## **Guidance for diplomatic missions, consular posts and international organisations on the new health measures at the UK border**

The UK Government’s absolute priority is to protect the public and stop the spread of the COVID-19 virus. As the level of infection in the UK reduces, it will be important to manage the risk of transmissions being reintroduced from abroad to avoid a second wave. This is why the Government, in line with many other countries, has introduced a series of measures and restrictions at the UK border which are supported by Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE), to contribute to keeping the overall number of transmissions in the UK as low as possible.

Under the Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (England) Regulations 2020 (and equivalent regulations elsewhere in the UK), international travellers arriving in the UK from 8 June 2020 will be subject to new public health restrictions. These restrictions are:

a. The mandatory collection of personal data from arriving passengers via an online ‘contact locator’ form;

b. A mandatory requirement for all people arriving in the UK to self-isolate at a location they specify for a period of 14 days.

There are only very limited exemptions from these measures, which will support Public Health England’s contact tracing system.

In addition to the legal measures, all international travellers will be encouraged to install the NHS contact tracing app (NHSX).

Public health is a devolved matter. The Government is therefore working closely with the Devolved Administrations, who will be introducing similar provisions, to build a four nations approach.

Further details can be found on the [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk/uk-border-control) website, as well as in the Q&A below on the general policy. The new measures will be subject to review every three weeks to ensure they are in line with the latest scientific evidence and support the UK’s roadmap to recovery.

How does this affect the diplomatic community?

*(See definition of diplomatic community and missions/IOs below)*

* All members of the diplomatic community will be exempt from filling in the contact locator form.
* Exemptions from self-isolation will be limited to those members of the diplomatic community who have been certified by their Heads of Mission/IO as needing to undertake duties on arrival that are essential to the functioning of the mission/International Organisation (IO) and which cannot be done while self-isolating. Family members and dependents are not eligible for this exemption and will be required to self-quarantine in line with the Regulations.
* This is without prejudice to any immunity from jurisdiction or inviolability which is accorded to any person described in above under the law of England and Wales apart from these Regulations.

A list of qualifying categories (referred to here as the ‘diplomatic community’) is shown below.

a) A member of a diplomatic mission in the UK

b) A member of a consular post in the UK

c) An officer or servant of an International Organisation\*

d) Employed by an International Organisation as an expert or on a mission

e) A representative to an International Organisation

f) A representative at an International or United Kingdom conference who is granted P&Is in the UK

g) A member of the official staff of a person in (e) or(f)

h) A person described in (a) or (b) who is passing through the United Kingdom to commence or continue their functions at a diplomatic mission or consular post in another country or territory, or to return to the country of their nationality,

k) A diplomatic or consular courier

l) A member of the family forming part of the household of a person falling within any

of the above categories

Those who fall outside this category are not able to apply for diplomatic exemptions. Further details on these and other exemptions can be found on the [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-travellers-exempt-from-uk-border-rules/coronavirus-covid-19-travellers-exempt-from-uk-border-rules) website or in the Q&A section below.

Missions/IO also refers to Consular post and international/ UK conferences

\*An IO is defined by the Regulations as an IO that has been granted privileges and immunities in the UK

How to obtain exemption letters

*FCDO Protocol Directorate will process exemption letters for the individuals covered in the above categories. To obtain exemption letters for government officials wishing to visit the UK to conduct official business with the UK, please contact the relevant FCDO geographic desk for guidance.*

In order that we can provide exemption letters covering the above measures, we are asking missions and international organisations (rather than individual travellers) to inform FCDO Protocol Directorate **in advance** of any intended travel by members of staff. Missions/international organisations should download the pre-notification form (Form 0 (COVID-19v2) from the [Protocol website](https://protocol.fco.gov.uk/): https://protocol.fcdo.gov.uk/ and email it to (Protocol.Covid19@fcdo.gov.uk) as soon as notified of intended travel, **but no later than two working days prior to travel**. We can only accept electronic applications at present due to the majority of FCDO staff working from home and being unable to receive or process paper applications.

The information requested on the form is similar to that which missions already provide to FCDO Protocol Directorate for new arrivals in post, such as contact details and address while in the UK. In addition we will need passenger travel details, including vessel/flight numbers and seat (where known) and passport numbers. This will allow the individuals to be quickly alerted if it is subsequently discovered that they may have come into contact with an infected individual. The FCDO will apply the same standard of data privacy to this information as it does to that collected for new arrivals.

We anticipate that most individuals will be in the position of requiring an exemption from filling in the contact locator form but not from self-isolation. Exemption from filling in the contact locator form alone does not need to be signed off by the Head of Mission/International Organisation– other suitable officers in the mission can perform this function. On receiving such forms, we will issue a ‘contact locator form’ exemption letter. This will need to be used in conjunction with normal travel documents when passing through the border.

