Cabinet Office

Guidance

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

Updated 14 September 2020

Contents

1. Changes in restrictions from 14 September
2. Social contact
3. Visiting public places and taking part in activities
4. Clinically vulnerable groups and clinically extremely vulnerable groups, and care homes
5. Going to work and being COVID-19 Secure
6. Workers' rights
7. Public Transport
8. Schools and Childcare
9. Borders / international visitors

This is national guidance that applies to England only – people in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland should follow the specific rules in those parts of the UK. If you live in an area that is experiencing a local COVID-19 outbreak and where local restrictions have been imposed, different guidance and legislation will apply. Please consult the local restrictions page to see if any restrictions are in place in your area.

1. Changes in restrictions from 14 September

On 9 September, the government announced upcoming changes to simplify the restrictions and ensure the virus is controlled.

These new restrictions take effect from 14 September. They are set out in the law, and the police and other enforcement officers are able to issue penalties to those that don't comply.

Further information on these changes can be found in the relevant section below.

Detailed guidance on the new rules on how to meet people safely, including our changes to gatherings rules, can be found here.

2. Social contact

The rules on who you can meet changed on Monday 14 September. There is further guidance on meeting with others safely.

2.1 Can I visit people indoors?

Yes.

There is a legal limit on the number of people you don't live with you are able to meet. When meeting with people you don't live with you can socialise in groups of up to 6.

You should continue to maintain social distancing with anyone you do not live with. There is further guidance on meeting others safely, which includes details of exemptions from this limit, including for larger households and support bubbles.

2.2 How many people am I allowed to meet with outdoors?

When meeting with people you don't live with (or have formed a support bubble with) you can socialise in groups of up to 6. You should continue to maintain social distancing with anyone you do not live with. There is further guidance on meeting with others safely, which includes details of exemptions from this limit, including for larger households and support bubbles.

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

You can help control coronavirus and travel safely by walking and cycling, if you can. However where this is not possible, you can use public transport or drive. If you do use public transport, you must wear a face covering and you should follow the safer travel guidance for passengers.

2.4 Are children counted in the group of 6?

Yes.

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

You should try not to share a vehicle with those outside your household or social bubble. If you need to, try to:

- share the transport with the same people each time
- keep to small groups of people up to the legal limit of 6 people at any one time (this limit of 6 people will apply and have legal force from 14 September).
- open windows for ventilation
- travel side by side or behind other people, rather than facing them, where seating arrangements allow
- face away from each other
- consider seating arrangements to maximise distance between people in the vehicle
- clean your car between journeys using standard cleaning products - make sure you clean door handles and other areas that people may touch
- make sure the driver and passengers wear a face covering

The Department for Transport has provided specific guidance on using private vehicles. Please see their guidance on private cars and other vehicles for more information on car sharing and traveling with people outside your household group.

2.6 Can I stay overnight in someone else's home?

Yes, you can stay overnight in someone else's home, but only if you do not form a gathering of more than 6 people. This limit does not apply if you are in a support bubble with the person whose home you are staying in.

You should ensure you maintain social distancing with anyone you do not live with or who is not in your support bubble. Take particular care to maintain excellent hygiene – washing hands and surfaces – especially when using shared facilities like bathrooms wherever possible.

People in the same support bubble can stay overnight with each other in larger groups as they count as one household.

2.7 Can I look after my grandchildren?

Yes. People in groups of up to 6 can meet indoors or outdoors, which enables you to spend time with your grandchildren (although whole families may not be able to meet up at once). We recognise that grandparents and other relatives often provide informal childcare for young children, and this can be very important. Although you should try to maintain social distance from people you do not live with wherever possible, it may not always be practicable to do so when providing care to a young child or infant. If this is the case - and where young children may struggle to keep social distance – you should still limit close contact as much as possible, and take other precautions such as washing hands and surfaces regularly.

If you have formed a support bubble with your grandchild's household, which is allowed if either you or they live in a 'single adult household', then there can be close contact and social distancing is not necessary.

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

The new legal gatherings limit of 6 does not apply to funerals. For funerals, there is a higher, legal gatherings limit of 30 people. You should still socially distance from people you do not live with (or have formed a support bubble with). Funeral providers will limit capacity based on how many people they can safely accommodate with social distancing in place.

