

PSED Equality Impact Assessment

The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Steps)(England) Regulations 2021

The Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC)

20.03.2021

1. The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Steps) (England) Regulations 2021 (the Regulations) revoke and replace the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (All Tiers) (England) Regulations 2020 (the All Tiers Regulations) and set out the legislative framework that will implement the Government's Roadmap. On 22 February 2021, the Prime Minister announced as part of the 'COVID-19 Response- Spring 2021 Plan' a roadmap that sets to ease restrictions cautiously at the same time across the whole of England that is dictated by data, and not dates. On the 8 March 2021, Step 1A came into force as part of the All-Tiers Regulations. These Regulations implement Step 1B, Step 2 and Step 3. Step 4 will be legislated for at a later date. Step 1B will replace Step 1A and come into force on the 29 March 2021. Within the Regulations, Step 1B is referred to simply as Step 1.
2. The design of the roadmap has been informed by the latest scientific evidence and seeks a balance between our key social and economic priorities, whilst preserving the health and safety of the country. The successful rollout of the vaccination programme, alongside falling infections and hospitalisations is paving the way for a gradual lifting of restrictions. In order to inform the pace and sequencing of the roadmap, the Government has taken the best scientific advice from the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE).
3. The Government's intention is that the steps for easing restrictions will be introduced across England in a national approach, in the absence of any significant regional disparity. At each step, the Government will make an assessment against the following four tests:
 - i. The vaccine deployment programme continues successfully.
 - ii. Evidence shows vaccines are sufficiently effective in reducing hospitalisations and deaths in those vaccinated.
 - iii. Infection rates do not risk a surge in hospitalisations which would put unsustainable pressure on the NHS.
 - iv. Our assessment of the risks is not fundamentally changed by new Variants of Concern.

4. This document will look at the impacts on protected characteristics as a consequence of the introduction of new measures in the four-step approach as part of the Government's COVID-19 Spring Roadmap plan. However, the equality analysis does not re-consider the continuation of impacts as a consequence of the continuation of Coronavirus restrictions, as these have already been considered as part of the All-Tiers Regulations equality analysis. Instead, the Equality Analysis only considers the introduction of changes in policy associated with the Regulations.
5. The relaxation of restrictions could lead to a rise in infections, and such rises may have a differential impact across the different protected characteristic groups of the population in terms of inequalities. The continued rollout of the vaccination programme should alleviate and mitigate some of the impact of rising infection rates measured by the approach set out in this roadmap and steps. These Regulations will seek to balance health, including mental health, economic and social factors and how they disproportionately impact certain groups, as well as epidemiological evidence.
6. This document records the analysis undertaken by Departments to enable Ministers to fulfil the requirements placed on them by the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) (as set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) when considering national de-escalation of the Steps in the COVID-19 Spring Roadmap plan. The PSED is made up of three elements; it requires a public authority (in the exercise of its functions) to have due regard to the need to:
 - I. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010;
 - II. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not;
 - III. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The protected characteristics are:

7. **Age:** The Equality Act 2010 categorises 'age' as a protected characteristic and defines a person who has or shares the protected characteristic as a 'person of a particular age group' or 'persons of the same age group'. An 'age group' is 'defined by reference to age, whether by reference to a particular age or to a range of ages'.¹
8. **Disability:** Under the Equality Act 2010, a person has a disability as a protected characteristic if the person has 'a physical or mental impairment', which 'has a

¹ See 'Equality Key Concepts' *Equality Act (c.15), Part 1 – Socio-economic inequalities*, Part 2, Chapter 1, 2010, p. 4: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/pdfs/ukpga_20100015_en.pdf

substantial and long-term adverse effect on [his/her] ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'.²

