**FAQs about pay, absence and leave**

**This page answers questions about how we’re applying reward policies in these unusual times.**

**If you work for Global, please check with your HR representative as some advice will differ.**

**As you know, the situation is changing daily, so we’re going to review these policies and procedures continuously. We reserve the right to withdraw, review or amend arrangements because of a change in circumstances or new advice.**

1. **I’ve been diagnosed with coronavirus. Which policy applies?**

You should follow the same procedures as you would for any other sickness. They can be found [here](https://hr.bt.com/en-gb/performance-reward/miscellaneous/sick-pay) for BT or [here](https://intra.bt.com/ee/how_we_work/policies/time_off/Pages/sickness.aspx) for EE. But we will treat it quite differently.

If you’ve been formally diagnosed with coronavirus, any time you take off won’t count towards your sickness entitlement. You will receive full basic pay for the duration. And we will not take any formal action over your absence.

We ask that you give us some evidence of your diagnosis and keep your manager updated. Although if you’re in hospital, we understand you might not be able to contact us.

Any absence needs to be recorded as sickness in the HR system. In the comments, please give ‘coronavirus diagnosed’ as the reason. If you’re in BT, see our [handy guide](https://hr.bt.com/en-global/Documents/All/Safety_wellbeing/Health/How_to_Report_COVID-19_absences.pdf) and please contact the [UK Sick Pay Team](mailto:hrservices.sickpay@bt.com) to ensure pay isn’t impacted.

We also need all managers to complete this Formwize. Please do this for anyone who has already taken absence since 1 March. You no longer need to use the CARM system to report coronavirus related absence. If you’re unable to work due to sickness for any other reason, then normal sickness policy applies.

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1. **I am following** [**official guidelines**](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public) **and self-isolating. What happens to my pay?**

If you’re potentially carrying coronavirus, it’s best to isolate yourself at home. As long as you have a genuine reason to self-isolate, we’ll support you by:

* continuing to pay you in full for the duration of the isolation period (as defined in the [official guidance](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public))
* not counting your time in self-isolation as sick leave.

As you might expect, if you ignored guidance and restrictions to travel and now need to self-isolate, we won’t pay you during your absence.

We’ll ask you to prove self-isolation is necessary, so be ready to share test results or travel documents. At the same time, we know some people won’t have paperwork. We trust you to act honestly; if you think you need to, please stay home.  
  
**What should you do while in self-isolation?**

* Stay in touch with your manager throughout your isolation period; they might ask for more information.
* Work from home if you can. If you’re abroad right now, there might be tax or visa issues that get in the way. You might even have security concerns. So speak to your manager before you make plans.
* If you’re unable to work from home, then if you’ve got any annual leave remaining from the 19/20 holiday year, you’ll need to use that up first.

Once that’s been used up, you’ll go onto a combination of paid special leave and annual leave.

We need to make sure that, once everyone is back to work, our people don’t have lots of extra holiday to use up, so you’re required to take your pro rata holiday whilst you’re on special leave during the 20/21 holiday year –for most people this will be around 2 days each month but will depend on your personal entitlement.

Depending on the absence system you’re using, record the absence as follows…

-[**Fusion HR system**](https://hr.bt.com/en-global/Documents/All/Safety_wellbeing/Health/How_to_Report_COVID-19_absences.pdf) - paid special leave. In the comments give ‘coronavirus (self-isolation)’ as a reason.

-**IEX- Self-isolate** - Paid Leave

-**Kronos** – Self-isolation - Virus isolation

-**ESS/MSS** – Paid Leave

You don’t need to book the annual leave days out , this will be done automatically but please bear with us as we’re still working this through, and your annual leave balance may not be adjusted until later in the year.

We also need all managers to complete this Formwize. Please do this for anyone who has already taken absence since 1 March. You no longer need to use the CARM system to report coronavirus related absence.

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1. **I work in a retail store that has been closed, what do I need to do?**

If you’ve got any annual leave remaining from the 19/20 holiday year, you’ll need to use that up first.

Once that’s been used up, you’ll go onto a combination of paid special leave and annual leave.

We need to make sure that, once everyone is back to work, our people don’t have lots of extra holiday to use up, so you’re required to take your pro rata holiday whilst you’re on special leave during the 20/21 holiday year –for most people this will be around 2 days each month but will depend on your personal entitlement.

