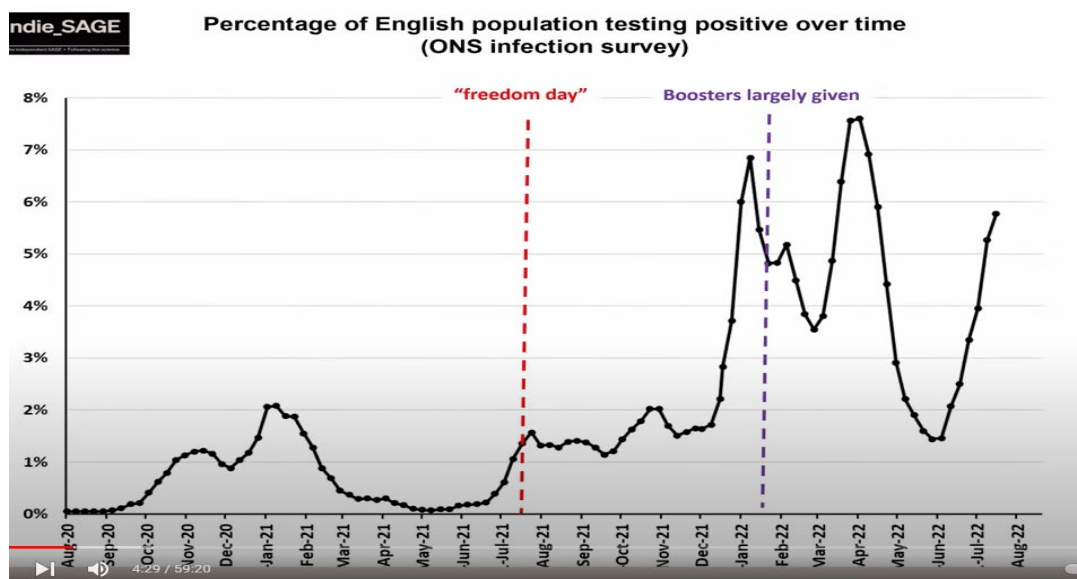


## Best practice controls for Covid-19

23rd August 2022

### 1 Overview

- 1.1 The controls for Covid as developed for the lockdown periods were socially and economically very onerous. Under the “Freedom Day” banner, in July 2021 the government removed the availability of free testing, restricted the flow of Covid information, reduced the momentum in the Covid vaccination and communication campaigns, and encouraged office workers to return to their offices. The public response has been to make more intensive use of public transport, entertainment, restaurants and social facilities, reduce mask wearing, and return to work.
- 1.2 However, this has resulted in high levels of infection, see the diagram below. From January 2021 the Delta variant receded and was replaced successively by the Omicron variants BA.1, BA.2 and BA.4/5. It is only recently that BA.5 is receding and is likely to be followed by a possibly-short low-infection period. This gives us a [chance](#) to reconsider the controls needed. From a national point of view a “free” system will keep the economy going, but from an individual and company point of view it might be better to employ a light-touch control system that reduces the ongoing incidence of the epidemic. This would lessen the impact of the epidemic in terms of hospitalisations, long Covid, the disruptive effects on children and vulnerable people etc., without imposing excessive restrictions.



- 1.3 The HRS control recommendations below are designed for a situation where the virus is present but its incidence is low, with say less than 2% of the population infected. The system should protect operations but in addition each staff member should be confident that his/her interests are being

protected, and in particular staff should be free to take additional measures to protect vulnerable people within their family if they so wish.

- 1.4 If the incidence rate increases markedly, then the recommended controls will be revised.

## 2 The HRS Covid control measures

The measures recommended by HRS as appropriate for today's conditions are as follows:

1. The organisation continues to encourage vaccination for residents, staff and their children, both for Covid and for influenza.
2. Staff are advised to wear a mask in interior places where there are many (non-family) people. FFP2/FFP3 masks or those with a valve and PM2.5 filter are more efficient than ordinary blue masks. Masks are not required when working at a work station but individuals may choose to wear them in meeting rooms.
3. Windows are kept open and extraction systems used to improve ventilation. In warm weather, some meetings are held outdoors if suitable spaces are available. In the medium term, the organisation is considering modifying offices to improve their ventilation systems.
4. A stock of lateral flow tests is available, for use if staff members display symptoms. Financial and other support is provided to enable staff to self-isolate if infected.
5. Members of staff who test positive are required to stay isolated and tell others with whom they have been in contact, so that they can test or isolate themselves as well.
6. Particular measures are in place to minimise the chances of the organisation being responsible for Covid being transmitted to people for whom the impact of the virus could be severe, such as older people and those with disabilities.
7. Staff are encouraged to wash their hands regularly and to cover their mouth and nose if they cough or sneeze.

## 3 Considerations in setting the measures

- 3.1 The UK Health Security Agency [publishes](#) sets of general measures, also [guidance](#) for work places. Independent Sage has published a [7-point plan](#) advising government of their recommended measures, though it is unlikely that these measures will be implemented.
- 3.2 There is a tendency to underestimate the impacts of Covid, which stretch beyond loss of personal income and disruption to the health service to economic disruption, staff shortages, confinement of the clinically vulnerable, effects on children's education, and the medium-term effects of Long Covid. For example the latest ONS research indicates that the number of people with self-reported Long Covid has increased from 1.1m in January to around 2.0m in mid-May.
- 3.3 However, at a time when the public regard Covid as in retreat it is important that the recommended measures are not considered too harsh by those affected, so proper consultation is an important factor in their introduction.

*HRS is a research consultancy providing risk management and strategy advice and analysis to forty housing associations through the medium of a membership service.*

Hargreaves Risk and Strategy  
48 Broomfield Avenue  
London  
N13 4JN

Tel: 020 8245 0737

Email:  
John Hargreaves: [j.hargreaves@HargreavesRS.co.uk](mailto:j.hargreaves@HargreavesRS.co.uk)  
Chris Mansfield: [c.mansfield@HargreavesRS.co.uk](mailto:c.mansfield@HargreavesRS.co.uk)  
Sharron Preston: [s.preston@HargreavesRS.co.uk](mailto:s.preston@HargreavesRS.co.uk)