

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Tuesday's Briefing

The UK's daily press briefing was led by Health Secretary Matt Hancock, with John Newton, director of health improvement at Public Health England:

- in order of significance, demographic factors which affects people's susceptibility to coronavirus include: age, sex, living in a city, and ethnic background. The government is looking at how to close these gaps, with work led by the equalities minister, Kemi Badenoch
- other health inequalities, linked to occupation, income and deprivation, also apply and may partially explain the effect of ethnicity
- each day, just over 40,000 antibody tests, which can tell whether someone has previously had the virus, are being administered to NHS and care staff. The government wants to roll them out to the public, but Mr Hancock stressed that we do not yet know whether antibodies convey significant immunity
- after criticism from the statistics watchdog, the government committed to working with the watchdog to publish its statistics in the best way
- if someone tests negative while isolating due to an instruction from a contact tracer, they must still complete the isolation period. This is because it is possible to test negative while incubating the virus.

Other developments:

- Greece has suspended all flights coming from Qatar until 15 June after 12 passengers on a Qatar Airways flight from Doha to Athens tested positive for Covid-19
- the government is to give more details of its proposals to require the majority of those arriving in the UK from abroad to self-isolate for 14 days amid criticism of the quarantine plan
- Portugal's foreign minister has said that anyone from the UK thinking of going to his country this summer would be "most welcome"
- a team of scientists from London's Guy's and St Thomas' hospital and King's College have begun a study to see if ibuprofen could provide a low-cost treatment for coronavirus
- universities are setting out plans for social distancing when campuses re-open in the autumn. Students may have to live and study with the same small group of people
- France's daily death toll from coronavirus has risen above 100 for the first time in 13 days
- Sweden's state epidemiologist, who was behind the country's policy of not having a lockdown, has admitted it should have imposed more restrictions to control the spread of the virus.

Latest figures

According to figures from Worldometer, there are:

Globally:

6,453,781 confirmed cases
382,507 deaths

UK:

277,985 confirmed cases
39,369 deaths.

Government strategy and workplace guidance

NHS Test and Trace service

The NHS Test and Trace service forms a central part of the government's coronavirus recovery strategy. Launching across England, the service aims to help identify, contain and control coronavirus, reduce the spread of the virus and save lives.

Anyone who tests positive for coronavirus will be contacted by NHS Test and Trace and will need to share information about their recent interactions. This could include household members, people with whom they have been in direct contact, or within 2 metres, for more than 15 minutes.

People identified as having been in close contact with someone who has a positive test must stay at home for 14 days, even if they do not have symptoms, to stop unknowingly spreading the virus.

If those in isolation develop symptoms, they can book a test at nhs.uk/coronavirus or by calling 119. If they test positive, they must continue to stay at home for 7 days or until their symptoms have passed. If they test negative, they must complete the 14-day isolation period.

Members of their household will not have to stay at home unless the person identified becomes symptomatic, at which point they must also self-isolate for 14 days to avoid unknowingly spreading the virus.

NHS Test and Trace brings together 4 tools to control the virus:

1. test: increasing availability and speed of testing will underpin NHS Test and Trace
2. trace: when someone tests positive for coronavirus the NHS Test and Trace service will use dedicated contact tracing staff, online services and local public health experts to identify any close recent contacts they've had and alert those most at risk of having the virus who need to self-isolate. This will be complemented by the rollout of the NHS COVID-19 App in the coming weeks
3. contain: a national Joint Biosecurity Centre will work with local authorities and public health teams in Public Health England (PHE), including local Directors of Public Health, to identify localised outbreaks and support effective local responses, including plans to quickly deploy testing facilities to particular locations. Local authorities have been supported by £300 million of new funding to help local authorities develop their own local outbreak control plans
4. enable: government to learn more about the virus, including as the science develops, to explore how we could go further in easing infection control measures.

The Department for Work and Pensions has announced that those having to self-isolate will be eligible for statutory sick pay if they are unable to work from home. This applies across the four nations of the UK.

The government has also commented that work continues on the NHS COVID-19 app following a successful rollout on the Isle of Wight. It has added that there has been a positive reception to the test and trace system on the island with over 52,000 downloads in the first week. The app, which will form a part of the NHS Test and Trace service, is due to be launched in the coming weeks once contact tracing is up and running.

NHS test and trace: workplace guidance

This document sets out guidance on the NHS test and trace service for employers, businesses and workers.

The role of employers

According to the guidance, the NHS test and trace service will help to manage the risk of the virus re-emerging as restrictions on everyday life are eased, as far as it is deemed safe to do so.

It stresses that it is vital employers play their part by:

- making their workplaces as safe as possible
- encouraging workers to heed any notifications to self-isolate and supporting them when in isolation.

The document recognises that although this may seem disruptive for businesses, but suggests that it is less disruptive than an outbreak of COVID-19 in the workplace will be, and far less disruptive than periods in lockdown.

The NHS test and trace service is designed to support businesses and economic recovery by:

- providing testing for anyone who has symptoms of coronavirus, so that if they have been tested positive, they and their household member know to continue to self-isolate
- helping to stop the onward spread of the virus in the workplace and wider society, so that fewer people develop coronavirus and have to self-isolate
- enabling the government to go further in safely easing or lifting lockdown measures, as far as it is deemed safe to do so, thereby allowing the nation to return to normal as quickly as possible.

Sector health and safety

This guidance must be followed to help to reduce the risk of a spread of infection in the workplace, says the document. In addition to this, employers are reminded that they must continue to follow health and safety workplace guidance for their sector such as:

- making every reasonable effort to enable working from home as a first option
- where working from home isn't possible, identifying sensible measures to control the risks in the workplace
- keeping the workplace clean, maintaining safe working separation, and preventing transmission through unnecessary touching of potentially contaminated surfaces.

