

Move to lateral flow tests for travel begins today

- Bookings for lateral flow tests opened on Friday and can be purchased through the private providers listed on GOV.UK from around £22 per test. NHS tests cannot be used.
- Passengers must send a photo of their test result to the private provider – failure to do so could result in a fine of £1000– and anyone with a positive result will need to take a free NHS confirmatory PCR test and isolate.

Eligible fully vaccinated passengers arriving in England from countries not on the UK's red list can take a cheaper lateral flow test instead of a PCR from today [Sunday 24 October].

Lateral flow tests must be taken as soon as possible on the day of arrival in England or at the latest before the end of a passenger's second day and can now be purchased from the list of private providers on GOV.UK from as little as £22 – significantly cheaper than PCR tests.

Lateral flow tests for international travel must be purchased from a private provider as NHS Test and Trace lateral flow tests cannot be used for international travel. Passengers who have already bought a PCR to use for travel do not need to buy another test as PCRs can still be used.

Passengers must take a photo of their lateral flow test and booking reference supplied by the private provider and send it back to them to verify the result. Passengers are also able to book a test which they can take on their arrival into England at testing centres located in some airports. People using PCR tests for travel will have their test reported by the company they purchase the test from.

Anyone testing positive will need to isolate and take a confirmatory PCR test, at no additional cost to the traveller, which can be genomically sequenced to help identify new variants. PCR tests can be accessed free of charge by ordering in the usual way through NHS Test and Trace – via nhs.uk/coronavirus or by calling 119. Test providers will be expected to advise people to self-isolate and direct people towards the NHS Test and Trace booking page.

Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid said:

“I'm delighted that from today eligible travellers to England, who've had the life-saving COVID-19 vaccine can benefit from a cheaper lateral flow test, providing faster results.

“This huge boost to the travel industry and the public will make it easier and cheaper for people to book holidays and travel abroad, and it is it is because of our incredible vaccine programme that this is possible. Anyone who tests positive must take a PCR test, which, if positive, may be genomically

sequenced to check for variants and further help us fight this virus.”

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps, said:

“The change in rules for post-arrival tests will give passengers more options and faster results, just in time for many half-term holidays.

“It’s thanks to the success of our vaccination programme that we can make this switch – giving the industry and consumers a much-needed boost.”

Dr Jenny Harries, Chief Executive of the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), said:

“Testing and self-isolating if you are positive remain crucial steps to managing the pandemic and stopping the spread of COVID-19 in the community.

“It is also critical that those who have positive Lateral Flow Tests when returning to England go on to get this checked through a NHS Test & Trace PCR. This way we can continue to monitor new variants and stay on top of the virus.

“Regular hand-washing, wearing face coverings in crowded spaces – including on transport – ventilating spaces and getting vaccinated are simple actions all of us can take to protect ourselves and those around us when we travel.”

All travellers must complete their passenger locator form prior to travel, including providing a test booking reference number supplied by a testing provider.

Anyone travelling on to Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales, the Channel Island or the Isle of Man in the ten days after arrival in England, must follow the rules for testing and quarantine in those places.

Passengers who are not fully vaccinated with an authorised vaccine returning from a non-red destination must still take a pre-departure test (antigen / PCR), a PCR test on day 2 and day 8 test and complete 10 days self-isolation (with the option of doing Test to Release on day 5). The vaccine programme is building a wall of defence across the country and the booster vaccine rollout is now well underway with more than 4 million people vaccinated. It is vital that eligible people get their booster jab and their flu jab to protect themselves, their loved ones and the NHS this winter.

Prime Minister issues vaccine call to arms ahead of winter

The Prime Minister has issued a call to arms ahead of winter, urging everyone over 50 to get their booster jabs when they get the call.

The booster programme is well underway with over four million booster doses already administered. The National Booking Service has had its busiest week of booster bookings, with nearly half a million jabs booked over Wednesday and Thursday alone.

The NHS will contact you to offer you a booster vaccine if you are eligible and anyone who receives an invite should book online or by calling 119.

Young people aged 12-15 are now able to book their jabs through the National Booking Service, with appointments available at 90 vaccine centres across the country from next week, with more to come next month.

The phenomenal national effort seen during the first phase of the vaccination programme has already saved around 130,000 lives, with almost 95 million doses delivered across the UK.