9. **Marriage/civil partnership:** The Equality Act 2010 defines someone as having the protected characteristic of marriage or civil partnership if 'the person is married or is a civil partner'.³ The first aim of the public sector equality duty applies to this characteristic but the other aims (advancing equality and fostering good relations) do not apply.
10. **Pregnancy and maternity:** Pregnancy and maternity is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. A woman is protected against discrimination on the grounds of pregnancy and maternity during her pregnancy and any statutory maternity leave to which she is entitled.
11. **Sex:** 'Sex' as a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010 refers 'to a man or to a woman'.⁴
12. **Sexual orientation:** The Equality Act 2010 explains that the protected characteristic of sexual orientation means a person's sexual orientation towards persons of the same sex, persons of the opposite sex or persons of either sex.⁵
13. **Gender reassignment:** Under the Equality Act 2010, transsexual people share the protected characteristic of gender reassignment. A person has this characteristic if that 'person is proposing to undergo, is undergoing, or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning the person's sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex'.⁶
14. **Race:** Race, as a protected characteristic in the Equality Act 2010, includes 'colour', 'nationality' and 'ethnic or national origins'.⁷ A racial group can include two or more different racial groups.
15. **Religion or belief:** In the Equality Act, defines 'Religion' as 'any religion [including] a lack of religion'. 'Belief' is defined in the *Act* as 'any religious or philosophical belief [including] lack of belief'.⁸

² See 'Equality Key Concepts' *Equality Act (c. 15), Part 1 – Socio-economic inequalities*, Part 2, Chapter 1, 2010, p. 4: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/pdfs/ukpga_20100015_en.pdf

³ See 'Equality Key Concepts' *Equality Act (c. 15), Part 1 – Socio-economic inequalities*, Part 2, Chapter 1, 2010, p. 5: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/pdfs/ukpga_20100015_en.pdf

⁴ See 'Equality Key Concepts' *Equality Act (c. 15), Part 1 – Socio-economic inequalities*, Part 2, Chapter 1, 2010, p. 6: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/pdfs/ukpga_20100015_en.pdf

⁵ <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/sexual-orientation-discrimination>

⁶ See 'Equality Key Concepts' *Equality Act (c. 15), Part 1 – Socio-economic inequalities*, Part 2, Chapter 1, 2010, p. 5: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/pdfs/ukpga_20100015_en.pdf

⁷ See 'Equality Key Concepts' *Equality Act (c. 15), Part 1 – Socio-economic inequalities*, Part 2, Chapter 1, 2010, p. 5: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/pdfs/ukpga_20100015_en.pdf

⁸ See 'Equality Key Concepts' *Equality Act (c. 15), Part 1 – Socio-economic inequalities*, Part 2, Chapter 1, 2010, p. 6: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/pdfs/ukpga_20100015_en.pdf

Equality Analysis

Analysis Step 1B Policy

Social Contact Policy

16. The elements of the policy are as follows:

- The Stay-at-Home provisions currently in the All Tiers Regulations will not be carried forward.
- Stay in the UK provisions will be introduced in order to restrict international travel. The 'declaration of travel' form will link to the Stay in the UK provisions instead of the Stay-at-Home provisions.
- Social contact restrictions will be loosened to allow the rule of 6, or 2 households to meet outdoors only (this includes in private gardens).
- Protests are permitted in any number subject to adhering to the permitted organised gathering conditions, where the rule of 6, or 2 households can meet outdoors.
- Parent and child groups are permitted outdoors for up to 15 persons - not counting those aged under five.
- All outdoor childcare and supervised activities for children, including indoor activities, are permitted for children eligible for free school meals, vulnerable children, and for children of parents/carers to enable them to work, attend education or to attend a support group or medical appointment. All youth activities are permitted outdoors, and all youth activities are permitted for children eligible for free school meals, vulnerable children, and for children of parents/carers to enable them to work, attend education or to attend a support group or medical appointment.
- Weddings and outdoor receptions continue to be allowed for up to 6 persons (previous guidance recommended only to allow weddings in exceptional circumstances).
- Organised outdoor sport and exercise classes are permitted; however, no spectators are allowed. Under 18 Sport is permitted where it is part of education of permitted childcare. Elite sport continues to be permitted with no spectators allowed.
- Outdoor sports facilities are open, these are subject to social contact limits although organised team sport and exercise classes are permitted in larger groups. For example, outdoor sports facilities may include: outdoor gyms and sports courts, outdoor swimming pools, golf courses including mini golf, driving

and shooting ranges, archery venues, outdoor riding arenas, outdoor climbing walls and water sports.