The guidance also includes information:

- for the self employed
- on contact tracing: contact with co-workers
- the NHS COVID-19 app
- for workers.

Scotland's route map through and out of the crisis

A four-phase “route map” has been published, which is aimed at restarting society while suppressing the virus. The document sets out the steps to reopen Scottish society, although it does not set exact timescales. It states that reviews will take place every three weeks as a minimum, to ensure Scotland is on track and to assess whether elements within each phase can be accelerated or need to be decelerated.

The route map takes an evidence-led and transparent approach to easing restrictions and sets out a phased approach.

It gives practical examples of what people, organisations and businesses can expect to see change over time, and highlights some of the things that won't change for a while, including the continuing need for enhanced public health measures such as physical distancing. For example:

- the first phase of easing will see garden centres and recycling facilities reopen, while some outdoor activities such as golf, fishing, tennis and bowls will be allowed again, as will outdoor work such as agriculture and forestry
- people will also be able to sit or sunbathe in parks and open areas, and will be able to meet people from one other household - although only initially in small numbers and while they are outside
- different households should remain two metres apart from each other, and visiting inside other people's houses will not be permitted in the first phase
- people will be able to travel - preferably by walking or cycling - for recreation, although they will be asked to remain “where possible” within or close to their own local area
- take-away and drive-through food outlets will no longer be discouraged from re-opening, so long as they apply safe physical distancing, but non-essential indoor shops, cafes, restaurants and pubs must remain closed during the first phase
- schools will not reopen until the new school year begins on 11 August (Phase 3). Children will return to a blended model where they will do a mix of school and home learning
- also in Phase 3 remote working remains the default position for those who can. Indoor office workplaces including contact centres can reopen, once relevant guidance has been agreed and with physical distancing.

If the evidence shows transmission of COVID-19 is under control and the number of infectious cases is starting to decline, the Scottish Government will consider moving to Phase 1 of the route map following the next end-of-cycle review date on 28 May.

The NHS Scotland test, trace, isolate and support strategy – known as Test and Protect - will be ready for expansion in all 14 health boards from 28 May.

The four phases

Phase 1: Virus not yet contained but cases are falling. From 28 May people should be able to meet another household outside in small numbers. Sunbathing is allowed, along with some outdoor activities like golf and fishing. Garden centres and drive-through takeaways can reopen, some outdoor work can resume, and childminding services can begin.

Phase 2: Virus controlled. People can meet larger groups outdoors, and meet another household indoors. Construction, factories, warehouses, laboratories and small shops can resume work. Playgrounds and sports courts can reopen, and professional sport can begin again.

Phase 3: Virus suppressed. Meetings of people from more than one household indoors. Non-essential offices would reopen, along with gyms, museums, libraries, cinemas, larger shops, pubs, restaurants, hairdressers and dentists. Live events could take place with restricted numbers and physical distancing restrictions. Schools should reopen from 11 August.

Phase 4: Virus no longer a significant threat. University and college campuses can reopen in full, mass gatherings are allowed. All workplaces open and public transport is back at full capacity.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Phase 1: returning to work

This guidance is for employees and employers on returning to work during COVID-19.

Currently the advice is that if somebody can work from home, they should do so. Details on which sectors are able to restart or can prepare to return to work in Phase 1 and how to do this safely are set out in this guidance.

Scotland's Route map through and out of the crisis was published on 21 May, setting out an indication of the order in which the Scottish government will carefully and gradually seek to lift restrictions across four phases.

This publication provides an updated annex to the original route map to reflect the move to Phase 1.

In terms of working or running a business, the default position for those who can is to work remotely. For those workplaces that are reopening, employers should encourage staggered start times and flexible working.

Non-essential outdoor workplaces with physical distancing resume once relevant guidance agreed.

For construction – Phases 0-2 of industry restart plan can be implemented. (Industry to consult government before progressing to phase 2).

Workplaces resuming in later phases can undertake preparatory work on physical distancing and hygiene measures.

The document, **Coronavirus (COVID-19): framework for decision making - supporting evidence for moving to phase 1**. It sets out an assessment of the evidence on the criteria for progressing to Phase 1 of Scotland's route map through and out of the crisis.

The UK Government's COVID-19 recovery strategy

An outline to the Government's plan for rebuilding and recovering from the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has now been published.

The government is proposing a three-step plan. In summary:

1. Step one, starting on Wednesday 13 May:
 - workers who cannot work from home should travel to work if their workplace is open, and workplaces should follow new "Covid-19 Secure" guidelines
 - more vulnerable children, who are already able to attend school, are urged to do so
2. Step two, which will begin no earlier than 1 June:

- nurseries and primary schools will begin a phased return. At first this will only involve early years, reception, and years one and six. But the government's ambition is that all primary school children in England should return to school for a month before the summer
 - some businesses will be able to re-open and sporting events will be able to take place behind closed doors - but not hairdressers or beauty salons
 - the government is seeking advice on allowing people to expand their household group and examining how small weddings can be better facilitated
3. Step three, which will start no earlier than 4 July:
- more businesses will be able to open - although some, which are crowded by design, will not be able to open.

It is stressed that all dates could be delayed if not enough progress is made in tackling the virus, and restrictions could be reintroduced. And the government stress that changes are dependent on the rate of infection staying down.

“COVID-19 Secure” guidelines

Many measures require the development of new safety guidelines that set out how each type of physical space can be adapted to operate safely. The Government has been consulting relevant sectors, industry bodies, local authorities, trades unions, the Health and Safety Executive and Public Health England on their development.

To make workplaces less infectious, the guidelines will promote, for example:

- keeping a distance between people outside their household
- keeping the hands and face as clean as possible. Hand sanitiser should be carried when travelling and applied where available outside the home, especially when entering a building and following contact with surfaces. Clothes should also be washed regularly, as there is some evidence that the virus can stay on fabrics
- limiting the number of people that any given individual comes into contact with regularly. Employers can support this where practical by changing shift patterns and rotas to keep smaller, contained teams. Evidence also suggests the virus is less likely to be transmitted in well-ventilated areas.

