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Cabinet Office

Guidance

Moving to step 4 of the roadmap

Updated 27 August 2021

Applies to England

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In February, the Government set out its roadmap, a step-by-step plan to ease restrictions in England cautiously.^{[\[footnote 1\]](#)} Since February, the roadmap has guided our approach to how we have eased restrictions on the basis of data, not dates. This document sets out the arrangements that will be put in place in England. The Devolved Administrations are setting out plans for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The Government has decided to move to step 4 of the roadmap on 19 July, a new phase of continued caution whilst managing the risks of COVID-19. This follows a four week pause, announced on 14 June, which as of 10 July has allowed an additional 7 million (3.5 million first and almost 3.6 million second) vaccination doses to be given. Every adult is expected to be offered a first dose, and two-thirds of adults a second dose, by 19 July.

The pandemic is not over. Cases are increasing rapidly and a third wave is underway. Step 4 does not mark the end of the need for caution and restraint. At step 4, while many of the legal restrictions that the Government has imposed through the pandemic will be lifted, cautious guidance will remain, making it clear this is not yet a return to normal. While cases are high and rising, everybody needs to continue to act carefully and remain cautious. We will continue to manage the virus and provide guidance over the coming months.

While there is no perfect time to relax existing restrictions, moving to step 4 on 19 July means relaxations coincide with the

end of the school term and take place over the summer when more activities can take place outdoors and pressures on the NHS are less than in the autumn and winter months.

The success of the vaccination rollout has paved the way for the safe and gradual lifting of restrictions. No vaccine, however, is 100% effective and, like all viruses, COVID-19 can mutate. As further restrictions are lifted, there will sadly be more cases, hospitalisations and deaths.

Key protections

That is why we are keeping in place key protections:

- testing when you have symptoms and targeted asymptomatic testing in education, high risk workplaces and to help people manage their personal risk.
- isolating when positive or when contacted by NHS Test and Trace or when advised to by the NHS COVID-19 app.
- border quarantine: for all arriving from red list countries, and for those people arriving from amber list countries, other than those UK residents fully vaccinated in the UK vaccine programme.
- cautious guidance for individuals, businesses and the vulnerable whilst prevalence is high including:
 - whilst Government is no longer instructing people to work from home if they can, Government expects and recommends a gradual return over the summer;
 - Government expects and recommends that people wear face coverings in crowded areas such as public transport;
 - being outside or letting fresh air in; and
 - minimising the number, proximity and duration of social contacts.
- encouraging and supporting businesses and large events to **use the NHS COVID Pass** in high risk settings to help to limit the risk of infection. The Government will work with organisations that operate large, crowded settings where people are likely to be in close proximity to others outside their household to encourage the use of the NHS COVID Pass. If sufficient measures are not taken to limit infection, the Government will consider mandating the NHS COVID Pass in certain venues at a later date.

Pathway through the summer

- On 12 July and in the days following, the Government will publish guidance on how to reduce risk through practising key behaviours:
 1. **For individuals:** while we are moving away from most legal restrictions, the guidance is there to help us all act responsibly. While prevalence is high, it is essential that everybody follows the guidance and takes action to protect themselves and others.
 2. **For businesses,** setting out advice for how to understand and mitigate risks as we start to live with COVID-19.
 3. **For those who are Clinically Extremely Vulnerable.**
- On 19 July, most legal restrictions will end, removing social distancing and social contact restrictions and enabling remaining businesses to reopen. All adults have now been offered a first dose of the vaccine.
- By the end of July, the Government will publish an updated COVID-19 contain outbreak management framework for local areas.
- On 16 August, the rules on self-isolating as a contact will change for people who are fully vaccinated^[footnote 2], and for under 18s. Those not fully vaccinated will still need to isolate if they are contacts, and everyone will still have to isolate if they test positive, to protect themselves and others.
- In September, the Government will undertake a review to assess the country's preparedness for autumn and winter, which will consider whether to continue or strengthen public and business guidance as we approach the winter, including on face coverings and test, trace and isolate, and will review the remaining regulations.

The five-point plan to manage the virus in the next phase

This five point-plan, set out in the COVID-19 Response: Summer 2021^[footnote 3], will help us to manage the risks of living with the virus on our careful and cautious pathway back to normality.

1. **Reinforce the country's vaccine wall of defence** through booster jabs and driving take up. Government will encourage vaccine take up among young adults and those yet to be vaccinated, ensure all adults have had the opportunity to receive two doses of the vaccine by mid September, and offer booster jabs to the most vulnerable subject to final advice from the JCVI.
2. **Enable the public to make informed decisions** through guidance, rather than laws. Government will reopen the remaining closed settings and remove regulations from 19 July, provide guidance for individuals, businesses, and those who are Clinically Extremely Vulnerable on the behaviours that can help to protect everyone. Government will look to operate public services in a way that supports everyone feeling safe to access them, and work with businesses to the

same effect.

3. **Retain proportionate test, trace and isolate plans.** Government will keep our testing system in place; continue to offer free lateral flow tests to help people manage their personal risk; maintain current domestic isolation requirements until 16 August before introducing an exemption for fully vaccinated contacts and under 18s; and maintain support for self isolation, with practical and financial support available until the end of September.
4. **Manage risks at the border and support a global response** to reduce the risk of variants emerging globally and entering the UK. Government will continue to operate a traffic-light system for international travel, reassessing the red, amber and green lists this week, and every three weeks, through the summer; remove quarantine requirements for fully vaccinated UK travellers returning from amber countries from 19 July, while retaining PCR testing crucial for identifying new variants; and accelerate global vaccination by prioritising access to vaccines in developing countries.
5. **Retain contingency measures** to respond to unexpected events, while accepting that further cases, hospitalisations and deaths will occur as the country learns to live with COVID-19. Government will continue to monitor the data on a regular basis to ensure there is no danger of the NHS facing unsustainable pressure; work with local authorities and provide national support to local areas that need an enhanced response to COVID-19; and maintain contingency plans for reimposing economic and social restrictions at a local, regional or national level if evidence suggests they are necessary to suppress or manage a dangerous variant. Such measures would only be re-introduced as a last resort to prevent unsustainable pressure on the NHS.

1. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-spring-2021/covid-19-response-spring-2021#roadmap> _
2. Full vaccination: 14 days after the second dose for two-dose vaccines. _
3. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-summer-2021-roadmap> _

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