- Outdoor attractions at sculpture parks, botanical garden, biomes or greenhouses, landmarks and grounds of heritage sites/stately homes continue to be open for exercise and outdoor recreation.

Age

17. Young people may be more likely to live in a flat or house where there may be a challenging dynamic for the creation of bubbles, e.g., if more than one member of the household wishes to create a bubble with a second single household. Also, 43% of 16- to 34-year-olds (around 5.9 million young people) live with their parents or relatives, most commonly in owner occupied homes (66%).⁹ Consequently, it is likely that young people will have found the household-based limits more restrictive, as they may be less inclined to socialise as a household than other types of household, such as nuclear families with young children. Therefore, the removal of the Stay-at-Home provisions are likely to have a positive impact on young people who are more likely to be socially active. In addition, they are also likely to benefit positively from the increase in the outdoor gathering limit, which enables the rule of 6 or two households to apply for meeting outdoors (including in gardens) and facilitates greater social contact.

18. Children and young people acting as carers may have been disadvantaged by restrictions on social interactions to a single household as they would be limited on who they can interact with and therefore may not have respite from caring responsibilities. Therefore, this group are likely to benefit positively from the relaxation of the contact restrictions, including being able to meet other people in outdoor settings (rule of 6/2 households). This should allow this group to access a greater support network, including friends and extended family, which will have a positive impact on their health and wellbeing through social interaction and familiarity of their family networks.

19. It has been consistently found that young people have experienced a greater deterioration in their mental health than middle aged and older adults¹⁰. The most recent survey for ONS for Coronavirus and the Social Impacts of Great Britain (published 12th March 2021), reported that in response to the question “In which ways is the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak affecting your life”, 70% of people aged 16-29 indicated that their wellbeing is being affected. The proportions for other age groups to the same question and category were 30-49 at 62%, 50-69 at

⁹https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/902866/EHS_2018-19_Life_Course_Report.pdf

¹⁰ Age Spotlight - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) – updated December 2020

40% and 70+ year olds at 37%.¹¹ PHE in their analysis of the ONS Opinions and Lifestyle Surveys showed that age group with the biggest change in anxiety levels from the baseline in 2019 was 45-54 year olds (from 22.9% in 2019 to 45.4% in October 2020) followed by 16-24's (26.1% to 40.2%).¹² The smallest changes were seen in 55-64 year olds (24.9% to 32.4%) and 75+ (22.9% to 30.8%).¹³ The PHE analysis of the UCL COVID-19 Social Study also shows that throughout the course of the pandemic, 18-29 year olds on average scored higher for depression, anxiety, and loneliness in their questionnaires than 30-59 year old and 60+ year olds. The lowest average scores were consistently the over 60's age group.

