

SOCIAL DISTANCING: ADDITIONAL MEASURES

1. This paper proposes increasing social distancing by requiring the closure of leisure businesses and cultural facilities across the UK, building on the existing advice to citizens to avoid such premises. It begins by reviewing the latest data on compliance with social distancing and hence the case for further action, before detailing the businesses that should be closed. It concludes by running through the decisions required to implement closures.

Current position on compliance

2. On Monday 16 March, the Government advised citizens across the country to begin working from home where possible, and to minimise social interactions, including by not visiting pubs, restaurants, clubs, and theatres, with the aim of achieving 75% reduction in non-household contact. This decision reflected clinical advice that the spread of infection is likely where people are in close contact for more than 15 minutes. Whilst it remains too early to judge compliance properly, and the decision to close schools from Friday will have a further effect, early data including from Google as well as anecdotal evidence on compliance is mixed, with some positive trends (more at **Annex A**).
 - a. Tube travel was down 69% on Thursday compared to the same day last year, continuing a trend of dropping further every day this week, but bus travel was only down 40%, again continuing a consistent downward trend. Initial data from this morning suggests both trends are continuing into today.
 - b. As of Wednesday, West End footfall was down almost 80%, compared to the same day last year. OpenTable reported that the number of diners at UK restaurants on 17 March was down 82% year on year.
 - c. Google places data shows average falls across London and UK mainline stations were similar at 54% and 52% of their usual levels on Thursday. In London, the largest decreases were seen in Euston, King's Cross, St Pancras, and Cannon Street, with City Thameslink and London Bridge seeing less change or even an increase in activity. Elsewhere falls were similar, with Manchester Oxford Road and Birmingham Moor Street (both smaller stations) seeing small falls, and Bristol Parkway a greater change particularly earlier in the day.
 - d. There was an up to 72% reduction in visits to the UK's major tourist sites in the first three days of this week as reported by their representative body, and Google data for Westminster Abbey shows a substantial reduction on Thursday with only 19% of usual activity.
3. In addition, it is worth considering the latest public polling data, which shows that the number of people who claim to be engaging in socially distancing behaviours continues to rise. As of Friday morning:
 - a. 58% now claim to have stopped going to bars entirely (up from 51% yesterday);
 - b. 44% claim to have stopped seeing friends (up from 40%);
 - c. 37% have stopped seeing family members who they do not live with (up from 34% yesterday), including 44% of those aged 65 or over; and

- d. 47% of full time workers are still going to work as much as before (down from 59% the day after social distancing measures were announced), but 31% have stopped entirely.
4. This mixed picture means that there is merit in considering further measures to increase compliance. It is also worth noting that overnight polling shows that 66% of people now think that the Government should force bars and clubs to close, with only 17% of the view that they should stay open. Whilst measures could be applied to a specific geographic location, this could have a perverse impact on compliance elsewhere, and, as has been the case in other countries that have imposed localised restrictive measures, there is also some risk of displacement with residents traveling in order to access goods and services not available locally. As such, **it is proposed that measures apply to the whole UK.**

Businesses to be closed

- 5. Based on an epidemiological view of what further measures would have the greatest impact, it is proposed that the Government require the closure of:
 - a. those leisure and cultural businesses already identified in Government advice on social distancing (list at **Annex B**); and
 - b. an additional set of leisure businesses where the spread of infection is likely and they are evidently non-essential (list at **Annex C**).

Closing leisure and cultural businesses already identified in Government advice on social distancing

- 6. The first step would be to require the closure of all leisure and cultural businesses already identified in Government advice. On Monday, the Government highlighted pubs, cinemas, restaurants, theatres, bars, and clubs as examples of businesses to avoid in order to minimise social mixing in the community. In moving to require closure, the Government would need to be more specific about the businesses in question, and explicit about the inclusion of cultural facilities.
- 7. In summary, this would mean requiring the closure of: food and drink venues *for consumption on-site*; drinking establishments; and entertainment venues, including cinemas, theatres, museums, and galleries. There would be an economic impact in taking this step, although compliance with the existing guidance has already had a significant effect, meaning the delta is likely limited; HMT estimates that the impact on the economy from decisions already taken (case isolation, household quarantine, school closures) is very significant, and we should expect a peak to trough fall in GDP of 10-30%.
- 8. As an exception, to maintain food resilience, relieve pressure on supermarkets, and support continued business activity where it does not pose a particular risk, **takeaway and delivery facilities should remain open and operational**. This will mean, for example, that cafes can continue operating to provide takeaway, whilst closing their seating areas. Planning regulations will be changed to enable restaurants and cafes to offer delivery and hot-food takeaway where they do not at present.