Depending on the absence system you’re using, record the absence as follows…

-[**Fusion HR system**](https://hr.bt.com/en-global/Documents/All/Safety_wellbeing/Health/How_to_Report_COVID-19_absences.pdf) - paid special leave. In the comments give ‘coronavirus (store closure)’ as a reason.

-**IEX- Self-isolate** - Paid Leave

-**Kronos** – Self-isolation - Virus isolation

-**ESS/MSS** – Paid Leave

You don’t need to book the annual leave days out , this will be done automatically but please bear with us as we’re still working this through, and your annual leave balance may not be adjusted until later in the year.

We also need all managers to complete this Formwize. Please do this for anyone who has already taken absence since 1 March. You no longer need to use the CARM system to report coronavirus related absence.

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1. **Should I work, if I’m self-isolating or under enforced quarantine while abroad?**

Talk to your manager. There might be tax or visa issues that get in the way and your IT set-up might not be secure enough. In any case, don’t go into our offices.

1. **I’m on holiday and my journey’s been disrupted by travel restrictions due to coronavirus. What happens if my return to work is delayed?**

We’re giving people two extra days of paid leave in these cases. Hopefully, this will give you enough time to get home safely.

If you’re delayed by longer than 2 days, then we’ll continue to pay you in full for the duration.

As you might expect, if you ignored guidance and restrictions to travel or did not take appropriate advice or options made available to you to return, we won’t pay you during your absence.

**What should you do?**

* Stay in touch with your manager; they might ask for more information.
* Work remotely if you can. If you’re abroad right now, there might be tax or visa issues that get in the way. You might even have security concerns. So speak to your manager before you make plans.
* Depending on the absence system you’re using, record the absence as follows…

-[**Fusion HR system**](https://hr.bt.com/en-global/Documents/All/Safety_wellbeing/Health/How_to_Report_COVID-19_absences.pdf) - paid special leave. In the comments give ‘coronavirus (self-isolation)’ as a reason.

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-**ESS/MSS** – Paid Leave

We also need all managers to complete this Formwize. Please do this for anyone who has already taken absence since 1 March. You no longer need to use the CARM system to report coronavirus related absence.

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1. **My child’s school or nursery has been closed due to coronavirus. Can I stay at home?**

Discuss your options with your manager. Decide whether you need to work from home or take leave by asking these questions or anything else you think’s relevant:

* Could anyone else help with childcare?
* Is your child independent enough to look after themselves while you work?
* Could you work from home, while handling childcare responsibilities?
* Would changing your shifts or reducing your hours help?
* Would it be best to take annual leave?

Because of these exceptional circumstances, we’re allowing people to use one week of their holiday allowance for 20/21 (the coming holiday year) now.

We expect you to use your holiday allowance for the current holiday year before asking for paid special leave. But if you’ve exhausted your allowance and there’s no alternative, we’ll give it to you until you’re able to make other arrangements.

Here’s how this paid special leave will work:

* It won’t count as sickness absence. Instead, it should be recorded as paid special leave as follows based on the system you’re using…

-[**Fusion HR system**](https://hr.bt.com/en-global/Documents/All/Safety_wellbeing/Health/How_to_Report_COVID-19_absences.pdf) – paid special leave (Add a comment giving ‘coronavirus (looking after dependents)’ as the reason.)

-**IEX- Self-isolate** - Paid Leave

-**Kronos** – Self-isolation - Virus isolation

-**ESS/MSS** – Paid Leave

We also need all managers to complete this Formwize. Please do this for anyone who has already taken absence since 1 March. You no longer need to use the CARM system to report coronavirus related absence.

* Your manager will continue to review your situation.
* You should keep questioning whether there’s another way to care for your children during these closures.
* You should do as much of your job from home as possible.

*We reserve the right to withdraw, review or amend these arrangements because of a change in circumstances or new advice.*

1. **I was planning to go on annual leave, but now my plans have been changed. Can I cancel my leave?**

Yes, although if you’re not a ‘key worker’ we’d encourage you to still take the leave even if you can’t go anywhere.

We want to make sure that you have plenty of time for rest alongside work at this difficult time and we also need to make sure that, once things get back to normal, our people don’t have lots of holiday to use up.