20. Although young people have been disproportionately affected by mental health impacts, social contact restrictions may have also had further negative health impacts for older people. Between June and July 2020, older people that had been recommended to shield, particularly those that were closely following the guidelines with respect to isolating, were more likely to report higher levels of depression, anxiety and loneliness than those not recommended to shield.¹⁴ In addition, older people may be unable or find it more difficult, to go outdoors to meet people, so easing of social contact restrictions may help them less than other groups. Age UK reported that 1 in 3 people they surveyed reported less energy, 1 in 5 less steady on their feet and 1 in 4 were unable to walk as far as they could before.¹⁵ However, there are measures in place such as support bubbles, and for those more mobile, they can also meet outdoors for recreation including in gardens, which can benefit older people in being able to socialise with family and friends. Therefore, easing social contact restriction will have a benefit on both the young and elderly.
21. Under 18 sport being permitted for education or childcare purposes encourages and promotes children to be active. This is important not only for their physical but also their mental wellbeing as part of a healthy lifestyle, which is crucial for children at this stage in their lives. There is also a health benefit for adults, who will be able to participate in outdoor sport and outdoor exercise classes. Therefore, all ages can continue accessing sport for their physical and mental wellbeing.
22. As social contact rules are relaxed, and people are allowed to meet in groups of up to six outdoors or meet one other household, there may be an increased use of public transport as people travel to meet friends and family outdoors. This may cause anxiety and stress to older people at a higher risk of negative outcomes if they a) contract the virus or b) are distressed as a result of an inability to remain socially distanced at all times of public transport. There are mitigations in place,

¹¹ [Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk) – survey dates 3rd – 9th March 2021 – reported 12th March 2021

¹² [Wider Impacts of COVID-19 \(phe.gov.uk\)](https://www.phe.gov.uk)

¹³ [Wider Impacts of COVID-19 \(phe.gov.uk\)](https://www.phe.gov.uk)

¹⁴ [Important findings - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk) – updated February 2021

¹⁵ [The-impact-of-covid-19-on-older-people age-uk.pdf](https://www.age-uk.org.uk) – published October 2020

such as Covid secure measures, and also the vaccination programme should help ease and offer a level of safety to those using these facilities.

23. Young adults may be impacted by the provision to stay in the UK as they are more likely to travel and take 'gap years' in between different stages of their education. In addition, young people that have moved to England, are less likely to have established family or support in England already. As a result, limiting their ability to travel abroad to see friends and family may increase their risk of isolation
24. Young adults may also be less able to pay the fixed penalty notices. Data shows that individuals are less likely to be economically active, and therefore less likely to be able to pay a fixed penalty notice (FPN), if they are aged 16-24 or over 64. According to the 2018 Annual Population Survey, 39% of 16–24-year-olds were economically inactive, compared to 13% of 25–49-year-olds and 26% of 50–64-year-olds.¹⁶ Paying an FPN discharges a person's liability for prosecution, and so failure to pay could result in prosecution for the original offence. Inability to pay might result in the youngest and oldest groups of adults being overrepresented in those prosecuted under this legislation and ultimately those receiving criminal convictions.
25. Access to indoor face-to-face provision offered by out-of-school settings and wraparound childcare continues to be restricted. Wrap-around childcare is only available for vulnerable children and children eligible for free school meals (to enable those eligible for free school meals to attend provision as part of the Department for Education Holiday Activities and Food Programme), and for other children where it is to enable parents to work, seek work, attend education, seek medical care or attend a support group. There may therefore be a disproportionate positive impact on those children aged between 5-14 (which are the predominant age group for wraparound childcare provision, and likely age group where parents will need the provision to work). These children will be able to benefit from access to the full range of organised activity offered by these settings, and the positive effects this can have on continuing engagement in education and development of skills and attitudes which promote wellbeing. However, any indirect disproportionate negative impacts to older children and students, should be mitigated as all outdoor childcare and supervised activities for children, pupils and students will be allowed to take place without any restrictions on attendance. With exceptions for sport, and certain education and training purposes - such as obtaining a regulated qualification, or as part of further education or higher education provision - restrictions on indoor activities will remain for older students (aged 18 and over) further denying them the positive impacts of extra-curricular and enrichment activities can bring. In comparison to these positive impacts, attendance on-site may present greater risks to the health of these pupils and

¹⁶ <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/work-pay-and-benefits/unemployment-and-economic-inactivity/economic-inactivity/latest#by-ethnicity-and-age>

students, given the higher prevalence of COVID-19. That said, the risk of transmission should be reduced by implementation of the protective measures for out-of-school settings, by providers. In any case as detailed, the risk to children and young people remains very low due to their age.