This higher limit only applies to the funeral ceremony itself – other than for religious, ceremonial purposes, wakes should not take place in groups of more than 6.

The guidance on funerals can be found here.

2.9 Can weddings go ahead?

Yes, wedding ceremonies, civil partnerships and receptions (sit down meals in COVID-19 Secure venues) are allowed to take place in venues or in public outdoor spaces.

Weddings and civil partnership ceremonies can have gatherings of up to 30 in COVID-19 Secure venues or public outdoor spaces.

Wedding receptions can have gatherings of up to 30 in COVID-19 Secure venues.

Within these larger gatherings, people do not need to limit their interaction to groups of 6, but social distancing should still be followed between people not in the same household or support bubble.

See further guidance on wedding ceremonies and civil partnerships.

2.10 When can I gather in groups of more than 6?

If you live in a household with more than 6 people, you can continue to gather in and attend all settings together. This same applies for your support bubbles. All venues should continue to accomodate groups larger than 6 who live together or are in the same support bubble to gather in and use their services and venues.

There are exceptions where groups can be larger than 6 people, including:

- for work, or the provision of voluntary or charitable services
- registered childcare, education or training
- supervised activities provided for children, including wraparound care, youth groups and activities, and children's playgroups
- providing support to a vulnerable person
- providing emergency assistance, and to avoid injury or illness or to escape risk of harm
- to continue existing arrangements where children do not live in the same household as both their parents
- fulfilling a legal obligation such as attending court or jury service
- weddings and civil partnership ceremonies and receptions – up to 30 people, in a public place
- funerals – up to 30 people. This does not include wakes, other than for religious ceremonial purposes.
- other religious and belief-based life cycle ceremonies – up to 30 people, in a public place. This only covers the ceremony, and does not include celebrations of these events.
- organised sport or exercise classes or licensed outdoor physical activity. This does not include informal sport or fitness activity with family or friends – this must be limited to a group of 6.
- elite sporting competition and training
- support groups – formally organised groups to provide mutual aid, therapy or any other form of support. This includes support to victims of crime, recovering addicts, new parents, people with long-term illnesses, those facing issues relating to their sexuality or gender, and those who have suffered bereavement.
- protests – if organised in compliance with COVID-19 Secure guidance

Where a group includes someone covered by one of these exemptions, they are not counted as part of the gatherings limit. This means, for example, that a tradesperson can go into a household of six without breaching the limit if they are there for work.

2.11 Does this mean that no more than six people can be in a pub, restaurant or place of worship at once?

Venues following COVID-19 Secure guidelines can host more than 6 people in total, but no one should visit in a group of greater than 6 (unless you are all from the same household or support bubble). When you visit one of these places, such as a pub, shop, leisure venue, restaurant or place of worship you should:

- follow the limits on the number of other people you should meet with as a group (it will be illegal to be in group of more than six from outside of your household or support bubble)
- avoid mingling with anyone outside the group you are with, even if you see other people you know
- provide your contact details to the organiser so that you can be contacted if needed by the NHS Test and Trace programme

2.12 Can I have a celebration for significant or ceremonial life events, other than weddings?

The legal gatherings limit of six people does not apply to standalone religious and belief-based life cycle ceremonies, such as christenings and bar/batmitzvahs. You can have up to 30 people at these events, provided they take place in a public place. This includes events to mark or celebrate a significant milestone in a person's life, according to their religion or belief, such as events to celebrate a person's birth (other than a birthday) or coming of age; or to mark a person's death or celebrate their life following their death.

This does not include celebrations of these events - receptions are only permitted for weddings and civil partnerships.

You should socially distance wherever possible from people you do not live with (or have formed a support bubble with).

2.13 Do I have to socially distance from my partner / boyfriend / girlfriend?

People in an established relationship do not need to socially distance. If in the early stages of a relationship, you should take particular care to follow the guidance on social distancing. If you intend to have close contact with someone, you should discuss how you can help to prevent risks of transmission as a couple, for example, by ensuring you are both avoiding close contact with people you do not live with.