Lifting restrictions step-by-step

In terms of work, the key messages in **Step 1** include:

- for the foreseeable future, workers should continue to work from home rather than their normal physical workplace, wherever possible
- parts of the economy that are allowed to open should do so, including food production, construction, manufacturing, logistics, distribution and scientific research
- employees in these industries are now asked to return to work but should avoid public transport on their commute where possible
- as soon as practicable, workplaces should follow the new “COVID-19 Secure” guidelines
- the advice says that these industries will be asked to follow new “COVID-19 Secure” guidelines which are set to be published, but will likely include asking employers to take steps to reduce unnecessary contact between workers
- hospitality and other non-essential shops will remain shut during this period.

Other measures relate to schools, travel, face coverings, public space, shielding, international travel, and enforcement.

Step 2

The Government's current aim is that the second step will be made no earlier than Monday 1 June, subject to conditions being satisfied.

The current planning assumption for England is that the second step may include as many of the following measures as possible, consistent with the government's five tests. Organisations should prepare accordingly, it says. The measures cover schools, a phased re-opening of all non-essential retail businesses, cultural and sporting events, and social and family contact.

Step 3

The final part of the Government plan is not expected to come into force before 4 July and relies on scientific and medical advisers being satisfied the previous measures have not caused a spike in the infection rate.

During this final stage, the government would hope to reopen at least some of the remaining businesses, including personal care (such as hairdressers and beauty salons) hospitality (such as food service providers, pubs and accommodation), public places (such as places of worship) and leisure facilities (like cinemas). They should also meet the COVID-19 Secure guidelines.

5 steps to working safely

This government advice sets out practical actions for businesses to take based on five main steps.

The relevant guide for each workplace should also be read (see below) as these contain specific actions for businesses to take based on these steps. Further guidance will be published as more businesses are able to reopen, says the government.

1. Carry out a COVID-19 risk assessment

Before restarting work you should ensure the safety of the workplace by:

- carrying out a risk assessment in line with the HSE guidance
- consulting with your workers or trade unions
- sharing the results of the risk assessment with your workforce and on your website.

2. Develop cleaning, handwashing and hygiene procedures

You should increase the frequency of handwashing and surface cleaning by:

- encouraging people to follow the guidance on hand washing and hygiene
- providing hand sanitiser around the workplace, in addition to washrooms
- frequently cleaning and disinfecting objects and surfaces that are touched regularly
- enhancing cleaning for busy areas
- setting clear use and cleaning guidance for toilets
- providing hand drying facilities – either paper towels or electrical dryers.

3. Help people to work from home

You should take all reasonable steps to help people work from home by:

- discussing home working arrangements
- ensuring they have the right equipment, for example remote access to work systems
- including them in all necessary communications
- looking after their physical and mental wellbeing.

4. Maintain 2m social distancing, where possible

Where possible, you should maintain 2m between people by:

- putting up signs to remind workers and visitors of social distancing guidance
- avoiding sharing workstations
- using floor tape or paint to mark areas to help people keep to a 2m distance
- arranging one-way traffic through the workplace if possible
- switching to seeing visitors by appointment only if possible.

5. Where people cannot be 2m apart, manage transmission risk

Where it's not possible for people to be 2m apart, you should do everything practical to manage the transmission risk by:

- considering whether an activity needs to continue for the business to operate
- keeping the activity time involved as short as possible
- using screens or barriers to separate people from each other
- using back-to-back or side-to-side working whenever possible
- staggering arrival and departure times
- reducing the number of people each person has contact with by using 'fixed teams or partnering'.

Workplace Guidance: Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19)

Guidance published by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is for employers to help them get their businesses back up and running and workplaces operating safely.

The 'COVID-19 secure' guidelines aim to help make workplaces as safe as possible and give people confidence to go back to work during coronavirus pandemic. The documents have been developed in consultation with approximately 250 businesses, unions, industry leaders as well as devolved administrations.

The new guidance covers eight workplace settings which are allowed to be open, from outdoor environments and construction sites to factories and takeaways.

Practical steps for businesses are focused on five key points, which should be implemented as soon as it is practical:

1. Work from home, if you can

All reasonable steps should be taken by employers to help people work from home. But for those who cannot work from home and whose workplace has not been told to close, our message is clear: you should go to work. Staff should speak to their employer about when their workplace will open.

2. Carry out a COVID-19 risk assessment, in consultation with workers or trade unions

This guidance operates within current health and safety employment and equalities legislation and employers will need to carry out COVID-19 risk assessments in consultation with their workers or trade unions, to establish what guidelines to put in place. If possible, employers should publish the results of their risk assessments on their website and we expect all businesses with over 50 employees to do so.

3. Maintain 2 metres social distancing, wherever possible

Employers should re-design workspaces to maintain 2 metre distances between people by staggering start times, creating one-way walk-throughs, opening more entrances and exits, or changing seating layouts in break rooms.

4. Where people cannot be 2 metres apart, manage transmission risk

Employers should look into putting barriers in shared spaces, creating workplace shift patterns or fixed teams minimising the number of people in contact with one another, or ensuring colleagues are facing away from each other.

5. Reinforcing cleaning processes

Workplaces should be cleaned more frequently, paying close attention to high-contact objects like door handles and keyboards. Employers should provide handwashing facilities or hand sanitisers at entry and exit points.

A downloadable notice is included in the documents, which employers should display in their workplaces to show their employees, customers and other visitors to their workplace, that they have followed this guidance.

The guidance applies to businesses currently open. This also includes guidance for shops which the government believe may be in a position to begin a phased reopening at the earliest from the 1 June. It is noted that guidance for other sectors that are not currently open will be developed and published ahead of those establishments opening to give those businesses time to plan.

