Guidance

Coronavirus outbreak FAQs: what you can and can't do

Updated 1 June 2020

The government has set out its plan to return life to as near normal as we can, for as many people as we can, as quickly and fairly as possible in coming months (weeks) and years, but in a way that is safe and continues to protect our NHS.

The government has published clearly-safe outside our homes guidance on what the new rules will mean. This page sets out key FAQs to help you prepare for these changes.

The guidance applies in England. Legislation in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland should follow the specific rules in these parts of the UK.

1. Gatherings, public spaces, and outdoor activities

1.1 What can I do that I couldn't do before?

From Monday 1 June, we can meet in groups of no more than six people (or six people from different households) in a socially distanced way, outdoors in England that you could not before.

- spend time outdoors meeting private gardens and other outdoor spaces, in groups of up to six people from different households, following social distancing guidelines (for example, in parks and gardens)
- in line with the arrangements made by your school, send your children to school, nursery if they are in early years, reception, year 1 or year 6, if you could not before
- if you are one of those defined by the guidance, travel with people outside your household to work if you cannot do your job from home or other valid, or the certain events we have outlined, where it is safe to do so

At all times, you should continue to adhere to social distancing guidelines and remain alert, you are outside your home, particularly ensuring you are less metres away from anyone outside your household.

You cannot:

- visit friends and family inside their homes
- stay overnight away from your own home, except for a limited set of circumstances, for example, for work
- exercise in a recreation ground, open or closed to entry, or in a cemetery in public groups
- use an outdoor gym or playground
- gather outdoors in a group of more than six (excluding members of your household)

1.2 I don't have to stay at home anymore?

You should continue to stay alert and limit your contact with others. Staying at home is the easiest way to do this.

However, from Monday 1 June, you can spend time outdoors and meet in groups of six or less. You must still maintain social distancing and avoid contact with people who are not from your household.

The more people you have interactions with, the more chance the virus has to spread further. Try to limit the number of people you are - especially close contact with - in your life.

If you are showing coronavirus symptoms, or if you or one of your household are self-isolating, for example if you have been contacted as part of the test and trace programme, you should stay at home. This is critical to stamp safe and keep this virus under control.

1.3 What else is a criminal offence?

It is a criminal offence to:

- incite others to commit one of the above offences by e.g. inviting people to a party
- threaten others with infection by coronavirus, for example by coughing or spitting in their direction

1.4 Can I meet people outdoors if I also have a carer from another household?

Yes - from 1 June you can meet in a group of up to six people, including you and any carers, as long as you practise the strict social distancing. Everyone should observe the guidance on social distancing and remain alert. Carers who have received care from your usual carer this may resume being closer than 2 metres.

1.5 Can I meet my friends and family in the park?

From Monday 1 June, you can meet in a group of up to six people, including children, if you are from different households, in a socially distanced way, outdoors in England that you do not live with. Public gatherings of more than six people from different households remain prohibited. Social distancing should be observed. Children who are more than two years from different households are the only exception to the rule that you can be in contact with no more than six people from one household.

Try to limit the number of people you see - especially over short periods of time - and be sure to stay 2 metres apart when you do.

1.6 If I can socially distance, can I play sport with someone I don't live with? What about tennis / croquet / cricket / Frisbee?

From Monday 1 June, you can exercise or play sport in groups of up to six people from different households, if it is safe to do so and it is possible to maintain 2 metres distance. Team games such as football are not allowed.

People who play team sports can expect to train together and do things like conditioning in fitness sessions but they must be in separate groups of no more than six and maintain 2 metres apart at all times. While groups could practice ball skills like passing and shooting, they should not be playing matches against other teams. Social distancing practice should be observed before and after. You can also play tennis with someone from a different people from outside of your household as long as you remain 2 metres apart as far as possible. Tennis players should not share equipment, including balls, and should not touch the net. Golfers can play in a foursome with people from different households.

And if you are showering coronavirus symptoms, or if you or any of your household are self-isolating, you should stay at home. This is critical to staying safe and saving lives.

1.8 Can I use garden equipment like tables and chairs? What about a climbing frame or paddling pool?

You should not be sharing garden equipment with people outside of your household unless you can clean it between people using it. This includes tables and chairs, barbecues, and outdoor toys. Washing your hands or using hand sanitiser before and after use.

You should not share shared equipment. For example you should use your own tennis racquet, golf club or basketball. Any equipment that is used should be cleaned frequently. Cleaning should be particularly thorough if it is to be used by other people.

Children who are from different households can be especially careful. They can be vulnerable carriers of the virus and sometimes carry asymptomatic them. Following the rules on social distancing and hygiene is important.