2.14 How will the new rules on gatherings be enforced?

The police will be able to enforce these legal limits, and if you break them you could face a fine (fixed penalty notice) of £100, doubling for further breaches up to a maximum of £3,200. Later this month, hospitality businesses will also be required to ensure there are no unlawful gatherings in their premises. We know the majority of businesses are responsible and are taking the necessary steps to be COVID-19 Secure, but for those businesses who won't take those steps, egregious breaches will be enforced.

Anyone organising a gathering (such as a rave or house party) of more than 30 could face a £10,000 fine.

2.15 Can I gather in a group of more than 6 for childcare?

There is an exemption to the legal gatherings limit which comes into force on 14 September for the purposes of education, training, formal registered childcare, and supervised activities for children (including before and after school clubs, or other out-of-school setting provision for children. Youth groups and other children's groups will also be exempt from the gatherings limit. Family and friends can continue to provide informal childcare as long as groups from different households do not exceed 6 people.

3. Visiting public places and taking part in activities

3.1 Are there restrictions on how far I can travel?

No. You can travel irrespective of distance, but you should take hygiene and safety precautions if using services on the way.

You can use public transport but it is better to travel in other ways if possible. It is difficult to socially distance during car journeys and transmission of coronavirus can occur in this context. So avoid travelling with someone from outside your household or your support bubble unless you can practise social distancing.

Further guidance on car sharing is available. If you need to use public transport, you should follow the safer travel guidance for passengers. When travelling on public transport you are legally required to wear a face covering.

If visiting other parts of the UK – Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland – you must adhere to the laws and guidance of the devolved administrations at all times. If you wish to travel internationally, you should follow the laws of other countries and FCO international travel guidance. Upon return to the UK, you must by law self-isolate for 14 days, unless you have come from one of the countries listed here, and you are required to complete a passenger locator form before arriving in the UK. This is crucial to help to ensure the virus does not spread across borders.

3.2 Are day trips ok?

Yes, day trips to outdoor open space are allowed. You should take hygiene and safety precautions if using services on the way. You should practise social distancing from other people outside your household or support bubble. You should walk or cycle if you can, however where this is not possible, you can use public transport or drive. If you do use public transport, you must wear a face covering and should follow the safer travel guidance for passengers.

3.3 Can I go on holiday? Can I stay in my second home?

Yes.

However, you should not go on holiday in England with people you do not live with (or who are not in your support bubble) in a group larger than 6 people. Doing so is against the law. You should ensure you maintain social distancing with anyone you do not live with or is not in your support bubble.

If you are in a support bubble, or if the group consists solely of people you live with, you can stay overnight without needing to maintain social distancing. People in the same support bubble can also gather together indoors even if the group size is more than 6.

Take particular care to maintain excellent hygiene – washing hands and surfaces – and avoid using shared facilities like bathrooms wherever possible.

3.4 What happens if I become unwell while on holiday in England?

If you develop symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) while staying in overnight accommodation you should inform the accommodation provider immediately, self-isolate where you are to minimise any risk of transmission, and request a test by calling 119 or online at nhs.uk. If your test is positive you should return home as quickly and directly as possible. You should use private transport but only drive yourself if you can do so safely.

Avoid using public transport in order to reduce the spread of the virus. If you cannot avoid using public transport, you should continue to self-isolate in your accommodation and call 111 for further advice.

In most cases, it will not be possible to self-isolate at your holiday accommodation. In these cases, you should make arrangements to travel home as safely as possible, while minimising the risk to others.

It may be possible for you to agree with the accommodation provider to extend your stay in order to self-isolate until you are well enough to travel. Unless otherwise provided for in the contractual terms of the booking, you will be expected to pay the costs of an extended stay in all but exceptional circumstances.

Once home, you should continue to follow the government guidance on self-isolation, household isolation and social distancing.

3.5 What if I can't travel home?

If you feel so unwell that you cannot travel, or if you cannot avoid using public transport, (for example because you do not have the means to travel via private transport), you should call 111 and ask to discuss your circumstances with an appropriate health care professional.