On 29 May, the sector guidance was updated to include details on test and trace.

Coronavirus (COVID-19): charter for safe working practice

This Charter has been launched to enable housebuilders to make a common commitment to operate in line with government safe working guidance. Signatories to the Charter have publicly committed to safe working practices in accordance with government and Construction Leadership Council guidance. It has been co-produced by the government and the Home Building Federation.

Through adherence to this Charter, the aim is that the industry can continue to provide much needed additions to housing supply and play its part in the country's economic recovery while delivering on its top priority: protecting the health and safety of the home building workforce, visitors to site and the local community.

According to HBF: “The Charter is a public facing commitment which supports the very detailed protocols individual builders have in place to ensure safe working on sites.”

Working safely during the coronavirus outbreak - a short guide

This HSE guidance covers steps you should take to help manage the risks of coronavirus in your business. These include taking measures to work at home where possible, maintaining social distancing, cleaning and hygiene.

This guide is aimed at all employers and those who are self-employed and work with or near other people. It explains how you can protect people from coronavirus (COVID-19) in your workplace, for example by putting in place social distancing measures, staggering shifts and providing additional handwashing facilities.

The guidance may also be useful to workers and their representatives.

Assessing risk

As an employer, you must protect people from harm. This includes taking reasonable steps to protect your workers and others from coronavirus. This is called a risk assessment and it'll help you manage risk and protect people.

You must:

- identify what work activity or situations might cause transmission of the virus
- think about who could be at risk
- decide how likely it is that someone could be exposed
- act to remove the activity or situation, or if this isn't possible, control the risk.

If you have fewer than five employees, you don't have to write anything down, but it might help if you do.

In terms of 'Talking to your workers' - separate guidance is available to help employers let people know what they need to do to protect themselves - see below.

This guidance goes on to cover who should go to work; protecting people who are at higher risk; getting into and leaving work; the work area; moving around; common areas; good hygiene; information and guidance; and PPE.

Talking with your workers about preventing coronavirus

This guide from the HSE is aimed at all employers. It explains how you can talk to your workers about preventing coronavirus (COVID-19) in your workplace, for example by putting in place social distancing measures, staggering shifts and providing additional handwashing facilities.

The guidance may also be useful to workers and their representatives, and those who are self-employed and work with or near other people. The law requires all employers to assess the risk of returning to work while the coronavirus outbreak is ongoing and to put steps in place to manage that risk.

This guide is designed to help you consult with workers as one part of putting in place measures to manage the risks of coronavirus in the workplace while continuing to work.

By talking to your workers, the guidance suggests that you can:

- reassure them by explaining the changes you are making
- get their thoughts and ideas about how to change the workplace to keep people safe and to ensure those changes are workable
- continue to operate your business safely during the outbreak.

The guide describes five different themes and suggests questions you can discuss with your workers. They are designed to get you talking with your workers about managing the risks of coronavirus.

Actions can then be taken to make sure your plans are working safely, and people have been listened to. You can hold conversations before returning to work so that plans can be developed and put in place before going back. You could then have further discussions soon after return to make sure the actions are working and are being followed.

You may also decide to repeat the discussions if something changes, for example: if new guidelines are published; or if lockdown restrictions change.

Importantly, the guidance points out that you should make sure that there is time available for managers and workers to have these conversations. The guide relies on both managers and workers having an open and honest conversation.

How to wear and make a cloth face covering

People in England are being advised to wear face coverings in enclosed spaces where they come into contact with other people – including on public transport.

Issued by the Cabinet Office, this guidance emphasises that people should use home-made coverings, not the specialist masks used by healthcare workers, for example. It provides advice on:

- wearing a face covering
- making a simple cloth face covering using either a T-shirt or cotton fabric.

Scotland: public use of face coverings

The Scottish Government has issued its own advice on this issue – click **here** <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-public-use-of-face-coverings/>

It says that Physical distancing, hand washing and respiratory hygiene, are the most important and effective measures we can all adopt to prevent the spread of coronavirus. Therefore, it is stressed that the wearing of facial coverings must not be used as an alternative to any of these other precautions.

Wales: Unlocking our society and economy: continuing the conversation

This document sets out the steps the Welsh Government are considering in order to lead Wales out of the coronavirus pandemic.

It builds on the approach set out in the document published on 24 April (Leading Wales out of the coronavirus pandemic: a framework for recovery) which identified three pillars:

1. Measures and evidence
2. Principles underpinning adjustments to restrictions
3. Public health purpose.

It is felt that there is a growing risk that changed behaviours could lead to a rapid, possibly uncontrolled increase in the spread of the disease. To avoid this, the document notes that Wales needs to move at a pace which is matched by its capacity to identify and shut down new outbreaks of the disease – to test, trace and protect those who become ill or have the virus without symptoms and ensure that they self-isolate to protect onward transmission.

It says the next few weeks need to be spent adapting workplaces, public spaces and other places where people come in contact with each other to the necessity of maintaining social distancing.

A traffic light-style system is set out, which is based on four stages to determine how those rules could be lifted - lockdown, red, amber and green - and includes the reopening of schools, seeing family and friends, playing sports and running businesses.

There are no dates given in the document, as changes can be only made when the scientific and medical advice says it is safe to do so, it says.

The document gives some detail to how life would look under each category:

- Lockdown – Schools are only open to vulnerable pupils’ children and children of key workers, people are advised to stay at home, only leaving home for essential travel and to work from home if possible.
- Red – Schools enabled to manage increase in demand from more key workers and vulnerable pupils returning; local travel, including for click-and-collect retail allowed; people allowed to provide or receive care and support to/from one family member or friend from outside the household
- Amber – Priority groups of pupils to return to school in a phased approach; travel for leisure allowed together with meeting with small groups of family or friends for exercise; people able to access non-essential retail and services; more people travelling to work;
- Green – All children and students able to access education; Unrestricted travel subject to ongoing precautions; All sports, leisure and cultural activities, as well as socialising with friends permitted, with physical distancing.

