

Kent County Council COVID-19 Update

This guide provides information on the national and local support available to help residents, businesses and voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector organisations respond to the impact of the Coronavirus (Covid-19). The guide also includes a summary of the latest Government announcements, alongside information on KCC's website (kent.gov.uk). The guide is update regularly and, is not intended to be an exhaustive list of all the resources, funding and advice being issued, therefore it links to other sources of information where available.

'ROADMAP' FOR EASING LOCKDOWN RESTRICTIONS

The Prime Minister has today published a 'Roadmap' for the easing of COVID-19 lockdown restrictions: [COVID-19 RESPONSE – SPRING 2021](#). The Prime Minister [announced](#) this in the House of Commons, and subsequently gave a [televised address](#), alongside the Government's Chief Medical Adviser, Professor Chris Whitty, the Government's Chief Scientific Adviser, Sir Patrick Vallance.

The Prime Minister has said that “the threat” from COVID-19 “remains substantial, with the numbers in hospital only now beginning to fall below the peak of the first wave in April”. However, he added that “we cannot persist indefinitely with restrictions that debilitate our economy, our physical and mental well-being, and the life-chances of our children”. “That is why it is so crucial that this roadmap should be cautious but also irreversible”. Subsequently, the Prime Minister said that “I can't guarantee it will be irreversible, but the intention is that it is irreversible”. He added that the Government's “priority has always been getting children back into school”. Government is “also be prioritising ways for people to reunite with loved ones safely”. “Decisions will be made on the latest data at every step, and [Government] will be cautious about this approach so that [it does] not undo the progress [it has] achieved so far”.

Government objectives for the 'roadmap'

The Government's approach is based on the following objectives:

- A. To restore freedoms sustainably, equitably and as quickly as possible without putting unsustainable pressure on the NHS, and avoiding a further lockdown.** The Government will take a gradual and cautious approach to reopening in England, guided by science and the data, with resuming face-to-face teaching in schools the priority.
- B. To deploy the vaccine as quickly as possible to maximise protections as restrictions are eased.** The more quickly people are vaccinated, the lower their risk of developing the kind of serious infection that requires hospital treatment and may lead to death.
- C. To protect the public and the NHS by having effective long-term contingency plans.** The Government will ensure it has the tools to manage local outbreaks, as well

as the means quickly and effectively to combat dangerous new Variants of Concern, both domestically and at the border, in close partnership with the Devolved Administrations.

D. To plan and deliver a national recovery. As the country recovers from the crisis, the Government is committed to building back better, supporting the key public services on which citizens and businesses depend, and working with global partners as the disease moves from a pandemic to an endemic state.

SAGE, the Government’s Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies, has [published](#) the advice they have given to the Government ahead of today’s announcement. “This has been published so that the public can see the evidence which has informed the design of the roadmap”.

The regulations underpinning the ‘Roadmap’ will be voted on by MPs in due course.

[The ‘roadmap’ outlines four steps for easing restrictions.](#)

The easing the lockdown will be carried out in “stages”. The “roadmap sets out indicative, “no earlier than” dates for the steps which are five weeks apart. The purpose of the five-week interval is to measure the whether the measures are working. This is on the advice of the Chief Medical Officer, who has said that “we cannot measure this in less than four weeks”. These dates are” dependent “on the data and are subject to change if the four tests are not met”. **The four Steps are detailed [here](#).**

The Prime Minister has said that as the “level of infection is broadly similar across Britain”, restrictions will be eased step-by-step across the whole of England at the same time. There will be no regional or local approach. The Prime Minister has said that Government “cannot rule out imposing restrictions a local and regional level”.

[Before proceeding to the next step, the Government will examine the data to assess the impact of previous easements.](#)

This assessment will be based on [four tests](#), which are as follows:

- 1. The vaccine deployment programme continues successfully.**
- 2. Evidence shows vaccines are sufficiently effective in reducing hospitalisations and deaths in those vaccinated.**
- 3. Infection rates do not risk a surge in hospitalisations which would put unsustainable pressure on the NHS.**
- 4. Our assessment of the risks is not fundamentally changed by new Variants of Concern.**

The ‘roadmap’ also seeks to balance between social and economic impacts, whilst preserving the health and safety of the country. As such, the ‘roadmap’ contains detailed economic and public health justifications for each measure.