3.6 What happens if I am on holiday in England and I am contacted by NHS Test and Trace?

If NHS Test and Trace contacts you while you are on holiday to tell you that you have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for coronavirus, you should tell your accommodation provider immediately and make arrangements to return home as quickly and directly as you can.

You should self-isolate for 14 days from the last day you had contact with the person who tested positive, even if you remain well. If you cannot avoid using public transport to get home, you should continue to self-isolate where you are staying and call 111 for advice.

If it is agreed with the accommodation provider that you can extend your stay in order to self-isolate until you are able to make safe travel arrangements, unless otherwise provided for in the contractual terms of the booking, you will be expected to pay the costs of an extended stay in all but exceptional circumstances.

In many cases it will not be possible to self-isolate at your holiday accommodation. In these cases, you should make arrangements to travel home as safely as possible, while minimising the risk to others. If this isn't possible because you feel so unwell that you cannot travel, or if you cannot avoid using public transport, you should call 111 for advice.

If you start to feel unwell during your self-isolation period, get a test either online at www.nhs.uk/coronavirus or by calling 119.

People you have been travelling with, or people you live with, do not need to self-isolate if you do not have symptoms, unless contacted and asked to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace.

3.7 Do I need to follow the rules if I'm on holiday in another country?

If you are abroad, you should follow the rules of the country you are in. You should also follow the same principles to keep you and your loved ones safe. It is essential to maintain social distancing wherever possible from those you don't live with and wash your hands regularly. These rules are important wherever you are in the world.

3.8 Will public toilets and playgrounds reopen?

Councils are responsible for public toilets and this decision is up to them. If you need to use any of these facilities, you should practise social distancing and good hygiene (i.e. washing your hands thoroughly).

Outdoor playgrounds are also able to reopen but the people responsible for them – for example, the local authority – should ensure they comply with COVID-19 Secure guidelines to help avoid risks of transmission. Anyone using playgrounds should take particular care to wash their hands after use and avoid touching their face. Children should be supervised carefully to maintain good hygiene and should not use playgrounds if they have any signs or symptoms of coronavirus.

3.9 Can I visit outdoor tourist sites? What about indoor ones?

Yes, you can still travel to outdoor areas, such as National Parks or beaches. It is advisable to check ahead to ensure the venue is open to visitors.

You are also able to visit most indoor sites and attractions. When going with people you don't live with you should only attend in groups of up to 6 people from 14 September, when the new social contact rules will become law. This does not apply if your household (and/or support bubble) is larger than 6 people. There will be exemptions, for example for school groups.

3.10 Can I pray in a place of worship?

Yes, places of worship will stay open for services and communal prayer in line with guidance for reopening Places of Worship.

Places of worship can stay open for services for more than 6 people. However, you must not mingle in a group of more than 6 (other than with people you live with or have formed a support bubble with).

Strict adherence to social distancing is strongly advised and a distance of 2 metres (or 1 metre with additional COVID-19 Secure measures in place) should be kept from people you do not live with wherever possible.

3.11 Can I send my teenagers to their youth club?

Yes, you can. However, you should advise your children to maintain social distancing, wash their hands regularly and limit social interaction outside of these formal activities with anyone they do not live with.

The club should also follow COVID-19 Secure guidance.

3.12 Can I go to a pub or restaurant with people I don't live with?

When eating or drinking out with people you do not live with (and who are not in your support bubble), you must keep to the wider rules on group sizes: you must only attend these places in groups of up to 6 people. You can attend in larger numbers with the people you live with/are in your support bubble.

In all cases, people from different households should ensure they socially distance as much as possible. You should think about where to sit at a table with this in mind – the premises should also take reasonable steps to help you do so in line with COVID-19 Secure guidelines. It remains the case that you do not need to maintain social distancing with those in your support bubble. This change also does not affect the support you receive from your carers.

3.13 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.

3.14 Can I go to the theatre or a concert?

You can now attend indoor and outdoor performances, for example dramatic, musical or comedy shows.