As set out in the autumn and winter plan, the winter months will lead to the increased transmission of viruses. Vaccines are our best line of defence but data shows that the natural immunity provided by vaccines will wane over time, particularly for older adults and those more at risk from Covid. Recent studies suggest protection against death falls from 95% to 80% for AstraZeneca after six months, and from 99% to 90% for Pfizer.

The booster programme is designed to top up this waning immunity for those most at risk over the winter months. A 15% drop in efficacy could lead to many more avoidable deaths and cases of severe illness from Covid. Early results from Pfizer shows that a booster dose can increase the protection from our vaccines back up to 95.6% against symptomatic infection. This additional protection is vital, and everyone aged over 50 or who is at high risk from Covid will be invited for their booster jab six months after their second dose.

Getting your booster dose will also help the NHS during the already challenging autumn and winter period. The second phase of the government's national campaign launched today, encouraging people to get their Covid and flu jabs as soon as possible.

Infection rates continue to rise across the country as predicted in the autumn and winter plan. The vaccination programme remains open to anyone who may not have received their first or second dose during the initial phase, and they are encouraged to come forward to protect themselves and others.

A one dose programme is underway for all 12 to 15 year olds, protecting young people from the catching and transmitting the virus, preventing them from becoming seriously ill, and preventing further disruption to education.

The National Booking System is now open for 12-15s, with millions of letters to be sent to parents and guardians of children aged 12 – 15 over the coming weeks inviting them to book the vaccine online or by calling 119.

The winter is a challenging time for the NHS and, coupled with waning vaccine immunity after six months, it is vital that everyone eligible for a vaccine comes forward to receive their dose. Vaccines save lives, and are our best

defence against Covid.

Prime Minister, Boris Johnson said:

Vaccines are our way through this winter. We've made phenomenal progress but our job isn't finished yet, and we know that vaccine protection can drop after 6 months.

To keep yourself, your loved ones, and everyone around you safe, please get your booster when you get the call.

We can and will beat this virus but only if we listen to the science and look out for each other. This is a call to everyone, whether you're eligible for a booster, haven't got round to your second dose yet, or your child is eligible for a dose – vaccines are safe, they save lives, and they are our way out of this pandemic.

[RAF airlifts 102 people who have left Afghanistan to the UK](#)

News story

The RAF has airlifted over 102 people who had already left Afghanistan from a neighbouring third country.



These flights are the first military relocation of eligible Afghans and British nationals since the end of the evacuation from Kabul

The airlifts took place across two flights and both have landed safely in the UK. Those on board will now receive support to begin their lives in the UK under Operation Warm Welcome.

While repatriation flights and individual relocations have been taking place since the end of August, these flights are the first military relocation of eligible Afghans and British nationals since the end of the evacuation from Kabul, known as Operation PITTING.

Those transported include vulnerable Afghans who fall under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) who are eligible for relocation to the UK, and British nationals. Further flights are due to arrive in the UK in the coming weeks with more eligible people on board.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

In August we worked tirelessly to airlift more than 15,000 vulnerable Afghans and British Nationals from Kabul to the UK.

As I made clear at the time, our commitment to the Afghan people did not end there. We are determined to do right by those who supported our Armed Forces for so many years and others who are at risk.

These flights mark the beginning of what will be an enduring effort to relocate and support those who need our help.

The UK is working with international partners to ensure that as many routes as possible remain open to support the movement of British nationals and relocation of eligible Afghans to the UK. These flights mark the beginning of the next chapter of that effort.

After arriving in the UK, eligible Afghans will be processed and supported by the Home Office and MoD under Operation Warm Welcome to ensure they receive the support they need to build their lives in the UK. This includes indefinite leave to remain in the UK for those under the ARAP scheme, as well as funding for schooling and healthcare.

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[UK forges closer defence and security partnership with India, October 2021](#)

- Foreign Secretary to build stronger security and defence links as she visits HMS Queen Elizabeth in Mumbai

- Liz Truss discussing developing security and defence tech, and strengthening defence-related trade with India during her trip
- The visit of the Carrier Strike Group underlines the UK's increasing defence, security and maritime co-operation with India and the wider region.

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss is forging stronger UK security and defence links with India on her visit to the country, as she visits HMS Queen Elizabeth in Mumbai today.

The ship is the spearhead of the Carrier Strike Group (CSG), a symbol of the UK's world-leading defence capability, whose visit to Mumbai is a clear sign of our growing defence and maritime co-operation with India. While in India the CSG is taking part in the most demanding exercise ever between undertaken between the UK and India, involving all three military services.

