

**Document 1**

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30 November 2021

First Minister  
Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care

**DAY TWO TESTING FOR INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL**

**Purpose**

1. To provide information and the clinical advice on the timescales for an individual to take a day 2 PCR test following arrival into Scotland from a non-red list country, following an enquiry submitted by a BBC Scotland journalist on 30 November querying whether the test should be taken “on day 2” or “on or before day 2”

**Priority**

2. Immediate. For the avoidance of doubt, it would be beneficial to have this clarified as soon as possible and to allow time for any changes to the regulations and guidance.

**Background**

3. The Day 2 or “Within 48 hours” test for individuals arriving into Scotland from international countries was introduced in February 2021 on a 4 Nations approach to ensure early identification of positive cases, allow contact tracing to begin as soon as possible and to detect any variants of the COVID-19 virus.

4. The requirement for pre-departure testing was removed for fully vaccinated individuals arriving from non-red list countries on 4<sup>th</sup> of October.

5. Fully vaccinated individuals from non-red list countries were able to take a day 2 lateral flow test with photo verification from 31<sup>st</sup> of October. This was in alignment with the rest of the UK, however Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland implemented this change one week after the UK.

6. Following the identification of the Omicron variant of concern, all individuals are required to take a PCR test on or before day 2 of arrival into the UK from 4am 30<sup>th</sup> of November and can no longer take a lateral flow test.

7. Individuals are now required to self-isolate until they receive notification from the test provider that they have submitted a negative result.

8. The International Travel regulations in Scotland state the individual should take the test “no later than the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> day after the day on which P arrived in Scotland.” This is reflected in the guidance on gov.scot for international travel.

## **Views of Clinicians**

9. The view of the Chief Medical Officer and Deputy National Clinical Director is that there are benefits in an individual taking the day 2 test as early as possible on arrival into Scotland. This was confirmed on 30<sup>th</sup> November. These benefits include:-

- Positive cases are identified as soon as possible and the individual can commence 10 day self-isolation.
- Contact tracing can commence as early as possible, particularly with passengers on a flight who may also have become infected.
- Any close contacts / family members of the positive case are made aware as soon as possible and can be tested.
- The impact on the positive individual is minimised as the self-isolation of 10 days would begin as early as possible.
- Viral loads tend to be higher in earlier parts of infectious course, therefore a sample as early as possible could maximise the ability to sequence for variants.

10. The recommendation from clinicians is therefore the advice remains as on or before day 2. There is no reduction in effectiveness in submitting the test before day 2.

## **Additional information**

11. The regulations and guidance in Scotland for the day 2 test is in alignment with the other nations. Any deviation in this alignment would cause confusion for individuals, the aviation and travel sector in Scotland.

12. There would be difficulty in enforcing the change in guidance, as the individual will book the test in advance of arriving into Scotland to allow completion of the passenger locator form and will have the home test kit usually on return. Also this change would remove the option to use an on-site PCR testing provider at Scottish airports.

13. The recent change requiring individuals to self-isolate until they receive notification of a negative result on the day 2 test is minimising the risk of community transmission.

## **Recommendation**

14. The recommendation of policy officials and clinical advisors is that the regulations and guidance remain for individuals to take the test on or before day 2 test. This will maintain alignment with the 4 Nations on travel testing and reflects the clinical and public health advice. Alternatively, should Ministers decide to change the advice to “on day 2”, legal colleagues have been briefed and policy officials will begin amendment of the regulations as soon as possible.

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30 November 2021

## **REASONS FOR NOT PROVIDING INFORMATION**

### An exemption applies

An exemption applies under section s.38(1)(b) (personal information) of FOISA to some of the information you have requested.

Section 38 of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 (FOISA) contains four exemptions, all relating to personal information.

Information is exempt from disclosure if it is:

- the personal data of the person requesting the information (section 38(1)(a));
- the personal data of a third party – but only if other conditions apply (section 38(1)(b));
- personal census information (section 38(1)(c)); or
- a deceased person's health record (section 38(1)(d)).

This exemption is not subject to the 'public interest test', so we are not required to consider if the public interest in disclosing the information outweighs the public interest in applying the exemption.