Wherever possible, you should stay 2 metres away from others, use a throw-over antibacterial wipe and hand sanitiser, and avoid touching your face. Washing your hands for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser if washing facilities are not easily available.

If someone is defined as clinically extremely vulnerable and being asked to shield, you should follow the guidance for a shielded person as this is different to those that are clinically vulnerable.

1.9 Are there restrictions on how far I can travel for my exercise or outdoor activity?

No. You can travel to outdoor open space irrespective of distance, as long as you can do so while practicing social distancing and remaining alert. Exercise should be taken the time you are away. You should continue to avoid using public transport and should cycle, walk or drive wherever possible.

Parks such as Richmond Park, Bushy Park, Wales and Northern Ireland - you should adhere to the rules and guidance of the discussed administration in it.

You shouldn't travel with someone from outside your household unless you can practice social distancing - for example by cycling.

1.13 Can I use public transport if I'm seeing friends in a park or going to my parents' garden?

You should avoid using public transport if you can. You should cycle, walk or drive wherever possible. If you do need to use public transport, you should follow the guidance. If you need to use public transport, use should follow the public transport guidance for passengers.

1.14 Can I share a private vehicle with someone from another household?

You should avoid sharing a private vehicle with members of another household as you will not be able to keep within social distancing guidelines. The Department for Transport has provided specific guidance on using private vehicles. Please see their guidance for more information. If you need to use public transport, please follow the public transport guidance for passengers.

You are not permitted to stay overnight away from the place where you are living for a period longer than 14 days, except for a limited set of circumstances, for example, for work. Staying away from your home should be kept to a minimum and you should practise social distancing.

Premises such as hotels and bed and breakfasts will remain closed, except where providing accommodation for specific reasons set out in law, such as for critical workers or those who are homeless. Campsites in Wales and Scotland will remain closed. Holiday and vacation accommodation (for example, caravans, static caravans, and holiday homes) will be allowed to open for visitors.

Campsites and holiday parks in Wales and Scotland are still not allowed to re-open.

1.19 Is there a limit on the number of people attending funerals?

The guidance on the number of people attending funerals has not changed.

1.20 Can weddings go ahead?

No, there's no change at this time. Local government gathering in sufficient numbers to enjoy a wedding ceremony. We recognise that the Foundation Liaison Group is meeting must be feeling at this time. We are keeping these restrictions under review and will keep in touch with the FLG. We know that weddings are important to many people. Guidance and local government over the coming weeks to give couples the certainty they deserve.

Marriages and civil partnerships under other restrictions will also be allowed to take place, if social distancing and good hygiene (i.e. washing your hands thoroughly).

1.21 Can I go into a place of worship?

No. It is still not possible to pray in a church, mosque, synagogue, temple or other place of worship. We will continue to review when it might be safe to open existing places of worship, including for private prayer.

1.22 Can I register the birth of my child?

You are permitted to register the birth of your child. You should check whether your local register office is open. The office will also be able to advise you on appointment availability.

2. Vulnerable groups, shielding, 70 year olds and over, and care homes

2.1 Does easing restrictions apply to healthy 70 year olds and over?

The advice for those aged 70 and over continues to be that they should take particular care to maintain social distancing and avoid contact with others.

If they do go out more frequently, they should be careful to maintain social distancing with others. They and everyone should continue to comply with any general social distancing restrictions.

We know that those aged 70 and over can be absolutely fit and healthy and it is not the case that everybody over 70 has a chronic health condition or an underlying condition.

But unfortunately, we also know that as you get older, there is a higher risk of complications from coronavirus. Men, people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds are more common in the elderly, even those without pre-existing conditions.

We know this is challenging guidance to follow, which is why we have a support scheme in place to provide help with access to food and basic supplies, such as medicines and social support.

We are keeping the guidance for shielded people under review.

2.3 What safety standards will need to be put in place in care homes?

We have issued detailed guidance about infection control and care home testing to help admit and care for residents safely and protect care home staff.

This includes vaccination programmes, PPE and infection control training and actuarial cleaning and how to provide personal care safely.

As with all our advice, this guidance is kept under constant review and updated frequently, in line with the latest scientific evidence.

3. Going to work / Safer spaces

3.1 Who is allowed to go to work?

In the first instance, employers should make every effort to support working from home, including by providing suitable IT and equipment so they have been already. This will apply to many different types of businesses, particularly those who typically would have worked in offices or online.

Where work can't be done in the workplace, we have set out tailored guidelines for specific sectors to ensure that employers can take the steps necessary to work safely, continuing to make a significant difference to our economy and society. We have published detailed COVID-19 secure guidelines, which has been developed in consultation with employers and trade unions.