26. With the gradual easing of restrictions, there is a risk that transmission rates of Coronavirus will increase. As older people are most at risk of serious illness and death from Coronavirus, it is likely that this will have a disproportionate negative impact on this group in relation to age. However, the Government has prioritised the vaccination of older people and with over 22 million people across the UK having received their dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, with all those within cohorts 1-4 having been offered a vaccine. Uptake rates to date have far exceeded programme assumptions and expectations such as over 90% of 70+ year olds having received their first dose of the vaccinations, and over 88% of those who are clinically vulnerable having received their first dose. This mitigates potential negative impacts as a consequence of loosening restrictions. In addition, the epidemiological data will continue to be reviewed by the Secretary of State every week, and the Government has committed to ensure that four tests are met before further loosening restrictions. This will allow the Government to consider the need for any contingency action should the transmission rate begin to increase significantly.

Disability

27. Disabled people have been disproportionately impacted by Covid-19 restrictions. In September 2020, 83% of people with a disability were more likely to be 'very worried' or 'somewhat worried' about the effect Covid-19 has had on their life compared to 71% for non-disabled people.¹⁷ Disabled people continued to report lower levels of wellbeing in September 2020 than before the pandemic, and these levels were on average lower than those for non-disabled people.¹⁸ The ONS also found that people with a disability were more likely to experience depressive symptoms during Covid-19 than people without a disability, with around 39% of disabled adults experiencing some form of depression and 34% some form of anxiety.¹⁹ Levels for non-disabled adults reported at 11% for some form of depression and 11% for some form of anxiety.²⁰ Therefore, the continuation of restrictions on inter-household mixing is likely to have a disproportionately negative impact on this group.

28. Allowing greater social contact in outside settings is, therefore, likely to have a positive impact on the mental wellbeing of disabled people. There may be a

¹⁷ [Coronavirus and the social impacts on disabled people in Great Britain - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

¹⁸ [Coronavirus and the social impacts on disabled people in Great Britain - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

¹⁹ [Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#) – December 2020

²⁰ [Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#) – December 2020

limitation to the benefit because it is restricted to outdoor settings, so inclement weather, mobility difficulties, or other difficulties with leaving house (e.g., for those with dementia) may reduce the options for socialising with friends or extended family. This may, in part, be mitigated by the inclusion of private gardens in permitted outdoor settings, and people may still benefit from the continuation of the support bubble policy. Those who live alone can create a support bubble with another household of any size. Disabled people who require care may also benefit from the exemption for people who are providing care or assistance to a vulnerable person and exemptions for support groups. Parents who have a child with a disability aged under 5 and who requires continuous care can also create a support bubble with another household of any size. Providing respite care for disabled people is also permitted.

29. Easing social contact restrictions is likely to have a positive impact on autistic people and people with learning disabilities, as they are likely to have been disadvantaged by the social gathering restrictions, which may have caused anxiety by disrupting their routine and smaller support networks.
30. There is also an exception to allow vulnerable children and young people to attend all outdoor and indoor provision offered by out-of-school settings and supervised activities, which includes those that are disabled, which means disabled children will still be able to benefit from access to the full range of provision offered – which can have positive effects on educational engagement as well as on the development of skills which promote and support wellbeing.
31. Disabled people are more than twice as likely than the general public to make a trip by taxi or Private Hire Vehicle (PHV) and 1.6 times more likely to use the bus. As social contact rules are relaxed, and people are allowed to meet in groups of up to six outdoors or meet one other household, we may see increased use of public transport as people travel to meet friends and family outdoors. This means it may not always be possible to maintain social distancing, causing anxiety and stress. The mitigation for this, such as the Covid-secure measures in place, will help alleviate some of the anxiety and potential stress caused.
32. Certain disabilities might also affect an individual's ability to understand what constitutes an offence, especially due to the changing nature of the regulations. This could result in certain individuals with this protected characteristic being affected where a genuine misunderstanding of the rules leads to a fixed penalty notice being issued once or on repeat occasions. The handling of the matter relies on professional judgement by the police to assess in the circumstances the mental and physical conditions of the person and the individual's ability to communicate this. To mitigate these impacts, the Government and the National Police Chiefs' Council has published guidance to forces stressing the importance of the four-step escalation principles. Following the approach of engaging, explaining, encouraging and then enforcing has helped to reduce some of these concerns, especially