Vaccination programme

The Government has been reviewing the data on infections and the effect of the vaccine on the virus.

The Prime Minister has [said](#) that “the vaccination programme has dramatically changed the odds in our favour and it is on that basis that we can now proceed”.

At the weekend the Government announced that its new target is for all adults over 50, and younger people with underlying health conditions (the top nine priority groups), to have been offered their first COVID-19 vaccination by 15 April, and all adults by 31 July. The previous target was to offer all adults the first dose by September. The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has yet to announce the order of priority for under-50s. The Prime Minister has said that he wants the vaccine rollout to "go further and faster" and to give vulnerable people protection "sooner". A faster rollout could also further speed up the easing of lockdown restrictions.

The Health Secretary has also announced that one in three adults in the UK have now had their first COVID-19 vaccine. The Health Secretary said that while hospital admissions are falling, the number of people in hospital with COVID-19 is still “far too high” at around 18,000. For this reason, social distancing will remain in place for the time being along with the wearing of facemasks, and the instruction that people should work from home if possible.

It has been reported that Scientists from the University of Edinburgh, the University of Strathclyde and Public Health Scotland, have concluded that four weeks after a person has received a first dose of either the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine or the University of Oxford and AstraZeneca vaccine, the risk of hospital admission from COVID-19 was reduced by up to 85% and 94%, respectively.

Public Health England (PHE) have published a [report](#) on their monitoring of the early impact and effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccination in England. PHE has also [published](#) the first independent analysis in the UK which shows the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is effective against COVID-19 from the first dose. PHE is also monitoring the real-world impact of the AstraZeneca vaccine and will publish these findings in due course – but early signals in the data suggest it’s providing good levels of protection from the first dose.

Health Secretary has said that “[early evidence](#)” suggests “that there’s a reduction in transmission for those who” are vaccinated.

Testing

Government will combine vaccines with the “continued expansion of rapid testing”, and will also “extend the provision of free test kits for workplaces until the end of June, and families, small businesses and the self-employed can collect those tests from local testing sites”.

Next month Government “will publish an updated plan for responding to local outbreaks, with a range of measures to address variants of concern, including surge PCR testing and enhanced contact tracing”.

Financial support packages

The Prime Minister has said “for the duration of the pandemic, the Government will continue to do whatever it takes to protect jobs and livelihoods across the UK”. The Chancellor will set out further details in the Budget on Wednesday, 3 March.

THE FOUR STEPS FOR EASING RESTRICTIONS

Behaviours

As restrictions are lifted, the Government has emphasised the importance that everyone continues “the good habits that reduce transmission: remembering ‘hands, face, space’ and letting fresh air in, getting a test on the first sign of symptoms and self-isolating if it is positive”, and that “it is safer to meet outdoors and to avoid large gatherings”. Businesses must also continue to take necessary precautions as restrictions ease. Government add that they “will continue to monitor existing enforcement powers and modify them if necessary. The police and local authorities are able to take action against people who break the law and apply sanctions, for those businesses that are not operating safely”.

STEP 1

Government have said that as the four tests are currently being met, Step 1 will proceed from 8 March. The reasoning is that by 8 March, the top four priority cohorts for vaccinations - as determined by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) will have received a degree of immunity, three weeks after being offered their first dose.