These have to work: guidance supply to those in essential retail (like:

- supermarkets
- those in construction and manufacturing
- those working in labs and research facilities
- those administering takeaways and deliveries at restaurants and cafes
- tradesmen, cleaners and others who work in people's homes
- those who are facilitating trade or transport ports)

Non-essential retail, restaurants, pubs, bars, gyms and leisure centres will remain closed. We have set out tailored guidance for specific sectors to ensure that employers can do so they are able to meet the COVID-19 secure guidelines to protect customers and workers with the flexibilities that are necessary to attention to reopen non-essential retail. We have set out tailored guidance for the hairdo and little beauty sector and for more made Crack sector.

There are specific guidelines for those who are vulnerable, shielding, or showing symptoms that should be observed when going to work. Please see the guidance.

3.2 What is a critical worker?

Critical workers are those working in health and care and other essential services, who can take their children to school or childcare, regardless of year group, and can hold and other accommodation services for work related purposes. For example if they need to stay overnight away from their place of work. The Cabinet Office worker definition does not affect whether or not you can travel to work. If you are not a critical worker, you may still travel to work if you cannot reasonably work from home.

3.3 What is meant by the phased approach?

Not all forms of work will return to normal at once. People will have to prepare for a new way of working. We will be working with employers and trade unions to ensure that maximum and that we aren't doing anything to increase the risk of infection of consumers and workers alike. We have published tailored guidance for specific sectors to ensure that employers can do so safely. We have published the tailored guidance for the hairdo and little beauty sector and for more made Crack sector.

There are specific guidelines for those who are vulnerable, shielding, or showing symptoms that should be observed when going to work. Please see the guidance.

3.4 Will you open pubs / cinemas / hairdressers in July?

The roadmap sets out that some businesses (like pubs - cinemas or hairdressers) will open until Step 3 is reached.

The government's current planning assumption is that this step will be no earlier than 4 July and subject to further detailed scientific advice, provided close to the time, on whether it can go. When they do reopen, they should also meet the COVID-19 secure guidelines.

3.5 What are the 'Covid Secure' safety guidelines workplaces have put in place?

We have set out clear, practical ways that businesses should take to ensure their workplaces are COVID-19 secure and give their staff the confidence to return to work.

These include how to keep as many people as possible safely apart from those they do not live with in various workplaces settings.

3.6 Do people need to wear face coverings at work?

Face coverings are not compulsory. However, if you can, people are advised to wear face coverings in enclosed spaces where social distancing is not possible and in places where you are more likely to come into contact with people you do not normally meet, for example, on some public transport services or in shops. Face coverings should not be worn by children under the age of 2 because of the disease if you are suffering from coronavirus, but not showing symptoms. You should be prepared to remove your face covering if asked to do so by police officers and staff for the purposes of identification.

A face covering is not the same as the surgical masks or respirators used as part of personal protective equipment (PPE) in the workplace. PPE in the workplace continues to be reserved for those who need them to protect against risks to their employees such as health and care workers and those in industrial settings like those exposed to dust hazards.

3.7 Will a face covering stop me getting COVID-19?

The evidence suggests that face coverings can help or protect each other and reduce the spread of the disease if you are suffering from coronavirus, but not showing symptoms.

To protect yourself, you should continue to follow social distancing measures and hygiene guidance and wash your hands regularly.

4. Workers' rights

4.1 My employer is asking me to come to work but I'm scared.

Employers and staff should discuss and agree working arrangements.

Employers should make efforts to help people to work from home where they can. Employers should also make reasonable adjustments to the workplace to help people to feel safe and comfortable and create safe places to work, such as limiting contact and staggering processes. To identify the precautions needed to manage risk, your employer should carry out a risk assessment and consult with you to identify the practical ways of managing those risks.

If you remain concerned that your employer is not taking all practical steps to promote social distancing then you can report their failure to your local authority or the Health and Safety Executive who can take a range of action, including where appropriate requiring your employer to take additional steps.

4.2 What if they try to fire me because I won't go to work but cannot work at home?

We can emphasise to new county responsible decisions and listen to the concerns of their staff. Employers and employees should come to a pragmatic agreement about their working arrangements.

If individuals need advice, they should approach ACAS where they can get impartial advice about work disputes.

5. Public Transport

6. Travel

7. Business and other venues

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5.1 Who is allowed to travel on public transport?

If you cannot work from home and have to travel to work, or if you must make an essential journey, you should cycle or walk wherever possible. Before you travel on public transport, consider if your journey is necessary and if you can, stay local. Try to reduce your travel. This will help keep the transport network running and allows people who need to make essential journeys to travel.