We anticipate that a smaller number of individuals will be in the position of requiring exemptions from filling in the contact locator form and from self-isolation. These individuals will need to ensure the Head of Mission/IO (or Chargé/Deputy in their absence) has certified on the form that they will be required to undertake duties on arrival that are both essential to the functioning of the mission/IO and cannot be done while self-isolating. On receiving the information, we will in these cases issue two exemption letters, one covering the contact locator requirement and the other the requirement for self-isolation. The self-isolation exemption letter will need to be carried at all times during the 14 day self-isolation period and produced if challenged by authorities.

We are looking to missions to apply exemptions responsibly.

Letters can be issued on an individual rather than family basis, to enable family members to travel independently of the accredited/appointed diplomat, should they wish to do so. If this is required please indicate on the form.

In order to maintain an accurate record of new arrivals we still need individuals to continue to complete the Protocol arrival form, Form 1, once they have arrived in the UK at the start of their posting. Form 1 is available on the Protocol website.

Travelling to the UK

On departure, travel company staff may ask travellers whether they have completed a contact locator form. Border Force will also undertake spot checks on passengers arriving in the UK. If asked for proof of exemption, diplomats/international organisation staff and their families should provide copies of their exemption letters.

If an individual has forgotten their proof of exemption they will not be prevented from flying but may be inconvenienced by Border Force officials whilst their status is verified. This may take some time, especially out-of-hours. Border force Officials will accept electronic copies of the letters, such as on a mobile phone.

It is recommended that newly arriving/returning staff are collected from the airport, port or station by colleagues, friends or family or use private vehicles. Travellers should only use public transport if they have no other option. If they do use public transport, they should wear something that covers their nose and mouth and stay two metres apart from other people where possible.

**Q & A**

General Policy

*This section answers questions related to the general UK policy on health measures at the UK border. For questions related specifically to the diplomatic/ international organisation exemptions, please scroll down to the relevant section.*

The New Measures

The measures include:

* **Contact locator form** – Passengers arriving in the UK, whether as a final destination or for transit, will be required to complete a form to provide contact and travel information so they can be contacted if they, or someone they may have been in contact with, develops symptoms of COVID-19.

Passengers arriving from another part of the Common Travel Area (CTA) (Ireland, the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands) will not have to complete the contact locator form if they have been in the CTA for at least the previous 14 days.

* **Self-isolation** – Passengers arriving in the UK will be required to self-isolate for 14 days from arrival. They may be contacted regularly throughout this period to ensure compliance.

Passengers arriving from another part of the CTA will not be required to self-isolate if they have been in the CTA for at least the previous 14 days.

* **Enforcement** - Anyone failing to comply with the mandatory conditions, and who does not have exemption from the restrictions, may face enforcement action. A breach of self-isolation would be punishable with a £1,000 fixed penalty notice in England or potential prosecution and unlimited fine. The level of fine could rise if the risk of infection from abroad increases. The Devolved Administrations will set out their own enforcement approaches.
* **Spot checks** - Border Force will undertake checks at the border and may refuse entry to any non-British citizen who refuses to comply with these regulations and is not resident in the UK. Failure to complete the form is also punishable by a £100 fixed penalty notice. Public health authorities will conduct random checks in England to ensure compliance with self-isolation requirements. Removal from the country would be considered as a last resort for foreign nationals who refuse to comply with these public health measures.

This will not affect those who fall within specific exemptions.

**Are there any exemptions to the measures?**

Yes, there are some groups which are exempt from the measures. This includes:

* Those travelling to the UK from Ireland, the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man will not need to complete the online contact and accommodation form or self-isolate for 14 days.
* Certain key workers will be exempt from self-isolation, for example those that are travelling to maintain essential supply chains, critical national infrastructure or to contribute to the crisis response.
* Finally, a very small group will be exempt from providing a contact detail declaration. This includes diplomats, consular and international organisation staff, defence personnel and contractors and officials working on border security.

The full list of exemptions can be found on the [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-travellers-exempt-from-uk-border-rules/coronavirus-covid-19-travellers-exempt-from-uk-border-rules) website.

**Why are these measures being introduced?**

The Government is introducing these measures now because imported cases matter more when the UK has a low level of infection. When domestic transmission is high imported cases represent a small amount of the total and make no significant difference to the epidemic. As the UK moves to a situation where domestic transmission is much lower (including when our infection rate falls below that of other countries) imported cases could become a higher proportion of the overall number of infections.