If you are watching the performance, you should:

- only attend in a group of no larger than 6
- socially distance from people you do not live with (or who are not in your support bubble)

3.15 When will I be able to go to a football match?

Through our close work with the sectors and public health experts, we have been looking into ways to safely re-open larger venues, such as sports stadiums, to the public. However, the government will review plans to pilot larger audiences in venues this month; planned events will be limited to smaller, safer numbers, with strict conditions to ensure social distancing, and will not take place in areas where incidence is high.

We will also review our intention to return audiences to stadia from 1 October, as set out in the government's plan.

3.16 Can I still participate in sport and physical activity in groups of more than 6?

You can continue to take part in organised sporting or licensed physical activity in groups of more than 6. This can be in any public place – indoors or outdoors – or a private outdoor space like a garden; but not inside a private home. These activities either need to be organised by a club, business or charity; and/or involve someone who has received an official license to use equipment relevant to the activity. In all cases, the organiser must conduct a risk assessment and ensure compliance with COVID-19 Secure guidance.

You should only be playing team sports where the relevant governing body has published guidance on how to do so safely. Organised dance and exercise classes can take place in groups of more than six, where a risk assessment has been carried out, but you should limit your social interaction with other participants.

The list of organised sport or licensed outdoor physical activity that you can do in groups of more than six includes:

- Angling
- Baseball / Softball
- Basketball
- Canoeing / Kayaking
- Caving
- Climbing
- Curling
- Cricket
- Dodgeball
- Dragon Boat Racing
- Equestrian
- Floorball
- Football
- Gaelic Sports
- Goalball
- Hockey
- Hunting - some forms
- Ice Hockey
- Lacrosse
- Netball
- Octopush
- Polo
- Roller Sports
- Rowing
- Rugby League
- Rugby Union
- Rounders
- Sailing/Yachting
- Shooting (including hunting and paintball that requires a shotgun or firearms certificate license)
- Ultimate Frisbee
- Volleyball

Other sports or licensed outdoor physical activities may also be permitted where their governing body has published guidance.

All supervised activities for children, including sports and exercise groups, are permitted where a risk assessment has been carried out – up to any number of participants.

When participating in organised sport or licensed physical activity, you must not gather in groups of more than 6 before and after the activity. You must also ensure you socially distance from people you do not live with (or have formed a support bubble with) wherever possible.

When playing sports informally with people you don't live with, you must limit the size of your group to 6. It is illegal to do so in a larger group and you may be fined.

3.17 Do I have to wear a face covering in public?

Face coverings are currently mandatory on public transport, and in shops, supermarkets, indoor shopping centres, banks, building societies, post offices, indoor transport hubs, museums, galleries, cinemas, places of worship, and public libraries.

People are also strongly encouraged to wear face coverings in any other enclosed public spaces where there are people they do not normally meet.

You do not need to wear a face covering if you have a legitimate reason not to. This includes (but is not limited to):

- children under 11
- because of a physical or mental illness or impairment, or disability
- to communicate with someone who relies on lip reading
- to avoid harm or injury; to identify yourself
- to eat or drink if necessary

You can carry something that says you do not have to wear a face covering for medical reasons. This is a personal choice, and is not necessary in law – you should not routinely be required to produce any written evidence to justify the fact you are not wearing a face covering.

Relevant guidance on face coverings is available here

3.18 Can I go to my support group?

Some types of support group are exempt from the legal gatherings limit.

Support groups can can take place in gatherings of any number in a public place, if the support group is organised by a business, a charitable, benevolent or philanthropic institution or a public body to provide mutual aid, therapy or any other form of support to its members or those who attend its meetings. This includes, but is not limited to, providing support:

- to victims of crime (including domestic abuse)
- to those with, or recovering from, addictions (including alcohol, narcotics or other substance addictions) or addictive patterns of behaviour
- to new and expectant parents
- to those with, or caring for persons with, any long-term illness, disability or terminal condition or who are vulnerable
- to those facing issues related to their sexuality or identity including those living as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender
- to those who have suffered bereavement

This is an exemption to the legal gatherings limit of six people.

Support groups not covered by this exemption can still take place if they do not breach the new gatherings limit of six people. This does not mean that no more than six people can attend. There can be multiple groups of six people attending, provided that the social interaction and shared activity is limited to groups of six. Where this is unlikely to be possible, no more than six people should attend. Anybody who is attending for work purposes is excluded from the gatherings limit.