The Welsh government stressed that it is monitoring the “R rate” to decide what can be lifted and when.

Workplace guidance for employers and employees: COVID19

This workplace guidance is for employers and employees. The Welsh Government is now following a cautious approach to easing this lockdown and re-opening workplaces.

This guidance aims to help employers and employees who are currently working or who will be reopening workplaces understand what is important and how everyone should approach the shared endeavour of safe work. It is for all workplaces.

Key information addressed includes the following:

- workforce health: if someone becomes unwell in the workplace with a new, continuous cough; high temperature; the loss or a change in their normal sense of smell or taste they should be sent home and advised to follow the advice to stay at home
- keep legal: if you are permitted to operate your business you must do so safely in a way that complies with any restrictions imposed by the Coronavirus Regulations, in addition to other legal obligations imposed on employers (such as health and safety legislation)
- physical distancing
- risk assessment: all risks should be assessed, with meaningful discussion with staff and/or their recognised trade union, before re-commencing work. If the business or organisation is required by law to have a written risk assessment (where there are 5 or more employees) then significant findings must be written down and control measures put in place.

Northern Ireland: NI Executive plan for easing lockdown

A five-stage plan for easing the Covid-19 lockdown in Northern Ireland has been published by the Executive. The document sets out the approach the Executive will take when deciding how to ease restrictions in the future.

The plan does not include a timetable, but it is hoped to reach the final stage by December.

In making decisions, the Executive will consider three key criteria: the most up-to-date scientific evidence; the ability of the health service to cope; and the wider impacts on health, society and the economy.

Measures detailed in the plan include, amongst others:

Step 1:

- encouragement to those unable to work from home to return to work on a phased basis
- large outdoor-based retail can open including garden centres, though associated cafes and restaurants can only offer takeaway or collection
- groups of four to six people who do not share a household can meet outdoors maintaining social distancing. With the exception of people who are shielding, visits to immediate family allowed indoors where social distancing is possible

Step 2:

- non-food retail can open where numbers are limited, with social distancing
- groups of up to 10 can meet outdoors
- as demand increases on public transport within social distancing requirements, people encouraged to walk and cycle for short journeys where possible

Step 3:

- phased return to office and onsite working subject to risk assessment. Work that can be done from home should still be done from home
- schools expand provision for priority groups on a part-time basis, using a combination of in-school and remote learning
- gatherings can accommodate up to 30 people while maintaining social distancing

Step 4:

- other “contact” retail (hairdressers, fitness studios, tattoo and piercing parlours) can open subject to mitigations following risk assessment
- schools expand provision to accommodate all pupils on part-time basis with combination of in-school and remote learning

- reducing and staggering demand for public transport at peak times through continued home working and staggered start times for businesses

Step 5:

- all able to return to work subject to mitigations. Remote working still strongly encouraged
- hospitality retail (restaurants, cafes, pubs) can open subject to risk assessment, initially on a limited basis
- expand early-year school provision to full-time basis
- public transport operating full service but subject to ongoing risk assessment.

Guidance for schools

Managing school premises during the coronavirus outbreak

This guidance is for schools and other educational settings on managing premises during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

It is aimed at leaders of schools and other educational settings; and members of staff with responsibility for managing premises.

Schools are advised to review their arrangements for all building-related systems but in particular:

- hot and cold water systems
- gas safety
- fire safety
- kitchen equipment
- security including access control and intruder alarm systems
- ventilation.

While schools should review their arrangements for all building-related systems, says the guidance, in particular the following areas are important:

- water systems - drinking water, hot water services
- ventilation - good ventilation is essential at all times in classrooms and particularly during this period
- fire safety - fire safety management plans should be reviewed and checked in line with operational changes
- cleaning - new cleaning arrangements in line with coronavirus preparations should also include regular systematic checks on drainage systems, where toilets are put back into use
- all other systems - recommission all systems before re-opening, as would normally be done after a long holiday period.

Scotland: Coronavirus (COVID-19): re-opening schools guide

This guidance has been developed for education authorities and schools, (Primary/Secondary/ASN/School Hostels/Residential) to support a safe, phased reopening of schools in line with the Strategic Framework for Reopening Schools and ELC. It may also be used by grant aided schools and independent schools to support their recovery efforts.

The aims of this guidance are to:

- provide clarity of expectation with regard to practical approaches to a safe, phased reopening of schools and
- in so doing, promote broad national consistency whilst ensuring appropriate local flexibility for education authorities, schools and staff to adapt and adopt approaches that best suit their communities' needs and ensure the safety of staff, children, young people and their families.

It is noted that this guidance is not intended to promote a “checklist” approach. Rather, education authorities and schools should exercise their expert judgement to ensure the safety and wellbeing of their staff and children, taking into account local circumstances.

Risk assessments of individual facilities should be undertaken to ensure that health and safety legislation and guidance is fully adhered to.

As well as adapting the physical space and decreasing interactions in the education setting, education authorities and schools should consider key practices in respect of hygiene and facilities management.

If the school site or building has been closed for many weeks or if parts of the building have been out of use for a long period, the education authority/school should undertake a health and safety check of the building concerned and deep cleaning prior to reopening where necessary, says the guidance.

Re-opening the Workplace

Barbour Resources: Re-opening work premises after COVID-19 – Technical Guide and Director’s Briefing

The UK Government is coming under increasing pressure to review their lockdown measures, particularly in terms of the reopening workplaces. Whilst this discussion is evolving, the purpose of this guidance from Barbour is to outline to employers the range of issues that they must consider (where relevant) in preparing their offices, factories and warehouses for reoccupation.

