practical solutions to handwashing on delivery and collection which should be considered:

- Washing hands before leaving the office to start your duty and on return
- Request to use facilities of a business customer (they are legally required to provide toilet facilities)
- Make use of any public toilets
- If there is an urgent requirement to wash hands e.g. first aid incident, consider stopping your delivery/collection and visit the nearest public convenience or drive back to your office.

Q18 Will Royal Mail be providing face masks?

Current guidance is aligned to Public Health England advice on the use of face masks outside of clinical or care settings. Masks are not recommended outside of clinical settings.

Where we have identified specific roles for whom observing the 2m physical distancing is at times difficult, masks are being provided. However, in those cases the 2m physical distancing must be observed when possible and hand hygiene rules, including not touching the mouth, nose and eyes or before eating must continue to be observed.

The World Health Organization guidance on when to use a mask says states that it is only beneficial to stop the spread of the virus for:

- People who are ill, coughing and sneezing to reduce them from spreading the virus to others.
- People who are caring for, or in close contact with someone who is infected. People who are healthy only need to wear a mask if they are taking care of a person with suspected 2019-nCoV infection.

Further information on the use of face masks can be found on the [WHO website](#).

Q19 What new cleaning processes have Royal Mail put in place?

RMG have enhanced the normal cleaning regimes through increased frequencies and additional cleaning of high contact touchpoints.

Thank you for your ongoing support at this challenging time. Please continue to follow all the guidance on protecting yourself from coronavirus, especially when it comes to washing your hands.

Further information can be found at myroyalmail.com/coronavirus