3.19 Can I go to my hobby club / amateur musical group / other leisure activity?

It is against the law to gather in groups of more than six, where people are from different households or support bubbles. The rule above does not mean that there cannot be more than six people in any one place. All activities for under 18s are exempt. There can be multiple groups of six people in a place, provided that those groups do not mix or mingle.

In practice, however, this will make it difficult for some activities to take place without breaking the law. Activities where there is a significant likelihood of groups of more than six mingling – and therefore breaking the law – should not take place until further COVID-19 Secure guidance has been developed and approved to enable the activity to happen safely. This may include extended tour groups, large banquet dinners, society or club meetings, or amateur music or drama rehearsals.

4. Clinically vulnerable groups and clinically extremely vulnerable groups, and care homes

If you have any of the health conditions listed in the clinically vulnerable guidance or are over 70 you could be at higher risk of severe illness from coronavirus.

Specific advice can be found in the clinically vulnerable guidance.

4.1 How is guidance to those shielding (clinically extremely vulnerable) being relaxed?

The guidance for the clinically extremely vulnerable is that shielding has been paused from 1 August. This means:

- you do not need to follow previous shielding advice
- you can go to work as long as the workplace is COVID-Secure but should carry on working from home wherever possible
- clinically extremely vulnerable children should attend education settings in line with the wider guidance on reopening of schools and guidance for full opening: special schools and other specialist settings
- you can go outside as much as you like but you should still try to keep your overall social interactions low and keep to the new gathering limit of 6
- you can visit businesses, such as supermarkets, pubs and shops, whilst keeping 2 metres away from others wherever possible or 1 metre plus other precautions • you should continue to wash your hands carefully and more frequently than usual and that you maintain thorough cleaning of frequently touched areas in your home and/or workspace • you will no longer receive free food parcels, medicine deliveries and basic care from the National Shielding Service

For practical tips on staying safe see the meeting with others safely guidance.

You will still be able to get:

- local volunteer support by contacting your local authority
- prescriptions, essential items and food you buy delivered by NHS Volunteer Responders
- priority slots for supermarket deliveries (if you previously registered for free food parcels).

Further information can be found in the clinically extremely vulnerable guidance.

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

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

This includes isolation procedures, PPE and infection control training for all staff, cleaning and how to provide personal care safely.

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

5. Going to work and being COVID-19 Secure

5.1 Who is allowed to go to work?

With the exception of the organisations listed in this guidance on closing businesses and venues, the government has not required any other businesses to close to the public – it is important for business to carry on.

It is at the discretion of employers as to how staff can continue working safely. Working from home is one way to do this, but workplaces can also be made safe by following COVID-19 Secure guidelines. Your employer should consult with you on how you can work safely, and must ensure workplaces are safe if they are asking you to return, as above.

If you are clinically extremely vulnerable, you can go to work as long as the workplace is Covid-19 Secure but should carry on working from home wherever possible.

There is specific guidance for those showing symptoms that should be observed when considering adjustments to enable people to go back to work.

5.2 What are the 'COVID-19 Secure' safety guidelines workplaces have to put in place?

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

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

5.3 Can work gatherings exceed 6 people?

Work gatherings are exempt from the gatherings limit of 6. Where a group includes someone who is working, they are not counted as part of the gatherings limit. This means a tradesperson can go into a household of six without breaching the limit, if they are there for work.

5.4 Do I need to stay 2 metres apart – or 1 metre?

People should either stay 2 metres apart or '1 metre plus' – which is one metre plus mitigations that will help to prevent transmission. These mitigations will depend on the workplace or setting. For example, on public transport, shops, supermarkets and in other public places, people must wear a face covering, as it is not always possible to stay 2 metres apart. People should also wash or sanitise their hands regularly and avoid the busiest routes and times (like the rush hour).

In other spaces, mitigations could include installing screens, making sure people face away from each other, putting up handwashing facilities, minimising the amount of time you spend with people outside your household or bubble, and being outdoors.

We have set out COVID-19 Secure guidance to help businesses take the measures that are right for them.