**How long will these measures be in place and will they be amended?**

These measures will be reviewed every three weeks. Ministers will continue to be guided by scientific advice and data when reviewing the measures.

**Will the measures come into force across the Devolved Administrations at the same time?**

Public health matters are devolved, we are working closely with the Devolved Administrations to build a four nations approach. For further implementation of COVID crisis restrictions and advice in the devolved nations please see these websites:

Scotland: <https://www.gov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Wales: <https://gov.wales/coronavirus>

Northern Ireland: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/coronavirus-covid-19>

**Why aren’t you temperature screening at the border like other countries?** Throughout the outbreak, all of our decisions have been based on the best scientific evidence. The purpose of these measures is to manage the risk of transmissions being introduced from abroad. Temperature testing will not identify everyone who is infected with COVID-19 when they enter the UK – especially people who have not yet developed symptoms or for who raised temperature is not a symptom. That is why we will be asking all travellers to self-isolate for 14 days.

Travelling to the UK

**Are you officially recommending that people don’t travel to the UK?**

No. It is for other governments to provide advice to their nationals on travel to the UK, just as the UK Government advises British nationals on travel overseas through our travel advice.

**Are all forms of transport covered by the measures and exemptions?**

Yes, all forms of transport are included in both the measures and exemptions.

**Where is the information on UK Government recommended accommodation?** Border Force officers at points of entry will inform travellers of their options. However, it is hoped that the pre-notification will mean that this option is not needed in the case of diplomatic/consular/international organisations arrivals.

**What happens if someone has symptoms or has been in contact with someone who has symptoms?**

Our advice on this cannot be clearer; if someone has the virus, if they are displaying symptoms or have been in contact with someone who has had the virus recently then they should not travel. To do otherwise is putting other lives at risk.

**Should missions advertise the general policy and contact locator forms for their nationals wanting to visit the UK?**

A link will be made available on gov.uk which missions are free to use, but we will also advertise through travel companies to help ensure the message reaches all who intend to travel to the UK.

Self-Isolation

## **What is the new requirement to self-isolate?**

On arrival in the UK, there will be a mandatory 14 day period of self-isolation. Individuals can self-isolate at: home, the home of a friend or family member, or in a hotel, hostel, Bed & Breakfast (B&B) or other suitable place. Individuals can self-isolate in more than one place if necessary (i.e. they can move from a hotel into their home, if their home is not immediately available). They can self-isolate with those family members they travelled with and join family/friends already in the UK.

Only if absolutely essential, they are able to leave, or be outside, the place where they are self-isolating in order to:

* depart the UK, i.e. to leave the country within 14 days of arrival ;
* obtain basic necessities including food and medical supplies for those in the same household;
* seek medical assistance;
* fulfil a legal obligation, including attending court or to participate in legal proceedings;
* to access critical public services in exceptional circumstances (childcare or educational facilities, social services, services for victims, services provided by DWP);
* attend a funeral for a member of their household or a close family member;
* avoid injury or illness or to escape a risk of harm.

**Will those who need to self-isolate be required to stay in the UK for the full 14 days? Will they be prevented from leaving?**

People do not have to stay in the UK for the full 14 days self-isolation period. They are permitted to end self-isolation and depart the UK, providing they travel straight to their departure port and avoid using public transport if possible. If they do use public transport, they should wear something that covers their nose and mouth and stay two metres apart from other people where possible.

If individuals intend to remain in the UK beyond the 14 days self-isolation period, then they should not end self-isolation until the 14 days are complete.

**What about those who are only staying in the UK overnight, do they need to self-isolate?**

We would expect those who spend the night in the UK, whether due to a short visit or because they are transiting, to abide by the self-isolation guidelines, and to travel directly to and from their ports of arrival and departure, ideally using private rather than public transport.

**What if a passenger has already had COVID-19 and recovered?**

COVID-19 is a new disease and the science around “immunity” to the virus remains uncertain. We do not, for example, know how long an antibody response to the virus lasts nor whether having antibodies means one does not transmit the virus to others.This means everyone who is not exempt – including people who have had the symptoms of COVID-19 recently - should self-isolate for 14 days from arrival.

**If self-isolating with family or friends living in the UK, will they also have to self-isolate for 14 days from arrival?**

No, only people travelling to the UK need to self-isolate.

**Are there Government facilities available for self-isolation?**

If someone cannot safely self-isolate in their own (or arranged) accommodation, they should tell a Border Force official as they arrive at the UK border who can direct them to the booking system. The expectation will be that they pay for their accommodation. Existing immigration rules allow for a traveller who has insufficient funds to support themselves during a visit to be refused entry to the UK.

