

Pre-departure tests and travel isolation scrapped in England

Pre-departure testing will no longer be required for travellers returning to England and arrivals will not have to isolate until they get a negative PCR test.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson told the House of Commons [the pre-departure measure](#), introduced a month ago, will be removed as the Omicron variant is now so prevalent the measure is “having limited impact”.

From 4am on Friday, people returning to the England will not have to take pre-departure tests, the PM said.

He also announced that people arriving in England will no longer have to isolate until they get a negative PCR test, but will instead have to take a lateral flow test at the end of day two after arriving.

If that is positive they will then have to take a confirmatory PCR test to help identify any new variants.

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Javid: All countries to be removed from red list

The changes come after trade body Airlines UK and Manchester Airports Group called for the removal of all COVID testing restrictions, saying it would have no real impact on Omicron numbers.

Karen Dee, head of the Airport Operators Association, said removing the restrictions “is a welcome recognition that they no longer serve a purpose, now Omicron is well-established in the UK”.

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She said the Welsh, Scottish and Northern Irish governments should follow suit and added that airports are still facing difficulties as other countries have imposed restrictions on UK arrivals, while consumer confidence "has been knocked during the crucial Christmas booking period".

[Recent figures showed](#) one in 25 people in England had COVID-19 just before Christmas.

Currently, fully vaccinated travellers into the UK must take a pre-departure test and self-isolate until they receive a negative result from a post-arrival test.

Those who are not fully vaccinated must self-isolate for 10 days after they arrive.

Last month, the government [removed all 11 countries](#) on its travel “red list”, partly reversing the tightening of restrictions in order to contain the spread of Omicron from abroad.

Airlines UK said at the time that costly testing and isolation measures imposed on travellers ought to be removed too for the same reason and has now reiterated that plea.

The trade body and MAG – which operates Manchester, London Stanstead and East Midlands airports – cited research they had commissioned from consultancy Oxera and analytics firm Edge Health to make the latest call.



Image:

Shares in the owner of British Airways rose at the start of this week

They said the research showed the removal of all testing requirements on international travel this month would not impact the spread of Omicron in the UK.

It also found that the introduction of pre-departure and day two PCR testing in late November and early December respectively had little impact on the spread of Omicron in the

UK, compared to a scenario where the policy of a single, day two antigen test remained the same.

The companies said the tightening of travel restrictions hurt the sector last month, with MAG estimating a 30% hit to its recovery in passenger numbers.

Fears over the Omicron variant and tighter restrictions imposed before Christmas have already been revealed to have had an impact on demand for [Tui](#) and [Ryanair](#).

But hopes that conditions will ease – in the light of suggestions that Omicron will be cause less serious illness than other variants – have in recent days created a more optimistic outlook for the aviation sector.

Shares in British Airways owner International Airlines Group (IAG) and other airlines [rose sharply](#) on Tuesday, helping London stock indices enjoy a strong bounce on the first day of new year trading.