5.5 How will health and safety regulations be enforced?

Where the enforcing authority, such as the Health and Safety Executive or your local authority, identifies employers who are not taking action to comply with the relevant public health legislation and guidance to control public health risks (for example, not completing a new risk assessment taking account the risk of COVID-19, or taking insufficient measures in response), they will consider a range of actions to improve control of workplace risks. This includes giving specific advice to a business, or issuing an improvement notice, which a business must respond to in a fixed time, or a prohibition notice. Failure to comply is a criminal offence, which can lead to fines or imprisonment for up to two years, giving the COVID-19 Secure guidelines indirect legal enforceability.

Local authorities also have new powers to close any premises if they believe it necessary to help prevent transmission of COVID-19.

Later this month, hospitality businesses will also be required to ensure there are no unlawful gatherings in their premises. We know the majority of businesses are responsible and are taking the necessary steps to be COVID-19 Secure, but for those businesses who won't take those steps, egregious breaches will be enforced.

6. Workers' rights

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

Employers and staff should discuss and agree working arrangements.

Employers should decide, in consultation with their employees, whether it is viable for them to continue working from home. Where it is decided that workers should come into their place of work then this will need to be reflected in the risk assessment and actions taken to manage the risks of transmission in line with this guidance.

It is at the discretion of employers as to how staff can continue working safely. Working from home is one way to do this, but workplaces can also be made safe by following COVID-19 Secure guidelines. Your employer should consult with you on how you can work safely, and must ensure workplaces are safe if they are asking you to return, as above.

If you remain concerned that your employer is not taking all practical steps to promote social distancing then you can report this 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.

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

We urge employers to take socially responsible decisions and listen to the concerns of their staff. Employers and employees should come to a pragmatic agreement about their work arrangements.

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

7. Public Transport

7.1 Who is allowed to travel on public transport?

You should walk or cycle if you can. However where this is not possible, you can use public transport or drive. If you are using public transport, you should follow the safer travel guidance for passengers.

7.2 Should people wear face coverings on public transport?

It is the law that you must wear a face covering when travelling in England on a:

- bus or coach
- train or tram
- ferry or hovercraft or other vessel
- aircraft
- cable car
- in an enclosed transport hub, such as a train or bus station

If you do not wear a face covering you will be breaking the law and could be fined £100, or £50 if you pay the fine within 14 days. As announced, we will bring forward changes to mean that for repeat offenders these fines would double at each offence up to a maximum value of £3,200.

Please be aware that some people are exempt, and do not have to wear a face covering on public transport, including for health, age or equality reasons.

We have published guidance for those making face coverings at home, to help illustrate the process.

A face covering is not the same as the surgical masks or respirators used as part of personal protective equipment by healthcare and other workers; these should continue to be reserved for those who need them to protect against risks in their workplace such as health and care workers and those in industrial settings like those exposed to dust hazards.

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

The evidence suggests that face coverings can help us protect each other and reduce the spread of the disease from someone who is suffering from coronavirus, but not showing symptoms. That is why it is important to wear a face covering on public transport and it is required by law. It is currently mandatory to wear face coverings in shops, supermarkets, indoor shopping centres, banks, building societies, post offices, indoor transport hubs, museums, galleries, cinemas, places of worship, and public libraries. Relevant guidance on face coverings is available here.

To protect yourself, you should also continue to follow guidance on meeting safely with others and wash your hands regularly.

8. Schools and Childcare

8.1 Education and childcare

The government is committed to doing everything possible to allow all children to attend school safely, to support their wellbeing and education and help working parents. The overwhelming majority of children have now returned to school.

You can find out more about the government's approach to education and how schools are preparing.

8.2 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 these 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 groups. We have asked schools to consider staggering drop-off and arrival times, break times, and make use of outdoor space.

We have also published guidance on face coverings in education institutions that teach people in Years 7 and above. Schools and colleges have the discretion to require face coverings in communal areas where social distancing cannot be safely managed, if they believe that it is right in their particular circumstances. In areas where local restrictions apply, face coverings should be worn by adults and pupils (Years 7 and above) when moving around, such as in corridors and communal areas where social distancing is difficult to maintain.