We have set out further advice on how to stay safe during your journey.

5.2 Should people wear face coverings on public transport?

If you can, wear a face covering in an enclosed space where social distancing isn't possible and where you will come into contact with people you do not normally meet. This is most relevant for short periods indoors in crowded areas, for example on public transport or in some shops. The evidence suggests that face coverings can help us protect each other and reduce the spread of the disease if you are suffering from coronavirus, but not showing symptoms. You should be prepared to remove your face covering if asked to do so by police officers and staff for the purposes of identification.

If people choose to wear them, we are asking people to make their own face coverings at home, using scarves or other textile items. We are publishing guidance to help illustrate the process.

We urge the public not to purchase medical or surgical masks as these should be reserved for health and social care workers.

5.3 Can I use public transport to get to green spaces?

You should avoid using public transport wherever possible. Consider all other forms of transport before using public transport. If you need to use public transport, you should follow the safer travel guidance for passengers.

6. Schools and Childcare

6.1 Can children go back to early years settings, schools or university?

We continue to urge those who are currently eligible to use school provision (children of critical workers and vulnerable children) to attend. We said that we would bring more year groups back to school in a phased way when it is safe to have larger numbers of children within schools.

From Monday 1 June, therefore, all early years settings can reopen, and schools will start welcoming back pupils in Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 in smaller class sizes.

From Monday 15 June, secondary schools and further education colleges will also prepare to begin some face to face support with Year 10 and 12 pupils who have key exams next year, in support of their continued remote, home learning.

6.2 How will you make sure it is safe?

Keeping children and staff safe is our utmost priority. As more children return to school, we require new safety standards to set out how schools and early years settings can be adapted to operate safely.

We have published guidance advising schools and early years on reopening to ensure schools can adequately prepare new safety measures to operate safely and minimise the spread of the virus.

Protective measures to reduce transmission include regular hand cleaning, hygiene and cleaning measures, and small consistent group and class sizes of no more than 15 pupils. We have asked schools to consider staggering drop-off and arrival times, break times and assemblies, and make use of outdoor space.

7. Borders / international visitors

Please note - these measures are NOT yet in force. We will set out further detail, including from when these will be in force, in due course. You can find more information on border control here.

7.1 Are you isolating people at the border now?

The scientific advice shows that when domestic transmission is high, cases from abroad represent a small amount of the overall total and make no significant difference to the epidemic. Now that domestic transmission within the UK is coming under control, and other countries begin to lift lockdown measures, it is the right time to prepare new measures at the border.

7.2 What is self-isolation and which countries will it apply to?

We will be asking people travelling to the UK to make some sacrifices to stop coronavirus cases from being imported. In the same way as people in the UK have made large sacrifices to control the spread of coronavirus.

So what we will be requiring people to do on entering the UK is supply their contact details and details of their accommodation, and to self-isolate in their accommodation for 14 days, other than those on a short list of exemptions.

We will set out further details shortly.

7.3 Is this for foreign travellers only or British people returning home from holiday or living overseas?

All arrivals including British nationals will be required to provide their contact information and self-isolate upon arrival, other than those on a short list of exemptions.

8. Enforcement

8.1 How will police enforce the new rules?

The police and local authorities have the powers to enforce the requirements set out in law if people do not comply with them. The police will act with discretion and common sense in applying these measures, but if you breach the regulations, they may instruct you to disperse, leave an area, issue you with a fixed penalty notice or arrest you where they believe it necessary. They may also instruct you to take steps to stop your children breaking these legal requirements again if they have already done so.

The government has introduced higher penalties for those who do not comply, to reflect the increased risk to others of breaking the rules as we begin to ease the restrictions.If the police believe that you have broken these laws – or if you refuse to follow their instructions enforcing the law – a police officer may issue you with a fixed penalty notice of £100 (reduced to £50 if paid within 14 days). If you have already received a fixed penalty notice, the amount for further offences will increase in line with the table below.

First offence	£100
Second offence	£200
Third offence	£400
Fourth offence	£800
Fifth offence	£1600
Maximum penalty	£3200

For both individuals and companies, if you do not pay your fine you could be taken to court, with magistrates able to impose unlimited fines.

9. Devolved administrations

9.1 Does this guidance apply across the UK?

This guidance applies in England – people in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland should follow the specific rules in those parts of the UK.

If you live in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland additional guidance is available:

- Scotland
- Wales
- Northern Ireland

Is this page useful? Yes No Is there anything wrong with this page?

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance and support

The UK has left the EU

Transition period: get ready for 2021

Services and information

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Business and self-employed
Childcare and parenting
Citizenship and living in the UK
Crime, justice and the law
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Employing people
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