From Monday 8 March	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All schools and Further Education settings will reopen.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Breakfast clubs will resume.○ Under-18 sport can take place at school as part of educational provision, or as part of wraparound care, but should not otherwise take place at this time.• Students on practical Higher Education courses at English universities who would be unable to complete their courses if they did not return to take part in practical teaching, access specialist facilities, or complete assessments can return. Research labs and libraries can be kept open if needed.• For those Higher Education students that do not need to take part in practical teaching, and do not require access to specialist facilities or equipment as part of their studies, the Government will review, by the end of the Easter holidays, the options for timing of the return of these students. Students and institutions will be given a week’s notice ahead of any reopening.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Testing for secondary school and college pupils:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Primary school staff will continue to take 2 rapid COVID-19 tests each week at home.○ All secondary school and college students will take three COVID-
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19 tests as they return to the classroom from the 8 March at existing school testing facilities. Schools and colleges will have discretion on how to test students over that week to enable their return to the classroom. After the initial programme of three tests in school or college, students will be provided with 2 rapid tests to use each week at home

- Secondary school and college staff will also be provided with 2 tests to use each week at home
- Twice weekly testing will continue to be available for all university students on campus

[Further information](#)

- **Face coverings for secondary school and college pupils:** The Government recommends that the use of face coverings in Higher Education, Further Education and secondary schools is extended for a limited period to all indoor environments - including classrooms - unless 2m social distancing can be maintained. Face coverings are now also recommended in early years and primary schools for staff and adult visitors in situations where social distancing between adults is not possible, for example, when moving around in corridors and communal areas.
- **Two people will be allowed to meet in an outdoor public space,** such as a park, without having to do so for exercise. The Prime Minister has characterised this as being able to meet for a “coffee or a picnic in a park”. The “Stay at Home’ restriction will continue but it will be amended so that people can leave home for recreation as well as exercise outdoors - with their own household, support or childcare bubble, or with one person from another household. Social distancing and other safe behaviours should be followed. Government have said that “Outdoor settings are known to be lower risk than indoor, so outdoor activities will be opened earlier than indoor ones”.
- **Care home residents will be able to be visited indoors by a single, named individual.** The person nominated will remain unchanged while this step is in place. There will be discretion for care homes to allow more than one named visitor in exceptional circumstances. The scheme will allow a single visitor to hold hands indoors with their relative or contact in a care home, and make repeat visits under carefully designed conditions to keep residents, staff and visitors safe. The named individual will be required to have a lateral flow test beforehand, wear PPE during the visit and avoid close contact. Home testing of single, named visitors will not be allowed during the start of the scheme but will be reviewed

Vaccination is not mandatory and will not be a condition of visiting. Visiting will be suspended during local outbreaks in individual homes. Further guidance will be published before the launch of the single, named visitor scheme.

Outdoor, pod and screen visits will be able to continue in line with the

	<p>published guidance which has been in place during lockdown, meaning there will be chances for residents to see more than just the one person they nominate.</p> <p>Further information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wrap around childcare Wraparound childcare (including childminders) and other children’s activities can restart for all children where it is needed to enable parents or carers to work, seek work, attend education, seek medical care or attend a support group. Vulnerable children can attend these settings regardless of circumstance. • The Clinically Extremely Vulnerable have been advised to shield until the end of March • Regulations will be amended to allow COVID-secure campaigning for local elections. The Government will be publishing further guidance for candidates, their agents and political parties on campaigning in the elections in due course, and will be engaging with the Parliamentary Parties Panel on this guidance shortly to ensure the views of political parties are taken into account. • As has been the case up until now, people can leave home for work if they cannot work from home and to escape illness, injury or risk of harm, including domestic abuse.
<p>From Monday, 29 March</p>	<p>Three weeks later, when schools break up for Easter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ‘Stay at home’ guidance will be lifted. However, “for many lockdown restrictions will remain. People should continue to work from home where they can, and minimise all travel, wherever possible”. • People will be able to meet outside in groups up to a maximum of 6 people (the Rule of 6) or with one other household. People from different households will still need to socially distance from each other. This will apply in all outdoor settings, including private gardens. Those eligible to form a support bubble will still be able to do so, enabling close contact for many of those in most need of support, and will continue to be counted as part of the same household. Guidance will set out how people can see others safely. <p>Professor John Edmunds, an epidemiologist who sits on Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (Sage), said, on 21 February, that “mixing outside is pretty safe”. While, the Vaccines Minister has said that "Outdoor is safer and therefore we prioritise versus indoor". He added that “Outdoors is the priority because it's where the transmission rates are much, much, much lower”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdoor sports facilities will reopen, such as tennis or basketball

courts. These facilities, such as tennis and basketball courts, and swimming pools, can be used by people in line with the wider social contact limits.