During her visit the Foreign Secretary will progress talks to ramp up defence and security ties and boost strategic cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region. It will take forward joint work agreed by the Prime Minister and Indian Prime Minister Modi in the landmark 2030 Roadmap on maritime security, cyber security and counter terrorism signed earlier this year.

She will also discuss developing innovative security and defence tech with the Indian government to tackle common threats and will talk through strengthening defence-related trade between the two countries.

The Foreign Secretary sees developing this security and defence relationship with India, the world's largest democracy, as a key part of the UK's Indo-Pacific tilt. She wants to strengthen such links with fast-growing economies and like-minded partners in the region and build "a network of liberty" around the globe. The Foreign Secretary sees India as essential in ensuring a free, open, inclusive and prosperous Indo-Pacific.

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said:

Closer defence and security partnerships between the UK and India underpin deeper economic ties and make both countries, as well as the wider region, safer. We need to protect our sea and trade routes and, operating from a position of strength, be hard-headed in defending our interests and challenging unfair practices.

The arrival of the Carrier Strike Group in India this weekend represents the UK's Indo-Pacific tilt in action. This is a true symbol of Global Britain, working closely with like-minded partners like India.

The Foreign Secretary will join the Queen Elizabeth Carrier at sea to tour the vessel and observe live exercises involving UK and US F35B fighter jets.

Chief of Defence Staff Sir Nick Carter is also visiting Mumbai to see the Carrier Strike Group in action. He joined his Indian counterpart General

Bipin Rawat in Delhi to discuss regional security and laid a commemorative wreath at the National War Museum.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

A strengthened partnership with India is a key pillar of the UK's tilt to the Indo-Pacific. Our Carrier Strike group visit represents an important step towards our goal of establishing a maritime partnership with India in support of mutual security objectives in the Indian Ocean.

The Foreign Secretary will also visit the Taj Mahal Palace Hotel in Mumbai today to lay a wreath at the memorial for those killed in the 2008 terrorist attacks.

This evening, she will welcome senior business leaders and guests from the world of education, film, sport and politics onto HMS Defender, a Type 45 Destroyer, where the UK will showcase its world-leading tech and innovation in defence, healthcare, science and climate.

ENDS

[£65 million support package for vulnerable renters](#)

- Low income households to benefit from £65 million support package
- Funding comes on top of £500 million helping vulnerable families with essentials over winter
- Ban on evictions during the pandemic and other support has made sure vast majority of households are up to date with rent

Vulnerable renters struggling due to the impact of the pandemic will be helped by a £65 million support package announced by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities today (23 October 2021).

The funding will be given to councils in England to support low-income earners in rent arrears – helping to prevent homelessness and support families get back on their feet.

Renters across the country have been protected throughout the pandemic because of government action, including a ban on evictions and a £400 billion support package for the economy.

Today's extra funding comes on top of the £500 million Household Support

Fund, which was announced by the government in September and is helping vulnerable households across the country with the cost of food, energy, water and other essentials.

Minister for Rough Sleeping and Housing Eddie Hughes MP said:

We have taken action throughout the pandemic to support the most vulnerable families, and it is vital we continue to provide support as we enter the winter months.

This new funding will support families that are struggling and help to get them back on their feet as we begin to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The £65 million will be available through the winter months and households at risk of eviction or homelessness should contact their local council if they require support. The fund recognises the impact the pandemic has had on households in the private rented sector with the lowest income.

The government has already provided £310 million to councils this year through the [Homelessness Prevention Grant](#) and this funding will increase that grant by a further £65 million this year. £140 million is also available through Discretionary Housing Payments, which can also be used to prevent evictions and help people find a new home.

The £500 million Household Support Fund provides £421 million to help vulnerable people in England, with the devolved administrations receiving almost £80 million. The funding is primarily being used to support households with the cost of essentials, although councils have flexibility to best address local needs. At least 50% of the funding is reserved for households with children.

It is for councils to determine the best way to support each household on a case-by-case basis. Any payment is likely to be paid directly to the existing landlord, or a new landlord if the money is being used to support a household to find a new home.

The government is grateful to landlords for their support and the funding will mean more of them will be able to reach agreements with existing tenants.

In September the government launched a [£500 million support fund for vulnerable households over winter](#).

Councils received an additional [£310 million to tackle homelessness](#).