

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 or have symptoms consistent with, coronavirus. Which policy applies?

You should follow the same procedures as you would for any other sickness. They can be found [here](#) for BT or [here](#) for EE. But we will treat it quite differently.

If your symptoms or diagnosis are related to 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 where applicable, 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 and](#) please contact the [UK Sick Pay Team](#) to ensure pay isn't impacted.

We also need all managers to complete [this Formwize](#) (except those in Openreach who should complete [the people tracker](#) and Enterprise who should update the BAU absence system, the [ReCOVer](#) app and update the BCM CFU lead). 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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2. I'm not showing any symptoms but am following [official guidelines](#) and self-isolating. What happens to my pay?

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](#))
- 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, you'll move onto a combination of paid special leave and annual leave.

We need to make sure that, once everyone is back to work, colleagues don't have lots of extra holiday to use up. So, for every 4 complete consecutive weeks paid special leave that you take due to the coronavirus situation, you'll need to take 2 of these days as annual leave (pro-rated for part timers). This is broadly your pro-rated monthly annual leave entitlement and is a condition of the paid special leave being approved. So, a colleague taking 0-3 weeks paid special leave would have 0 annual leave days deducted, someone taking 4-7 weeks paid special leave would have 2 annual leave days deducted, and someone with 8 - 11 weeks would have 4 days deducted etc.

Depending on the absence system you're using, record the absence as follows...

-**Fusion HR system** - 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, the last 2 days of each 4 week special leave period will be recorded as holiday and adjusted in the system automatically on your return to work. Please bear with us though at this busy time as it may not show immediately.

We also need all managers to complete [this Formwize](#) (except those in Openreach who should complete [the people tracker](#) and Enterprise who should update the BAU absence system, the [ReCOVer](#) app and update the BCM CFU lead). 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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3. 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.

4. 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.
- If you're unable to work, you'll move onto a combination of paid special leave and annual leave.

We need to make sure that, once everyone is back to work, colleagues don't have lots of extra holiday to use up. So, for every 4 complete consecutive weeks paid special leave that you take due to the coronavirus situation, you'll need to take 2 of these days as annual leave (pro-rated for part timers). This is broadly your pro-rated monthly annual leave entitlement and is a condition of the paid special leave being approved. So, a colleague taking 0-3 weeks paid special leave would have 0 annual leave days deducted, someone taking 4-7 weeks paid

special leave would have 2 annual leave days deducted, and someone with 8 - 11 weeks would have 4 days deducted etc.

- Depending on the absence system you're using, record the absence as follows...

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We also need all managers to complete [this Formwize](#) (except those in Openreach who should complete [the people tracker](#) and Enterprise who should update the BAU absence system, the [ReCOVER](#) app and update the BCM CFU lead). 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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5. 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?

- If you're a key worker, discuss with your child's school / nursery whether they will still be able to continue to accept your child in line with government guidance (there's a letter we'll provide you with to show to them), and if not whether any other local schools / nurseries will accept them.

If you've exhausted all other options and are unable to work, you'll move onto a combination of paid special leave and annual leave. If you're a key worker but choose not to send your child to school / nursery where it's available, we'll let you request time off work, so you can stay at home with your children. But this would count as unpaid leave.

We need to make sure that, once everyone is back to work, colleagues don't have lots of extra holiday to use up. So, for every 4 complete consecutive weeks paid special leave that you take due to the coronavirus situation, you'll need to take 2 of these days as annual leave (pro-rated for part timers). This is broadly your pro-rated monthly annual leave entitlement and is a condition of the paid special leave being approved. So, a colleague taking 0-3 weeks paid special leave would have 0 annual leave days deducted, someone taking 4-7 weeks paid special leave would have 2 annual leave days deducted, and someone with 8 - 11 weeks would have 4 days deducted etc.

Depending on the absence system you're using, for paid leave record the absence as follows...

- [Fusion HR system](#) – 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

You don't need to book the annual leave days, the last 2 days of each 4 week special leave period will be recorded as holiday and adjusted in the system automatically on your return to work. Please bear with us though at this busy time as it may not show immediately.

We also need all managers to complete [this Formwize](#) (except those in Openreach who should complete [the people tracker](#) and Enterprise who should update the BAU absence system, the [ReCOVER](#) app and update the BCM CFU lead). 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.

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6. I was planning to go on annual leave, but now my plans have been changed. Can I cancel my leave and can I carry any remaining holiday allowance over into the next holiday year?