Groups can be larger than 6 people for registered childcare, education and training purposes.

8.3 Can I go back to University?

Yes, Universities are preparing to welcome students back safely. Our guidance has advised safety measures, including good ventilation, using a blend of online and face to face provision, the use of face masks in communal areas where distancing is not possible and good hand hygiene.

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

Students will be expected to follow the latest guidance on social contact in their local area whilst attending university, and not travel back in the event of restrictions being imposed on a local area.

8.4 Who is in my household if I am in university halls?

Your accommodation provider will identify your household in halls within which routine contact can be easily managed. A household in halls is normally considered to be those students living in the same flat or on the same floor who share a kitchen and/or bathroom rather than an entire block. You must not gather in groups of more than 6 with people who are not in your household.

9. Borders / international visitors

9.1 What are the rules for quarantining if you've been abroad?

Unless you have only been in a country or territory on the UK's travel corridor list in the last 14 days, when you arrive in the UK you must travel directly to the place you are staying and not leave the place where you're staying until 14 full days have passed since you were last in a country or territory not on that list. Exemptions are in place for some countries where the risk of transmission is low. Find out more about self-isolation when you travel to the UK. You must also complete a public health passenger locator form to provide details of your journey.

You may be fined up to £100 for failure to fill out the passenger locator form ahead of your arrival into the country, or more if you break this rule more than once. You also may not be allowed to enter the UK (unless you're either British or a UK resident).

In England, if you are required to self-isolate and if you do not, you can be fined £1,000. If you do not provide an accurate contact detail declaration – or do not update your contact detail form in the limited circumstances where you need to move to another place to self-isolate – you can be fined. These fines start at £100, and will double – up to £3,200 – for repeated offences.

9.2 How do the quarantine exemptions work?

Passengers arriving from the countries and territories on the UK's travel corridor list will not be required to self-isolate on arrival into the UK, unless you have visited or stopped in a country or territory not on that list in the preceding 14 days, when you must self-isolate at the address you provided on the public health passenger locator form.

We will keep the conditions in these countries and territories under review. If they worsen we will not hesitate to reintroduce self-isolation requirements.

Travellers should always check the latest FCO travel advice. Travel advice includes information on any health measures in place for visitors to the country or territory. These can include a requirement to self-isolate, quarantine, or undergo testing for COVID-19, or even restrictions on entry.

Information on self-isolation in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland can be found on the Devolved Administration websites:

- Scotland
- Wales
- Northern Ireland

9.3 What rules do I need to follow if I am visiting the UK?

Before you travel to the UK from anywhere outside the Common Travel Area, you should complete the public health Passenger Locator Form before you arrive, providing your journey and contact details, as well as the address where you will self-isolate.

If you are required to self-isolate, when you arrive in the UK you must travel directly to the place you are staying and not leave the place where you're staying until 14 full days have passed since you were last in a non-exempt country or territory. The 14-day period starts from the day after you leave a non-exempt country or territory. A non-exempt country or territory is any country or territory that is not on the travel corridors list.

If you do not have any coronavirus symptoms at the end of your self-isolation period, you can stop self-isolating. You will then need to follow the same rules as people who live in the UK. People should follow the government guidelines, including maintaining social distancing with those they are not staying with and washing their hands regularly.

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

Check the new rules for January 2021

Services and information

- Benefits
- Births, deaths, marriages and care
- Business and self-employed
- Childcare and parenting
- Citizenship and living in the UK
- Crime, justice and the law
- Disabled people
- Driving and transport
- Education and learning
- Employing people
- Environment and countryside
- Housing and local services
- Money and tax
- Passports, travel and living abroad
- Visas and immigration
- Working, jobs and pensions

Departments and policy

- How government works
- Departments
- Worldwide
- Services
- Guidance and regulation
- News and communications
- Research and statistics
- Policy papers and consultations
- Transparency and freedom of information releases

Help Privacy Cookies Contact Accessibility statement Terms and conditions
Rhestr o Wasanaethau Cymraeg Built by the Government Digital Service

All content is available under the Open Government Licence v3.0, except where otherwise stated

© Crown copyright