The guidance is set out in four main sections:

- Building Safety
- Plant and Equipment Safety
- Management of Safety
- Managing Wellbeing.

It does not cover construction sites, or health and social care activities. These have their own sector specific guidance in place.

Existing risk assessments may not cover COVID-19 hazards in sufficient detail, and as such employers may wish to develop a specific risk assessment as part of their reoccupation planning. They must also consider how the key findings and controls from the risk assessment are effectively communicated to staff and other interested parties and how they are implemented. The guidance sets out topic areas that a reoccupation risk assessment might cover.

Director’s Briefing

Barbour's Director's Briefing addresses some key questions that employers may have around re-opening the workplace following the COVID-19 lockdown:

- I want to reopen my site – where do I start?
What issues do I need to think about in terms of building safety? (fire safety; water management; asbestos containing materials; deep cleaning for re-occupation)
- What about plant and equipment safety?
- Do I need to make changes to the overall management of safety on site?

Guidance for Businesses Re-opening after Temporary Closure

[Northern Ireland]

The purpose of this guidance note is to provide information to those responsible for premises that have been closed for a period of time and where the water supply has not been in regular use.

It is applicable in the current situation when buildings are re-opened following a period of closure as a result of COVID-19 restrictions, but it is also relevant to a period of closure for any reason. It provides guidance to ensure water quality is maintained when the water supply within a building is returned to use.

Government guidance

Coronavirus (COVID-19): advice on accessing green spaces safely

This document sets out advice on using green spaces and protecting yourself and others from coronavirus.

In England, you can leave your home to exercise and spend time outdoors for recreation with your household or in groups of up to six people from outside your household.

When travelling to outdoor spaces, it is important that people respect the rules in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Do not travel to different parts of the UK where it would be inconsistent with guidance or regulations issued by the relevant devolved administration.

Coronavirus (COVID-19): transport and travel guidance

Safer transport guidance for operators

This guide is to help organisations, agencies and others (such as self-employed transport providers) understand how to provide safer workplaces and services for themselves, their workers and passengers across all modes of private and public transport. It outlines measures to assess and address the risks of coronavirus (COVID-19) in the transport sector across England.

The guidance aims to ensure that stations and services are regularly cleaned, making clear to passengers how to stay 2 metres apart where possible in stations, airports and ports, and to ensure routes for passengers are clearly communicated to avoid crowding. The government's guidance also sets out steps operators should take to provide safe workplaces and services for their staff and passengers across all modes of private and public transport.

Safer travel guidance for passengers

This guidance provides advice on how passengers should make journeys safely, following the publication of the government's roadmap and strategy for the next phase of the pandemic. It urges people to consider cycling, walking or driving to help ensure there is enough capacity for those who need to travel on public transport to do so safely.

The advice asserts that if people who cannot work from home and have to travel for work, they should first consider alternatives to public transport. Those driving their own cars have been asked to avoid busy areas.

The guidance includes checklists for safer travel; these cover planning your journey and what to take with you. It has been updated to set out details of how people with coronavirus symptoms can arrange to have a test to see if they have COVID-19.

Relieving pressure on public transport

The government has announced plans for boosting active transport, in an attempt to relieve pressure on public transport.

Pop-up bike lanes with protected space for cycling, wider pavements, safer junctions, and cycle and bus-only corridors will be created in England within weeks as part of a £250 million emergency active travel fund - the first stage of a £2 billion investment, as part of the £5 billion in new funding announced for cycling and buses in February.

The government will fund and work with local authorities across the country to help make it easier for people to use bikes to get around - including Greater Manchester, which wants to create 150 miles of protected cycle track, and Transport for London, which plans a "bike Tube" network above Underground lines.

Statutory guidance for local authorities

Fast-tracked **statutory guidance**, effective immediately, tells councils to reallocate road space for significantly-increased numbers of cyclists and pedestrians. In towns and cities, some streets could become bike and bus-only while others remain available for motorists. More side streets could be closed to through traffic, to create low-traffic neighbourhoods and reduce rat-running while maintaining access for vehicles.

Vouchers will be issued for cycle repairs, to encourage people to get their old bikes out of the shed, and plans are being developed for greater provision of bike fixing facilities. Many more will take up the Cycle to Work scheme, which gives employees a discount on a new bike, the government has said.

The government has announced that an updated Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy will be launched by the Prime Minister in the summer, with further measures to transform cycling and walking to deliver the government's aims to double cycling and increase walking by 2025 – including:

- the creation of a national cycling and walking commissioner and inspectorate
- higher standards for permanent infrastructure across England
- getting GPs to prescribe cycling and exercise
- creating a long-term budget for cycling and walking similar to what happens for roads.

The government will also be launching a campaign to encourage more people to look at alternative ways to travel, to walk or get on a bike for their commute instead of public transport.

E-scooter trials will also be brought forward from next year to next month to help encourage more people off public transport and onto greener alternatives.

Staggering the commute

Further efforts to encourage drivers to make the switch include the upcoming launch of a consultation which hopes to make charging electric vehicles just as easy as filling up a traditional petrol or diesel car. It will explore measures such as requiring rapid charging points – which are fundamental for longer journeys - to offer contactless payment, improving transparency on pricing and giving drivers better access to information about the chargepoints available on their journey.

The government says it is also working alongside the tech sector to see how technology could be used to help commuters stagger their journeys and advise on alternative modes of travel.

The statutory guidance is made under section 18 of the Traffic Management Act 2004.

Supporting Workers

IOSH guidance can be found at <https://www.iosh.com/coronavirus>

The CIPD's advice pages can be found **here** <https://www.cipd.co.uk/news-views/coronavirus>

Acas advice for employers and employees is available **here** <https://www.acas.org.uk/coronavirus>

Advice from the HSE

The HSE has issued advice within a document titled: *Social distancing, keeping businesses open and in-work activities during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak*. It covers guidance on social distancing, essential and non-essential work, and in-work activity.

