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25 Jan 21

All members of the UK community stationed at SHAPE

*Dear all,*

### **SNR Guidance on SHAPE's COVID Policy**

I last sent out thoughts on 22 Nov on how COVID continues to impact our daily lives and gave you some guidance on navigating the complexities of SHAPE and Belgian rules. I try not to do this every time policies change as you will get tired of me writing, and I risk not keeping up to date. Instead, I know that the advice on [www.EJSU.net](http://www.EJSU.net) is updated as fast as feasible after the team receive new policy information. Messages also tend to go out on the community Facebook page (but please – do look at the official websites yourselves as it might be awkward if FB advice from someone is incorrect). However, I'm writing now as SHAPE rules have recently changed, and although they are very close to the latest Belgian rules there's still a bit of a difference.

So, we're not out of the woods yet with COVID as we can see from the effects of the Omicron surge on schools and work areas. However, Belgium and SHAPE have adjusted policies to reflect the latest medical assessments to reduce the impact where possible, particularly for those considered as contacts. I must highlight the significant emphasis from SHAPE medical experts that full vaccination is really important (including the booster), which is why the rules for those who are partially vaccinated or unvaccinated remain stringent.

SHAPE released its new policy on Wed last week on procedures for COVID-19 close contacts, which I have enclosed at the end of this letter and you may have seen already. Belgian rules are available at <https://www.info-coronavirus.be/en/faq/>. To compare the two, essentially:

**For those who are fully vaccinated and show no symptoms**, Belgian rules are the same as SHAPE if you are a COVID contact. You do not have to quarantine even if you are deemed a contact, but you must comply with preventative measures and the timeframes are different. For the eagle-eyed, there appears to be a discrepancy on the Belgian website on what to do if someone in your household has COVID. In one area of the site it says you should quarantine, but in two other areas it says you don't have to. It does not say there is any requirement to quarantine on the other authoritative Belgian health website (<https://covid-19.sciensano.be/fr/procedures/mesures>). So, there is a slight uncertainty and I have asked Belgian authorities for clarification. If you go with the no-quarantine interpretation, then please do be sensible and sensitive, and take every effort to minimise the risk of catching and spreading. I am aware that BSB has recently said it does not require children over 12 years old who are fully vaccinated (within 5 months) to quarantine if someone in their house has COVID.

**For those who are partially vaccinated or unvaccinated**, SHAPE requires quarantine and a negative PCR test before release, whereas Belgium requires quarantine and negative self-tests, then mask-wearing. Quarantine is longer if you are unvaccinated, and duration differs between SHAPE policy and Belgian rules, so don't get caught out. SHAPE rules apply for those who want to access SHAPE (and are slightly more stringent), you can apply Belgian rules if you're not coming onto the SHAPE estate/facilities. The British Section of SHAPE International School and the bus to the British School of Brussels still have to comply with SHAPE rules.

**There is no longer such a thing as “contact of a contact”** that requires quarantine. However, please routinely take sensible precautions to reduce the risk of catching/spreading COVID (mask/hand-washing/physical distancing) and do avoid those who are vulnerable. We're all trying to get back to some sort of normality without creating too much carnage on the way.

I'd also like to recognise the frustration that COVID continues to create, it's emotionally-wearing for us all particularly as we're now in another wave. The UK Senior Medical Officer (SMO) has updated the advice on EJSU.net on what to do if you get COVID symptoms or a positive test. Go to the COVID-19 info tab on the page at this link: <https://www.ejsu.net/health/https-shapemedical-webgp-com/>.

I'd also like to mention PrevMed. This is a key organisation for so many of us as it is the focal point of testing and contact tracing for SHAPE. The recent surge has inevitably created a huge workload that has seen some test results delayed, and people unable to get through on the phone to find out how long they/their children need to quarantine or chase results. I have raised this issue here and SHAPE has specifically engaged with the Healthcare Facility to offer additional support. In the meantime, I must ask you – however frustrated you become – please remain courteous with whoever you are looking to for help for your situation. There is another human being on the end of your call / message who is unlikely to react positively if berated, no doubt they are having an equally bad day but for different reasons. If they can't help, please let someone appropriate in the UK chain here know of your particular situation to see if we can do something.

I hope this helps to show you where to look for the latest rules and reassures you that we are working with the right people to resolve the things that irritate and exasperate. I've also spoken with the CLOs and others to make sure that we get plans in place to get together and make life more enjoyable as restrictions ease. It's important that we can re-connect with each other.

Yours sincerely,

*Rich*

R P H HUTCHINGS  
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## SHAPE All User Message “Procedures for COVID-19 Close Contacts”

Releasable to the Public

Date of distribution: 19 Jan 22

### Procedures for COVID-19 Close Contacts

For COVID related questions unrelated to testing or medical appointments call the COVID-19 Hotline at **065-32-5336** for guidance.

The following guidelines are what SHAPIANS can expect to receive if the SHAPE Healthcare Facility determines you to be a close contact of a COVID-19 positive individual. This information has considered Force Health Protection measures and Host Nation regulations.

**Close Contact. If you are identified as a CLOSE CONTACT and:**

**You are FULLY VACCINATED or received a booster within past 5 months and...**

- **You display NO symptoms:**
  - No quarantine is required, no PCR test is required. You may come to work, but must comply with strict preventive measures of wearing mask for 14 days from contact (FFP2 mask recommended), maintain distance and avoid vulnerable people.
- **You ARE symptomatic:**
  - You will be required to quarantine for 7 days and get PCR tested between day 5 and day 7.
  - If the test is negative and you are symptom free, you can return to work.
  - If tested positive, you must follow the rules explained below.

**Your last COVID-19 vaccine shot was greater than 5 months ago...**

- **Regardless if you are symptomatic or display no symptoms:**
  - You will be required to quarantine for 7 days and get PCR tested between day 5 and day 7
  - If the test is negative and you are symptom free, you can return to work.
  - If test is positive, you must follow the rules explained below.

**You are NOT VACCINATED or PARTIALLY VACCINATED...**

- **Regardless if you are symptomatic or display no symptoms:**
  - You will be required to quarantine for 10 days
  - Get PCR tested on day 7 and day 10
  - If day 10 test is negative you can be released as long as fever free for the last three days of quarantine

**Regardless of vaccination status and you were COVID positive in the past 90 days...**

- **You display NO symptoms:**
  - No quarantine is required, no PCR test is required, monitor symptoms and wear mask for 14 days from last contact
- **You ARE symptomatic:**
  - Self-quarantine and contact COVID Hotline at **065-32-5336** for guidance

**COVID-19 Positive:** Individuals whom test positive for COVID-19 will be required to quarantine for 10 days, be PCR tested on day 7 and 10. If day 10 test is negative, can be released to work only if no fever has been present during last three days of quarantine. Individuals residing in the same household with a COVID positive individual are recommended to quarantine for a minimum of 10 days, unless they have received their last COVID-19 vaccine shot in the past 5 months.

**Disclaimer: Individual guidance may differ based on clinical indicators at the discretion of the SHAPE HCF**