- **Formally organised outdoor sports – for adults and under 18s - can also restart** and will not be subject to the gatherings limits, but should be compliant with guidance issued by national governing bodies.
- **All children will be able to access any outdoor childcare and supervised activities. Parent and child groups can also take place outdoors with a limit of 15 attendees (children under five years of age do not count towards the attendee limit.)**
- **Children will still only be able to attend indoor childcare, or supervised activities, where doing so will allow parents, or carers, to work, seek work, attend education, seek medical attention or attend a support group.** Vulnerable children can already attend these settings regardless of personal circumstance and the **Government will ensure any other child eligible for Free School Meals will also be able to do so – ensuring they can attend those that are part of the Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF) running over the Easter holidays.**
- **Weddings will still be able to proceed with 6 attendees only but will no longer be limited to exceptional circumstances.**

STEP 2

This would happen no earlier than 12 April, and an announcement would be made at least 7 days in advance. If Step 2 is delayed, subsequent steps will need to be pushed back in order to maintain the necessary five week period to assess the impact of each step and provide notice

<p>No earlier than 12 April</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional premises will be able to reopen but should only be visited alone, or with household groups. • Non-essential retail; personal care premises such as hairdressers, salons and close contact services; and indoor leisure facilities such as gyms and spas (but not including saunas and steam rooms, which are due to open at Step 3) would reopen. • Overnight stays away from home, in this country, will be permitted and self-contained accommodation - those that do not require shared use of bathing, entry/exit, catering or sleeping facilities - can also reopen, though must only be used by members of the same household. • Public buildings, such as libraries and community centres, would be able to reopen.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities such as driving tests would resume. • The majority of outdoor settings and attractions would also reopen, including outdoor hospitality, zoos, theme parks, drive-in cinemas and drive-in performances events. • Hospitality venues will be able to open for outdoor service, with no requirement for a substantial meal to be served alongside alcoholic drinks, and no curfew. The requirement to order, eat and drink while seated ('table service') will remain. • All newly open settings must abide by the social contact rules. The Government will continue to enforce restrictions and require businesses to demonstrate robust strategies for managing the risk of transmission and to ensure social distancing rules are followed. Councils and the police will continue to provide support and advice to newly reopened settings, enabling them to operate safely. Where businesses do not follow the rules, the appropriate enforcement action will be taken. • These measures will be accompanied by mitigations including workforce testing and continued social distancing guidance. • People should continue to work from home where they can, minimise domestic travel where they can. International holidays will still be prohibited. • Care homes visits: At Step 2, the Government will take a decision on extending the number of care home visitors to two per resident and set out a plan for the next phase of visits. • All children would be able to attend any indoor children's activity, including sport, regardless of circumstance. • Parent and child groups of up to 15 people (not counting children aged under five years old) would restart indoors. • Weddings, receptions, and commemorative events including wakes will be able to take place with up to 15 attendees (in premises that are permitted to open).
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STEP 3

This would happen no earlier than 17 May, and an announcement would be made at least 7 days in advance.