For now, you should agree with your line manager, how much holiday you’ll take and when you’ll take it, but if people don’t do this we may need to put more rules in place around this or your manager may insist that you take holiday on specific days.  
If you do cancel leave under these circumstances, please do everything you can to work from home. Where this isn’t possible, talk to your manager about taking special paid leave in line with the self-isolation guidance.

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1. **I’m a key worker, can I still take annual leave?**

This will depend on the role you’re doing and whether your manager can arrange cover.

As a key worker, your work underpins the UK infrastructure including the NHS, 111 and 999 amongst other critical activities, as well as supporting many international businesses across the world. At this unprecedented time your role is more important than ever, and that means that we may need to ask you to postpone your annual leave until things calm down. If that’s the case, your manager will talk to you about it, and if there’s a reason you think you can’t cancel your leave, talk to your manager and we’ll see what we can do to help you. Of course, if your leave is cancelled, you’ll be able to take it at a later date so it won’t be lost altogether.

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1. **I had a holiday planned in March, but it’s been cancelled because of coronavirus. Is there any way I can carry my remaining holiday allowance over into the next holiday year?**

You can carry up to one working week’s leave over into 20/21. This will be done automatically at the beginning of April.   
  
If it’s practical to do so, you should still take any additional leave before the end of March.  
  
If you can’t, you’ll need the approval of your manager to carry over more than a week of leave. If you’re in BT or Openreach, apply using the [exceptional carry over process](https://hr.bt.com/en-gb/performance-reward/annual-leave/carrying-over-leave)

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1. **I’m in self isolation and need to update Your Rewards before the annual window closes on March 26. How do I access this from home?**

You can log in at home or on your mobile device:

* Visit [www.your-rewards.co.uk](http://www.your-rewards.co.uk)
* Log in using your UIN or EE employee number and password

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1. **I want to buy holiday, so I can look after my children due to the school closures. How do I do this?**

You can do this through [Your Rewards](https://employeegate.bt.com/spredirect.htm?target=https://employeegate.bt.com/benefex_portal.htm), so log in for more information. You need to apply and submit your choices by 26 March.

1. **Can I take parental leave to look after my children during school closures?**

Yes you can. You can find all the information you need on parental leave [here](https://hr.bt.com/en-gb/working-at-bt/being-a-parent/parental-leave).

Parental leave is unpaid leave. You can take up to 4 weeks off work for each child you have below the age of 18. We’re being flexible about some of the conditions that usually apply: you don’t have to give 21 days’ notice or use the leave in week-long blocks.

If you’re interested, speak to your manager. *We reserve the right to withdraw, review or amend these arrangements because of a change in circumstances or new advice.*

1. **Will the March 2020 Your Rewards window be extended?**

Unfortunately, we’re unable to extend the current Your Rewards selection window as this would impact payroll timetables and reporting and the set-up of your benefits with our suppliers. The site is fully mobile enabled and you can submit your benefit selections from work or home. Outside of the March window, there are still lots of benefits that can be selected at any point in the year. Take a look at Your Rewards for all the details.  There’s also a number of “life events” so check out the detail on the Your Rewards home page for further info on what can be changed outside of the enrolment window.

1. **What happens to my existing benefits that I have selected through Your Rewards?**

Many benefits aren’t impacted however there are some that will now have restrictions in place, the main one is gym membership. All gym memberships are being frozen for the duration that gyms are closed, and memberships will instead be extended by that same period of time. We’ll therefore place payroll deductions for gym membership on hold and re-start these when gyms are open again. We’ll contact colleagues in this situation directly to let them know.

Some other benefits, including travel insurance and voluntary life assurance, are also impacted by COVID-19 and so we’ve added some additional FAQs and information in the useful links sections of Your Rewards.

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1. **What happens to the Your Reward benefits I selected during the March 2020 window that are effective from 1 April?**

We’ve decided to cancel any selections for the following benefits. This will be done automatically and no payroll deductions will be made. We’ll contact those impacted colleagues.

* Activity pass
* Experience days
* Gym membership
* Restaurant cards

These benefits can be selected at any time, not just during March. .

Some other benefits, including travel insurance and voluntary life assurance, are also impacted by COVID-19 and so we’ve added a few additional FAQs and information in the useful links sections of Your Rewards portal.