Also available is guidance covering RIDDOR, first aid and chemicals:

RIDDOR reporting of COVID-19

What to report?

- dangerous occurrences: if something happens at work which results in (or could result in) the release or escape of coronavirus you must report this as a dangerous occurrence
- cases of disease: exposure to a biological agent: if there is reasonable evidence that someone diagnosed with COVID-19 was likely exposed because of their work you must report this as an exposure to a biological agent using the case of disease report.

First aid cover and qualifications during coronavirus (COVID-19)

If first aid cover for a business is reduced because of coronavirus or the first aid training needed is not available, this advice points out that there are some things that can be done to still comply with the law.

Arrangements for regulation of chemicals during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak

The HSE has made some administrative changes in the provision of services for regulating chemicals during the coronavirus outbreak. These are set out for each chemical regime, with updated details on how to contact the HSE.

HMRC Furlough Advice

Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

The UK's coronavirus furlough scheme will finish at the end of October, Chancellor Rishi Sunak recently confirmed. He also set out how employers will have to start sharing the cost of the scheme.

From August, employers must pay National Insurance and pension contributions, then 10% of pay from September, rising to 20% in October. Also, workers will be allowed to return to work part-time from July, but with companies paying 100% of wages.

Mr Sunak said the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme will adjust so "those who are able to work can do so".

Some 8.4 million workers are having 80% of their salaries paid for by the government - up to £2,500 a month - under the scheme, which was originally intended to last until the end of July.

Under these changes, furloughed workers will continue to get 80% of pay until the end of October, but by then a fifth of their salary will have to be met by employers.

"Then, after eight months of this extraordinary intervention of the government stepping in to help pay people's wages, the scheme will close," Mr Sunak said.

How will the scheme change?

From 1 July, businesses will be allowed to bring furloughed employees back part-time, a month earlier than previously announced. The move is aimed to help support people back to work, the government said.

It will be down to individual firms to decide what part-time means. They will be able to set the hours and shift patterns staff will work when they return, but companies will have to pay wages while they are in work.

From 1 August the level of government grant will be reduced "to reflect that people are returning to work".

Furloughed workers will continue to receive 80% of their pay, but from August it will include a growing employer contribution. It will start with bosses paying NI and pensions in August, plus 10% of pay in September, rising to 20% in October.

During August the government will pay 80% of wages up to a cap of £2,500. Employers will have to pay NI and pension contributions. For the average claim, that's 5% of the gross employment costs the employer would have incurred had the employee had not been furloughed.

In September, the government will cut its grants to 70% of wages up to a cap of £2,190. Employers will pay NI and pension contributions and 10% of wages to make up the 80% total up to a cap of

£2,500. That works out at 14% of the average gross employment costs the employer would have incurred.

In October the government grant will be cut to 60% of wages up to a cap of £1,875. Employers will pay NI and pension contributions and 20% of wages to make up the 80% total up to a cap of £2,500. That's 23% of the gross employment costs the employer would have incurred had the employee not been furloughed.

Legislation

Coronavirus Act 2020

The Coronavirus Bill, introduced in the House of Commons on 19 March 2020, received Royal Assent on 25 March 2020 and is now in force.

The purpose of the Coronavirus Act is to enable the Government to respond to an emergency situation and manage the effects of a covid-19 pandemic. A severe pandemic could infect up to 80% of the population leading to a reduced workforce, increased pressure on health services and death management processes. The Act contains temporary measures designed to either amend existing legislative provisions or introduce new statutory powers which are designed to mitigate these impacts.

The Act aims to support Government in the following:

- increasing the available health and social care workforce
- easing the burden on frontline staff
- containing and slowing the virus
- managing the deceased with respect and dignity
- supporting people.

The Act is required as part of a concerted effort across the whole of the UK to tackle the covid-19 outbreak. The intention is that it will enable the right people from public bodies across the UK to take appropriate actions at the right times to manage the effects of the outbreak.

As part of its contingency planning, the Government has considered what measures would be needed during a severe covid-19 outbreak to reduce the pressure of key services and limit the spread of infection.

It is stressed that these are extraordinary measures that do not apply in normal circumstances. For this reason, the legislation will be time-limited for two years and it is neither necessary nor appropriate for all of these measures come into force immediately. Instead, many of the measures can be commenced from area to area and time to time, so as to ensure that the need to protect the public's health can be aligned with the need to safeguard individuals' rights. These measures can subsequently be suspended and then later reactivated, if circumstances permit, over the lifetime of the Act.

Coronavirus bill: summary of impacts

The Department of Health and Social Care issued an impact assessment document. It provides a summary of impacts relating to clauses within the Coronavirus Bill 2020 (now Act) and provides an overview of the impacts considered for each clause.

The Health Protection (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020 and The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Business Closure) (England) Regulations 2020 have been revoked by the Coronavirus Act 2020.

The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) (Amendment) (No. 3) Regulations 2020

The instrument makes a number of changes to the Restrictions Regulations to enable and support gradual relaxation of restriction measures whilst amending, but crucially, keeping in place public health measures to continue to reduce public health risks posed by the incidence and spread SARS-CoV-2. The relaxations will facilitate the country's economic recovery by opening certain non-essential retail premises operating mainly outdoors as supported by health data. The relaxations will also enable certain important aspects of public and private life to restart in a controlled manner.

Schedule 2 is amended:

- to allow all outdoor markets to open
- to allow vehicle showrooms and other premises, including outdoor areas used for the sale or hire of caravans, boats, or any vehicle which can be propelled by mechanical means to open
- to allow amenities for water sports, stables, shooting and archery venues, golf courses and driving ranges to open
- to add the following categories of venues which must close: indoor games, recreation and entertainment venues; theme parks and adventure parks and activities; social clubs; model villages; zoos, aquariums, and safari parks; visitor attractions at farms; indoor attractions at landmarks including observation wheels and viewing platforms; and indoor attractions at visitor attractions such as botanical or other gardens, biomes or greenhouses, and heritage sites or film studios.

The Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (Wales) (Amendment) (No. 3) Regulations 2020

[Wales]

These Regulations amend the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (Wales) Regulations 2020.

They came into force on 11 May 2020.

Amendments include:

- permitting libraries to open subject to requirements to take all reasonable measures to ensure a distance of 2 metres is maintained by persons on the premises and persons waiting to enter the premises
- removing the limitation in paragraph (2)(b) on exercising no more than once a day
- specifying that making use of a recycling or waste disposal facility, or visiting a library, constitutes a reasonable excuse
- adding garden centres and plant nurseries to Part 4 of Schedule 1, which means that they may open subject to requirements to take all reasonable measures to ensure a distance of 2 metres is maintained by persons on the premises and persons waiting to enter the premises.

The Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (Wales) (Amendment) (No. 4) Regulations 2020

[Wales]

Regulation 2 of these Regulations makes two amendments to the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (Wales) Regulations 2020 (“the principal Regulations”).

In particular, amendments are made to regulation 13 of the principal Regulations to increase the amount of the fixed penalty for repeated breaches of the Regulations up to a maximum of £1,920. The increased penalties apply to any fixed penalty notice issued on or after 22 May 2020. When determining the number of notices received by a person for the purposes of calculating the amount of fixed penalty, notices received before 22 May will be counted.

The Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (Wales) (Amendment) (No. 5) Regulations 2020

These regulations amend the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (Wales) Regulations 2020.

Regulation 2 makes, amongst others, the following amendments:

- provisions enabling a marriage or civil partnership where a party to the marriage or civil partnership is terminally ill
- a relaxation to the requirement to stay at home unless you have a reasonable excuse to enable people to be outside for any purpose within their local area
- a relaxation to the prohibition on gathering which allows persons from no more than two households to gather outdoors.

Taking all reasonable measures to maintain physical distancing in the workplace [Wales]

This document sets out guidance under regulation 7A of the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (Wales) Regulations 2020.

It is aimed at any person who is required by the Coronavirus Regulations to take all reasonable measures to ensure that a distance of 2 metres is maintained on particular premises.

Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020

The Coronavirus (Scotland) Bill received Royal Assent on 6 April 2020.

The purpose of the Act is to enable the Government to respond to an emergency situation and manage the effects of a covid-19 pandemic. It contains temporary measures designed to either amend existing legislative provisions or introduce new statutory powers which are designed to mitigate these impacts.

The measures set out are deemed essential to respond to this current emergency and cover a range of measures intended to ensure that:

- renters are protected while confined to their homes
- the justice system is able to deliver essential services
- public services, business and consumers can still operate despite new restrictions.

Coronavirus (Scotland) (No.2) Act 2020

The Coronavirus (Scotland) (No. 2) Act (the Act) complements and supplements provisions contained in the Coronavirus (Scotland) Act (above).

The Act includes a change to the restoration of freedom of information (FoI) rights to 20-day response times. The first Act extended this period to 60 days.

Some of the other main provisions relate to:

- student residential tenancy: termination by tenant
- carer's allowance supplement
- bankruptcy
- further provisions for care homes
- justice
- land and buildings transaction tax: additional amount
- reports, etc. under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009: powers to extend by six months the deadline in section 8A (1) of the 2009 Climate Change Act for the creation of a nitrogen balance sheet
- extension of period of consent for listed buildings and conservation areas

Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 3) Regulations 2020

This instrument amends the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions) (Scotland) Regulations 2020 ("the principal regulations") to provide:

- that people may take part in outdoor recreation in certain circumstances with members of their household and with members of one other household
- for the reopening of garden centres and provides that it is a reasonable excuse to visit a garden centre or a recycling service
- for the reopening of outdoor tennis courts and bowling greens.

They also allow certain businesses and service providers, which are currently closed to the public under the principal regulations, to begin preparing their premises in advance of re-opening in order to ensure compliance with physical distancing requirements when they are allowed to reopen.

The Regulations provide more detail on changes to the lockdown measures in Scotland.

Statutory Sick Pay (General) (Coronavirus Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2020 for the explanatory memorandum

These Regulations came into force on 17 March 2020. These are emergency regulations in relation to the Government's response to coronavirus. The regulations have been prepared as soon as it became clear that there was a need for the measures they contain.

The measures are required as a matter of urgency as part of the Government response to a developing outbreak, in order to reduce the risk that employees will continue to work despite advice that they should self-isolate.

The Statutory Sick Pay (General) (Coronavirus Amendment) (No. 3) Regulations 2020 [4](#)

This instrument amends the Statutory Sick Pay (General) Regulations 1982. A person classed as extremely vulnerable and at very high risk of severe illness from coronavirus (COVID-19) is advised to remain at home for at least 12 weeks (known as shielding).

The effect of the amendment is that Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) is extended to those people who are deemed to be incapable of work because of this advice.

The Regulations came into force on 16 April 2020.

Further information

- Check the Barbour Service for latest documents
- Coronavirus outbreak FAQs: what you can and can't do. These have been updated to bring them in line with the latest announcements
- Department of Health and Social Care and Public Health England: Coronavirus (COVID-19): latest information and advice <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public#risk-level>
- Coronavirus (COVID-19): Common questions <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/common-questions/>
- Protect Home Workers – HSE homeworking advice https://www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/workers/home.htm?utm_source=linkedin&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=coronavirus&utm_term=employers-2&utm_content=dse
- WHO **Situation Reports** <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports/>
- GOV.UK Novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) guidance for health professionals <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/wuhan-novel-coronavirus>
- Latest global figures: Coronavirus COVID-19 [Global Cases](#) by Johns Hopkins CSSE