<p>No earlier than 17 May</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Step 3, all but the most high-risk sectors would be able to reopen. In all sectors, COVID-Secure guidance would remain in place and premises must not cater for groups larger than the legal limits.
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- At Step 3, the Government will further ease limits on social contact, enabling the public to make informed personal decisions.
- As soon as possible, and no later than Step 3, the Government will update its advice on social distancing between friends and family.
- The Government will lift most legal restrictions on meeting others outdoors, but gatherings of more than 30 people outdoors will remain illegal. Indoors, people will be able to meet socially in a group of 6, or with 1 other household, though it may be possible to go further than this at Step 3 depending on the data. People will be asked to follow guidance on how to meet safely, for example by minimising the size of gatherings and meeting outdoors where possible.
- The Government will continue to advise the public to work from home where they can.
- The Global Travel Taskforce will report on 12 April with recommendations aimed at facilitating a return to international travel as soon as possible while still managing the risk from imported cases and Variants of Concern. Following that, the Government will determine when international travel should resume, which will be no earlier than 17 May.
- Sectors which would reopen from Step 3 include:
 - a. Indoor hospitality, with no requirement for a substantial meal to be served alongside alcoholic drinks, and no curfew. The requirement to order, eat and drink while seated ('table service') will remain.
 - b. Remaining outdoor entertainment, such as outdoor theatres and cinemas.
 - c. Indoor entertainment, such as museums, cinemas and children's play areas.
 - d. Remaining accommodation, such as hotels, hostels and B&Bs.
 - e. Adult indoor group sports and exercise classes.
 - f. Some large events, including conferences, theatre and concert performances and sports events. Controlled indoor events of up to 1,000 people or 50% of a venue's capacity, whichever is lower, will be permitted, as will outdoor events with a capacity of either 50% or 4,000 people, whichever is lower. The Government will also make a special provision for large, outdoor, seated venues where crowds can be safely distributed, allowing up to 10,000 people or 25% of total seated capacity, whichever is lower. In addition, pilots will run as part of the Events Research

	<p>Programme to examine how such events can take place without the need for social distancing using other mitigations such as testing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weddings, receptions, funerals, and commemorative events including wakes would be able to proceed with up to 30 attendees. A broader range of stand-alone life events will also be permitted at this step, including bar mitzvahs and christenings.
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STEP 4

This would happen no earlier than 21 June, and an announcement would be made at least 7 days in advance.

<p>No earlier than 21 June</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With appropriate mitigations in place, by Step 4, the Government aims to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Remove all legal limits on social contact, publishing accompanying guidance on how best to reduce the risk of transmission and protect ourselves and loved ones; b. Reopen the remaining closed settings, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Nightclubs ○ Enable large events, including theatre performances, above the Step 3 capacity restrictions, subject to the outcome of the scientific Events Research Programme and potentially using testing to reduce the risk of infection, subject to further evaluation. c. Remove all limits on weddings and other life events, subject to the outcome of the scientific Events Research Programme. • Some measures may be required even after all adults have been offered a vaccine, because neither coverage nor effectiveness of the vaccine will be 100%.
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Government reviews

- Government will conduct four reviews which will consider different aspects of how the UK should handle COVID-19 from summer onwards:
 - **COVID status certification**
 COVID status certification involves using testing or vaccination data to confirm in different settings that people have a lower risk of transmitting COVID-19 to others. The Government will review whether COVID-status certification could play a role in reopening the economy, reducing restrictions on social contact and improving safety.

The Government will set out its conclusions in advance of Step 4 in order to inform the safe reopening of society and the economy.

- **Large events**

DCMS and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy have been working with representatives from industry and civil society to explore when and how events with larger crowd sizes, less social distancing or in settings where transmission is more likely (i.e. indoors), will be able to return safely. This includes sports events, music festivals and large weddings and conferences.

The Government will bring the findings from across different sectors and different settings to determine a consistent approach to lifting restrictions on these events. Depending on the outcome of this work, the Government hopes to be able to lift restrictions on these events and sectors as part of Step 4.

- **International travel**

The Government's objective is to see a safe and sustainable return to international travel, for business and pleasure.

The Department for Transport will lead a successor to the Global Travel Taskforce, with an ambition to develop a framework that can facilitate greater inbound and outbound travel as soon as the time is right, while still managing the risk from imported cases and variants.

The Taskforce will report to the Prime Minister and work with UK representatives of the travel sector, including airlines and airports. It will report on 12 April, with recommendations aimed at facilitating a return to international travel as soon as is possible, while still managing risk from imported cases and Variants of Concern.

Following that, the Government will determine when international travel should resume, which will be no earlier than Step 3.

- **Social distancing**

Ahead of Step 4, the Government will complete a review of social distancing measures and other long-term measures that have been put in place to limit transmission. The results of the review will help inform decisions on the timing and circumstances under which rules on 1m+, face masks and other measures may be lifted. The review will also inform guidance on working from home.

- **In March, the Government will also publish a plan for dealing with local outbreak and variants of concern.**