We'd encourage you to take annual leave even if you can't go anywhere, although we appreciate for some key workers this may prove difficult as we continue to focus on delivering for customers.

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.

If you do cancel leave, 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.

You can normally carry up to one working week's leave over into the next holiday year. This will be done automatically at the beginning of April if it applies to you.

In line with the recent amendment to the Working Time Regulations, we're relaxing this rule temporarily. If you've been unable to use your leave as a direct result of the coronavirus, you'll be able to carry over up to a total of 4 weeks* unused annual leave to be used over the next two holiday years.

If you have more than one working week to carry over, you'll need the approval of your line manager although we're asking managers to approve any requests where holiday has been impacted by Coronavirus. If you're in BT or Openreach, apply using the [exceptional carry over process](#) which will be open until 30th April. For EE contact HR Services before 30th April. There may be a short delay in getting this to show in your 2020/21 holiday balance due to the short notice of this change – please bear with us.

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***4 weeks is your annual statutory leave as defined in the Working Time**

7. 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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8. I'm in self isolation and need to update Your Rewards. How do I access this from home?

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

- Visit www.your-rewards.co.uk
- Log in using your UIN or EE employee number and password

9. 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.

10. 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. We'll contact colleagues in this situation directly to let them know as soon as we can give an update.

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.

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

11. 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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12. 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](#).

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13. I would like to volunteer with the NHS or elsewhere in my community, to help during the coronavirus outbreak, can I have time off to do this?

We know that many BT people have been looking for ways to support their local community and neighbours at this time and we want to support you in that. Keeping our customers connected has never been more important though, so we ask that anyone able to work focuses on supporting us in keeping our business running and limits any volunteering activity to non-work hours, or with line manager agreement as per normal [volunteering policy](#).

Under the new Coronavirus Act 2020 the government has introduced new regulations around volunteering and for some activities the volunteer will be provided with an Emergency Volunteer Certificate. This Certificate gives you the right to request 2 to 4 weeks [unpaid](#) leave.

If you're unable to work due to government restrictions, and are taking paid special leave, we're happy for you to volunteer during your normal working hours, subject to line manager consent, and providing you are not breaching any government guidance regarding steps required to protect yourself and your family, and which are designed to limit the spread of the virus.

If we're not able to provide you with work, it's your choice whether you want to register for any kind of voluntary activity at this time.

If you choose to volunteer we ask you tell us about what you're doing and how much time you're giving. [Complete this formwise](#) so we can capture your efforts and support.

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

14. I am an Emergency Service (or Other service) Volunteer, what should I do if I'm asked to support?

We know that many BT people currently volunteer as part of the Emergency Services or similar within their communities and may soon receive a call from the services that they work into, asking for their support.

All of these volunteers receive up to **10 paid days** of volunteer time per financial year, that they can take to fulfil their duties.

We appreciate that many of these volunteers have specialist skills and experience and the Emergency Services are currently under enormous pressure. All staff registered as an Emergency Service Volunteer, or Other Service (emergency and retained) will be able to use their volunteering days up to 10, including BT key workers.

Under the new Coronavirus Act 2020 the government has introduced new regulations around volunteering and for some activities the volunteer will be provided with an Emergency Volunteer Certificate. This Certificate gives you the right to request 2 to 4 weeks unpaid leave.

Emergency Service volunteers – These include Special Constabulary, First Responders, and Retained Firefighters

Other services – (emergency and retained) Mountain/Cave Rescue, St John Ambulance, Coastguard/River Rescue, Lifeguard Rescue, Lifeboat Service – RNLI, British Red Cross

The BT Volunteering Policy and FAQs can be found [here](#)

To apply to take your volunteering leave, please speak to your line manager. And we ask that you inform use of your volunteering activity via the [Volunteering COVID-19 Formwise](#).

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

15. Will BT's life assurance arrangements still pay out if I die from COVID 19?

There has been speculation in the media about certain private life insurance policies. We have been working closely with our insurers to make sure that BT's cover can meet the promises it has made to its colleagues. I want to assure you that the level of cover that BT has promised its colleagues would not exclude a COVID-19 related death.

16. I have a season ticket loan – can this be cancelled as my travel arrangements have changed due to coronavirus?

Yes.

If you received your loan into your salary and then paid for your Season Ticket independently with the travel company, you'll need to claim your season ticket refund directly from the provider and use these funds to

offset the deductions that we'll continue to take to cover the loan. You won't be able to pay the loan off in one go as the system won't allow you to do this.

