

9th July 2021



Rt Hon Sajid Javid
Secretary of State
Department for Health and Social Care
39 Victoria Street
LONDON
SW1H 0EU

Dear Secretary of State,

REMOVAL OF COVID-19 ISOLATION REQUIREMENT FOR KEY WORKERS FROM 19th JULY

Key workers in the cold chain have coped with a lot in the last 18 months. From the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic to post-Brexit trade changes and the current recruitment crisis, our food logistics professionals have worked tirelessly to ensure they have adapted to new ways of working and continued to keep the nation fed and supermarket shelves full.

Food businesses have managed to continue serving the nation despite the requirements on their staff to isolate for 10 days if they are identified as having to come into contact with a confirmed Covid-19 case, however our industry is set to face its biggest challenge yet following the relaxation of remaining distancing measures from the 19th of July – so called ‘Freedom Day’.

The current rising case numbers are already having a noticeable impact on the number of staff being asked to isolate with rates anticipated to reach a similar level seen during the peak of the crisis within 2 weeks. The risk of even higher numbers of cases over the summer and the impact on the number of people being told to isolate has been [well documented](#), but for our key workers supplying the nation’s food this risk is likely to be compounded by the [ongoing recruitment crisis](#) in the logistics sectors, which means many companies are already operating at reduced staff levels and struggling to fulfil orders.

We recognise that the rules on self-isolation are due to change from the 16th of August, however this will not be soon enough for food businesses to avoid the anticipated rising numbers of staff needing to isolate from placing further strain on a food supply chain already at breaking point.

We believe this risk can be prevented by safely reducing the requirement for isolation for key workers in the food supply chain on the basis that:

- Not doing so will risk considerable disruption to the UK’s food supply,
- The proven effectiveness of the UK’s vaccination program for minimising the worst symptoms of Covid-19,

- Food businesses are continuing to implement workplace distancing measures, encourage vaccine take up and regular Covid-19 testing to ensure cases within businesses are kept to a minimum and any positive cases are identified early.

We therefore urge the Government to bring forward to the 19th July the end of the requirement for key workers involved in the distribution of food who have received both vaccinations to self-isolate providing they undertake regular Covid-19 tests as per the stipulations of Public Health England's [Daily Contact Testing Study](#).

We understand the balance of judgement involved in managing this period of transition out of 'lockdown' and would not be making this request if we did not feel it was absolutely necessary. We believe businesses across our industry have shown their ability to manage their workplaces effectively and well throughout the pandemic and it is time to trust them again now.

We would welcome a chance to meet with you, or relevant ministers and officials that you suggest, to discuss this further as soon as possible and are able to provide evidence, or accounts from our members to support the points made in this letter.

I have written in similar terms to the Secretary of State for Environment Food and Rural Affairs.

Yours sincerely



Shane Brennan
Chief Executive
Cold Chain Federation