Travel within the UK

**Is it possible to transit the UK, and travel in/out of different ports (e.g. inbound on the Eurostar, outbound on a flight from Heathrow)? Can this be done without self-isolating?**

Landside transit is possible. If, after entering the UK, someone is travelling directly to a port from which they will leave the UK or travel home, they may do so without self-isolating. But they **still need to complete the contact locator form**. They should avoid using public transport to travel between ports if possible. If they do use public transport, they should wear something that covers their nose and mouth and stay two metres apart from other people.

**Do individuals who transit the UK, and remain airside, need to complete the contact locator form? Do they need to self-isolate?**

Yes, even those who remain airside will need to complete the contact locator form before they travel to the UK, unless they are eligible for and apply for an exemption. They will not need to self-isolate as they are only transiting the UK.

**How can passengers reach their accommodation or the Government-arranged accommodation if they are supposed to be self-isolating?**

Friends or family can collect travellers from the airport, port or station. Travellers should only use public transport if they have no other option. If they do use public transport, they should wear something that covers their nose and mouth and stay two metres apart from other people.

Enforcement

**How will the border measures be enforced?**

Given the high levels of compliance we have seen to date, we expect that the majority of people will do the right thing and abide by these measures. But we will take enforcement action against the minority of people who endanger the safety of others.

British Nationals and foreign nationals who fail to comply with the mandatory conditions could face enforcement action. A breach of self-isolation would be punishable with a £1,000 fixed penalty notice in England or potential prosecution and unlimited fine. The level of fine will be kept under review. Immigration action will also be considered as a last resort for foreign nationals.

The police will continue to use their powers proportionately and will engage, explain and encourage, and only as a last resort, enforce.

Enforcement measures will be set individually by the Devolved Administrations.

**What checks will be in place to make sure the information provided on contact locator forms is accurate?**

Border Force officers will be making spot checks on people crossing the border. The checks will be done at a level to assure compliance. If Border Force officers find a high level of non-compliance through the spot checks, we will increase the proportion of people being checked. However, we believe that the vast majority of people will see that it is in their best interests to provide correct information to help stop the spread of this disease.

**Will airlines prevent our nationals from flying if they have not completed the contact locator form?**

Airlines are aware of these measures and will support us in encouraging their passengers to complete their contact details in the UK. They will not stop travellers from flying if they have not completed the contact locator form. Travellers will be given the opportunity to complete the form on arrival in the UK.

Diplomatic Exemptions

*This section will answer questions related specifically to the diplomatic exemptions.*

Who is exempt?

**Who is exempt from completing the contact locator form?**Members of the diplomatic community (as defined on page 2) will be exempt from filling in the contact tracing form.

**Who is exempt from self-isolation?**

Exemptions from self-isolation will be limited to those members of the diplomatic community who have been certified by their Heads of Mission (International Organisation) as needing to undertake duties on arrival that are both essential to the functioning of the mission/IO and cannot be done while self-isolating. Family members and dependants are not eligible for this exemption and will be expected to self-quarantine in line with the regulations.

**Are Heads of Mission automatically exempt?**

Heads of Mission/IO are not automatically exempt. If Heads of Mission/IO can work from home then they should do so. A Head of Mission (International Organisation) can self-certify or their Chargé (Deputy) can certify them.

**Are Honorary Consuls exempt?**Diplomatic exemptions apply only to those who are members of missions or posts in the UK, and the family members/dependants of such staff. If the Honorary Consul is in this category, they will be exempt from filling in the contact locator form. Further, if their work is certified as meeting the qualifying criteria by the Head of Mission, they will be exempt from self-isolation measures.

**Are staff/representatives of international organisations headquartered elsewhere, on an official visit to their office (organisation) in the UK, exempt?**

So long as the international organisation concerned has been granted P&Is in the UK then staff/representatives would be exempt from completing the contact locator form. If their work is certified as meeting the qualifying criteria by their Head of International Organisation they will also be exempt from self-isolation measures.

**Why can’t the Head of Mission (International Organisation) certify family members as essential workers?**

This exemption is provided to facilitate delivery of essential functions of the mission. Only members of the mission can carry out essential functions.

**What about non-essential staff?**

We would expect staff who are doing either non-essential work or work that can be done from home to abide by the Regulations and self-isolate for 14 days after arrival.

**What about local employees or contractors working for us?**

The exemptions aren’t designed for the purposes of local staff/contractors.

**Are visiting Heads of State exempt from self-isolation?**

By virtue of their privileges and immunities, Heads of State are exempt from the requirement to provide contact information and are eligible for exemption from self-isolation.