For EE colleagues who have a season ticket with Trainline that was purchased directly by EE on your behalf, you'll need to [claim your refund from Trainline](#) directly but the money will be returned to EE. On receipt of the refund we'll stop your loan deduction from pay. You would then be able to re-apply for another loan once this situation is over.

17. I have gym membership though Your Rewards, what will happen to this whilst gyms are closed?

There will be a pause in your gym membership deductions whilst gyms are closed due to COVID-19. This will start from April 2020. We're unable to backdate this for gyms that closed during March 2020. You pay for your gym membership in the current month, so your April payroll deduction covers your membership for 1 - 30 April.

Your gym membership is being frozen for the duration that gyms are closed, and your membership will be extended by that same period of time instead. You don't need to do anything, this will happen automatically and you may have already had confirmation of this from your gym directly. Your deductions will re-start once gyms have re-opened and continue for the extension of your membership. We'll let you know when this is.

As an example: your membership is due to finish at the end of August 2020. Due to COVID-19, your membership and payroll deductions are frozen for 3 months from April - June. Your membership will therefore be extended by 3 months and so finishes at the end of November 2020 instead, and you'll have payroll deductions for this extended period too.

Will the freeze in my gym membership be reflected in Your Rewards?

Unfortunately not. Your Rewards will be out of sync. You'll need to keep track of when your gym membership extension is, especially if you plan on re-selecting gym membership at the end of the extended 12 months.

What happens if I leave BT whilst the freeze in gym membership deductions is happening?

If you leave, the balance of your remaining gym membership deductions is taken from your final pay (this is because BT have already paid the gym in advance for the whole 12 months). This will still be the case even if gym membership deductions are currently frozen.

18. Someone I live with (or for whom I am the primary carer) has been identified as high-risk and has been advised by PHE to self-isolate for the 12 week shielding period. It's not practical for them to self-isolate away from me - what happens?

The safety and wellbeing of our colleagues and their families is our priority but we also have a critical role to play in keeping the business running and our customers connected and we are therefore asking all colleagues to work with us and be as flexible as possible.

Anyone identified as high risk should follow PHE guidance to self-isolate. Where this cannot be achieved, any BT colleague who is unable attend their normal place of work without creating undue risk for someone they live with, should also stay at home and self-isolate. We'll support you by:

- continuing to pay you in full for the days that you need to stay at home during the shielding period (as defined in the [official guidance](#)).
- not counting this time as sick leave.

We'll ask you to provide evidence that demonstrates you have no feasible alternative but to self-isolate, so, when asked, please share any relevant documentation. We trust you to act honestly; if you think this applies to you, please stay at 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 unable to work from home, you'll move onto a combination of paid special leave and annual leave.

We need to make sure that, once everyone is back to work, colleagues don't have lots of extra holiday to use up. So, for every 4 complete consecutive weeks paid special leave that you take due to the coronavirus situation, you'll need to take 2 of these days as annual leave (pro-rated for part timers). This is broadly your pro-rated monthly annual leave entitlement and is a condition of the paid special leave being approved. So, a colleague taking 0-3 weeks paid special leave would have 0 annual leave days deducted, someone taking 4-7 weeks paid special leave would have 2 annual leave days deducted, and someone with 8 - 11 weeks would have 4 days deducted etc

Depending on the absence system you're using, record the absence as follows...

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

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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.

2. 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?
- If they're a key worker, discuss with your child's school / nursery whether they will still be able to continue to accept your child in line with government guidance (there's a letter we'll provide you with to show to them), and if not whether any other local schools / nurseries will accept them.

If they've exhausted all other options and are unable to work, you should approve the leave until they're able to make other arrangements. They'll move onto a combination of paid special leave and annual leave. . If they're a key worker but choose not to send their child to school / nursery where it's

available, they may request the time off work, so they can stay at home with their children, but this would count as unpaid leave.

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Depending on the absence system they're using, record the absence as follows...

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- 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.

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

3. 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.

4. Someone in my team is currently off on sick leave unrelated to Coronavirus. How should I be managing their sickness absence?

You should continue to follow normal sickness absence policy and procedures for as long as their primary reason for not being at work is non-coronavirus related sickness. This should only change if their return to work is only being delayed for reasons relating to coronavirus.

You should continue to have your normal absence meetings with the individual but these should be conducted over the phone as opposed to in person.

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