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12 January 2021

COVID-19(21)05

**TO: LABOUR AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
ALL MEMBERS & ASSOCIATE MEMBERS
BIWEEKLY MEMBERS MEETING PARTICIPANTS
INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION GROUP PARTICIPANTS**

UNITED KINGDOM ENTRANCE RESTRICTIONS UPDATE NOTE

Action Required

Members are invited to note the information which has been published by the UK government today regarding pre-departure testing will be required for all inbound passengers to England from 4am on 15 January 2021. There will be a very restricted number of exemptions, including maritime crew. Certain limited reasonable excuses for not undergoing testing will also be permitted, e.g. lack of testing infrastructure in the departure country and will apply to 3 overseas territories – St Helena, Ascension Island and the Falklands.

Information is contained in the document published 11 January 2021 and further information can click on to the hyperlinks contained in the underlined sections below

Last week the UK Prime Minister announced that the government had made a difficult but necessary decision to introduce a new national lockdown.

Both globally and domestically The UK is seeing significant increases in levels of coronavirus (COVID-19), including the emergence of worrying new strains. It is therefore imperative that The UK ensure it is doing all it can to protect travel, reduce the risk of imported infections, including from new variants, and protect the National Health Service (NHS) while national lockdown and vaccinations take effect.

The UK already have strong safeguards in place, including a requirement for mandatory 10-day self-isolation for the vast majority of arrivals and travel corridors system remains critical in managing the risk of imported cases from high-risk countries. The UK also successfully launched the test to release scheme last month, which provides passengers with the option to reduce self-isolation, through isolating for 5 days after they have left a destination not on the travel corridors list and then taking a test. Pre-departure testing does not remove the public health need for international arrivals travelling from non-exempt countries to isolate for 10 days or opt into test to release.

However, due to increasing instances of COVID-19 around the world, including the emergence of new variants, The UK is now taking additional steps to add a further layer of protection to safeguard public health.

From 4am on 15 January, The UK will introduce pre-departure testing requirements for all inbound passengers to England. Passengers arriving by ship, plane or train must take a test up to 3 days before departure and provide evidence of a negative result before travel.

This will be an additional requirement that applies to all passengers, including those travelling from a travel corridor country, other than those on a very short list of exemptions. This extra layer of protection is in addition to existing self-isolation requirements.

The UK will establish standards that tests must meet in regulations. This will include that the test must be of a diagnostic-standard test such as a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test and could in some cases include LAMP and lateral flow tests within set limits. Clear guidance and advice to passengers about testing standards and capacity will be provided.

Guidance will be available to passengers and carriers on what to look for to assure tests and the results provided meet the standards required.

The UK will keep test standards and innovative testing technologies under review.

In addition, The UK will also set out information passengers must have with them at check-in and the UK border to show they have had a qualifying negative test. This will include set data fields which test result certificates must include. All information on test requirements will be made available to passengers and transport operators through GOV.UK guidance.

The current advice for those across the UK remains to stay at home and not travel abroad unless it is for a permitted exempt reason. The requirements apply equally to visitors from other states and British Nationals, and carriers may deny boarding if passengers are not in receipt of a qualifying negative test. British Nationals that need consular assistance should contact the nearest consulate, embassy or high commission.

If British Nationals test positive for COVID-19 while abroad they should not travel and should follow the local relevant guidance on self-isolation.

Transport operators must check that a passenger has proof of a negative test result before they board their flight, train or ferry, and may deny boarding where appropriate to reduce numbers of non-compliant individuals arriving in England. Border Force will also conduct further checks upon arrival.

If a passenger arrives in England without a pre-departure negative test result they will be fined. The UK will amend the International Travel Regulations so that fines, starting at £500, can be levied on non-compliant passengers. Operators will also be fined for transporting non-compliant passengers.

Passengers travelling to England from the Common Travel Area (the United Kingdom, Ireland, Isle of Man, Jersey and Guernsey), will not be in scope of the regulations.

Children under the age of 11 will also not be required to complete pre-departure testing.

There will be a very restricted number of exemptions, including hauliers to allow the free flow of freight, and air, international rail and maritime crew. Certain limited reasonable excuses for not undergoing testing will also be permitted, for example, lack of testing infrastructure in the departure country. This will apply to 3 overseas territories – St Helena, Ascension Island and the Falklands.

Arrivals from 3 additional countries will be considered to have a reasonable excuse not to comply due to lack of testing infrastructure. However, for these countries this will only apply for a specific, time limited window. This includes:

- Antigua and Barbuda – until 4am Thursday 21 January 2021
- St Lucia – until 4am Thursday 21 January 2021
- Barbados – until 4am Thursday 21 January 2021

If passengers are arriving from one of the above 3 countries after the time limited window has ended, they will be required to meet all pre-departure testing requirements.

Further details on exemptions and reasonable excuses will be set out in regulations and in guidance. The UK will keep exemptions and reasonable excuses under regular review.

The UK will make detailed guidance available to both passengers and transport operators to support implementation of these changes. Measures are likely to be in place until the end of the current lockdown, although a review will take place before the end of the period.

The UK government recognises the continued challenges that the pandemic poses, both for individuals and for businesses. It has worked closely with the international travel sector during the pandemic and will continue to do so as The UK emerges from lockdown and are able to encourage people to travel again with confidence. are also continuing to implement recommendations set out in the [Global Travel Taskforce report](#) to support the safe recovery of international travel.

The delivery of a safe, effective vaccine is also the best way to protect the most vulnerable, save thousands of lives and support the removal of many of the restrictions and return to international travel. The UK are already making progress, particularly regarding vaccination delivery.

In the immediate term priority will be on safeguarding public health and the NHS. With the addition of pre-departure testing requirements, the already robust system to protect against imported cases of coronavirus is further strengthened and will provide the greatest overall protection against the risk of transmission during travel to England and after arrival.

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