**Are visiting government officials exempt from self-isolation?**

Foreign government officials wishing to come to the UK to conduct official business with the UK should contact the relevant FCDO geographic desk for further guidance.

**What about diplomatic couriers?**

Diplomatic couriers are exempt from completing the contact locator form and may be exempt from self-isolation measures, if their work is certified as essential to the functioning of the mission and cannot be done while they are self-isolating. The relevant Head of mission/post should complete Form 0 (COVID-19v2), available on the [Protocol website](https://protocol.fco.gov.uk/), to inform the FCDO Protocol Directorate of their travel plans (no later than two working days before they travel) to apply for the exemptions.

**Is it possible to get a blanket waiver for couriers or staff from other posts?**

No, all those seeking diplomatic exemptions will need to pre-notify FCDO Protocol Directorate ahead of each instance of travel in order to be issued with exemption letters.

**Can incoming family members be exempt if they visit the UK to look at housing and schools?**
Family members are only exempt from the requirement to complete the contact tracing form if they form part of the household of a member of a mission/post/IO in the UK. There is no exemption for them from the self-isolation requirement.

**Are construction workers, who come to the UK to work on residences, for example, exempt?**
Diplomatic exemptions apply only to those granted privileges and immunities in the UK. If the construction workers are in this category, they will be exempt from filling in the contact locator form. If their work is certified as meeting the qualifying criteria by the Head of Mission, they will be exempt from self-isolation measures.

Travelling to the UK

## **What evidence do I need to demonstrate I am exempt?**

The FCDO Protocol Directorate will issue one or two letters, one to demonstrate the exemption from providing contact information to Border Force officials and one to demonstrate the self-isolation exemption to other UK authorities (which may also include Border Force). These letters may not provide sufficient evidence to UK officials on their own so should be used in conjunction with normal travel documents and/or Diplomatic ID card

**Will a Diplomatic passport alone be sufficient to get through border control with exemptions?**

No. An exemption letter will also be required.

**What happens if diplomats are challenged by Border Force officials at the border?**

In the first instance individuals should produce the exemption letter. Border Force officials have been made aware of the specific exemptions and the various modes of evidence, so we do not expect this to be a problem. However, if individuals encounter difficulties after they have presented the letter, they should ring the number provided on the letter - though please bear in mind that we do not run a formal 24-hour / 7day service.

**Will diplomats be required to download and use the contact tracing app?**No. Downloading of the app is not mandatory.

**A child is travelling/returning to the UK by themselves or with a non-accredited parent to restart school. Will they need to provide contact tracing information and self-isolate?**

Yes. Children travelling on their own should stay with their designated guardian or other suitable family member.

**Self-quarantine exemptions are limited to those that are certified as doing work that is essential to the functioning of the mission (organisation) and cannot be done whilst self-isolating. How is such work defined?**

This is not for Her Majesty’s Government to determine it is for the Head of Mission (Organisation) to certify that the criteria is met, but it is envisaged that this would be the case in the minority rather than majority of staff. Such work may, for example, include essential consular services that need to take place in person, providing these can be done in a way that is consistent with social distancing and health guidelines. In all cases, Heads of Mission/International Organisation will be asked to certify that the two conditions are met in advance of the individual’s arrival in the UK. .

Enforcement

**Will diplomats be kept waiting at the border if they do not have an exemption from the contact locator form?**There is a good possibility that diplomats will be delayed at the border whilst their status is verified. The pre-notification system is designed to minimise the likelihood of this happening.

**What if a diplomat is caught breaching self-isolation rules?**All members of the diplomatic community are expected to abide by UK laws and regulations. There are long standing procedures in place for the management of potential breaches by diplomats and their dependants.

Other Exemptions

*For a full list of exemptions please check the* [*gov.uk*](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-travellers-exempt-from-uk-border-rules/coronavirus-covid-19-travellers-exempt-from-uk-border-rules) *website. The section below only deals with some of the questions we have frequently received in Protocol Directorate.*

**Are there exemptions for international institutions without privileges and immunities in the UK? E.g. international schools or cultural institutes?**No, all exemptions are drawn narrowly to ensure the effectiveness of the public health measures.

**Are those attending military training courses in the UK exempt?**

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) will be in contact with Defence Attachés in the UK about the bounds of the Defence exemptions and how these will work in practice.

**Are people travelling for medical treatment exempt?**

Any individual who, before travelling to the UK, made arrangements with a healthcare provider to receive healthcare in the UK will be exempt from the self-isolation measures, provided they can supply written confirmation of the arrangements. An individual who is travelling with a person receiving healthcare under this exemption will also be exempt from self-isolation. However, both persons must only travel between where they are staying and the place of pre-arranged treatment.