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1. **I am a serving Reservist in the UK Armed Forces, what should I do?**

The UK government has announced new measures to put Service personnel and Reservists on standby to support public services in response to the COVID-19 outbreak.  See full story at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/military-stands-up-covid-support-force>

At the moment, we don’t have any more information from the Ministry of Defence as to who might be affected or when, and it’s highly likely that the first you’ll hear about this is via your unit.

We recognise the importance of BT and Openreach’s continuing support to the UK Armed Forces, but we also need to balance that support against delivering critical functions in line with the Government’s official list of key workers.  This includes “key staff working in the telecommunications sector (including but not limited to network operations, field engineering, call centre staff, IT and data infrastructure, 999 and 111 critical services)”.

**Therefore, all Armed Forces Reservist colleagues in the UK must follow these directions in the case of any requests from your unit to support the COVID-19 outbreak:**

-       **If you are defined as a key worker** (this must be confirmed by your Line Manager), the business will not support any short-term deployments or voluntary mobilisations and will appeal against any compulsory mobilisation.  Our justification is based on Government policy on key workers and our business continuity plans.

-       **If you are not defined as a key worker** (again, this will need Line Manager confirmation), then any deployment or mobilisation is subject to Line Manager approval, as per existing [policy](https://hr.bt.com/en-gb/working-at-bt/other-time-off/having-time-off-(special-leave)).

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**Questions from people managers**

1. **Someone I manage is on a work site, when official guidance says they should be self-isolating. What should I do?**

Send them home right away. And if they have questions about self-isolation, refer them to these FAQs.

1. **Someone I manage is asking to change the way they work to look after children while schools and nurseries are closed. What should I do?**

Because of closures, many parents find themselves in a difficult situation. They will look to managers like yourself for leadership.   
  
If someone you manage is worried about childcare, discuss their individual case and outline their options. Decide whether they need to work from home or take leave by asking these questions or anything else you think’s relevant:

* Could anyone else help with childcare?
* Is their child independent enough to look after themselves while they work?
* Could they work from home, while handling childcare responsibilities?
* Would changing their shifts or reducing their hours help?
* Would it be best to take annual leave?

Because of these exceptional circumstances, we’re allowing people to use one week of their holiday allowance for 20/21 (the coming holiday year) now.

We expect colleagues to use their holiday allowance for the current holiday year before asking for paid special leave. But if they’ve exhausted their allowance and there’s no alternative, you should approve the leave until they’re able to make other arrangements.

Here’s how this paid special leave will work:

* It won’t count as sickness absence. Instead, it should be recorded as paid special leave as follows based on the system you’re using…

-[**Fusion HR system**](https://hr.bt.com/en-global/Documents/All/Safety_wellbeing/Health/How_to_Report_COVID-19_absences.pdf) – paid special leave (Add a comment giving ‘coronavirus (looking after dependents)’ as the reason.)

-**IEX- Self-isolate** - Paid Leave

-**Kronos** – Self-isolation - Virus isolation

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We also need all managers to complete this Formwize. Please do this for anyone who has already taken absence since 1 March. You no longer need to use the CARM system to report coronavirus related absence.

* You should continue to review the situation with the individual.
* You should keep discussing with the individual whether there’s another way to care for the children during these closures.
* They should do as much of their job from home as possible.

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1. **Someone I manage has cancelled the holiday they planned for March at short notice, because of coronavirus. Now they want to carry this leave over into the next holiday year. What should I do?**

People are able to carry over up to one working week. The system does this automatically.

If they want to carry over more than one week of leave, they’ll need agree this with you. BT and Openreach colleagues should apply through the [exceptional carry over process](https://hr.bt.com/en-gb/performance-reward/annual-leave/carrying-over-leave).  
  
When you’re making the decision to approve or deny this request, take the individual’s circumstances into account, including whether they:

* can demonstrate coronavirus has disrupted their plans
* have made this request in the past
* missed an opportunity to use the leave before now.

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**4. If someone I manage has a period of sickness absence because of coronavirus, should I see this as adding to their overall level of absence?**

You should disregard sickness absences due to coronavirus when looking at absence levels. This may still be reported to you as our systems can’t currently differentiate coronavirus from other absences but if someone can prove they’ve been formally diagnosed with coronavirus, we won’t take formal action over their absence (unless they’ve been travelling in defiance of public health advice and restrictions).   
  
*We reserve the right to withdraw, review or amend these arrangements because of a change in circumstances or new advice.*