around exemptions and misunderstandings of the rules. There has also been a communications plan to effectively communicate exemptions to officers and the public.

33. With the gradual easing of restrictions, there is a risk that transmission rates of Coronavirus will increase. Considering the complex vulnerabilities that may be associated with their disabilities, the physical wellbeing of some individuals with disabilities may have been improved by preventing inter-household mixing, as limiting contact with others may limit the potential for them to contract the disease. Consequently, there may be a disproportionate negative impact on disabled people should the transmission rate increase. This policy, however, has a largely positive impact on mental health and wellbeing in relation to disability. We consider any disproportionate impacts are justified on account of the continued rollout of the vaccine, and the prioritisation of clinically extremely vulnerable people for receiving the vaccine, and the commitment to keep the epidemiological data and the speed of reopening under review in order to control transmission and protect the health of individuals.

Marriage/ civil partnership

34. Allowing weddings and receptions for up to 6 people will have a positive impact on couples who do not wish to defer their wedding until later in the year. However, the number of attendees (up to 6) is very low and so is likely to deter couples from choosing to marry at Step 1B. It is also likely to disproportionately affect some religious communities if they believe that a wedding cannot proceed because of the current restrictions on numbers. For example, for many faiths it is not possible for couples to live together and start a family before they are married. In addition, for some faiths, it is customary for weddings to take place at specific times in the year. This has been mitigated through engagement with the Places of Worship Taskforce to understand the needs of faith and belief wedding ceremonies.
35. The introduction of the Stay in the UK requirement means that some people who were planning to get married or enter a civil partnership or attend one abroad may be unable to. This is because the regulations now require that one of the people entering into a marriage or civil partnership must be a non-UK resident. The impact of this is likely to be minimal, as the majority of countries have restrictions on entering the country and the activity that can be conducted there. However, only permitting individuals to travel if they are getting married or entering a civil partnership with someone who is resident abroad, or the individual is a family member will have negative impacts as some people will not be able to attend. In addition, not including this restriction may have resulted in inequality impacts by allowing people that from higher socio-economic backgrounds to avoid UK restrictions for a 'destination wedding'. However, any disproportionate impacts on this protected characteristic are justified on public health grounds as restrictions on

international travel are needed to reduce the risk of infection and of a variant of concern being imported into or exported from the UK.

36. Allowing weddings and receptions, albeit with a limited number, will have a positive impact on the protected characteristic of marriage and civil partnership, as previous guidance recommended not allowing weddings except in exceptional circumstances (e.g., deathbed weddings). There are likely to continue to be negative impacts on this characteristic on account of the limited number of attendees. However, gathering restrictions for weddings and receptions remains in place in order to ensure that the transmission risk is kept low. Therefore, we consider any disproportionate impacts in relation to continued restricted numbers are justified on the basis that the policy aims to reduce disease transmission and protect the health of individuals, as well as ensuring that the economy can be reopening in a careful and safe way.

Pregnancy and Maternity

37. Parents with young babies are likely to benefit from parent and child groups of up to 15 people being permitted outdoors, as it will offer them additional support networks. It will also be beneficial for the socialisation of babies and young children.
38. Allowing the Rule of 6/2 households to meet in outdoor settings will benefit pregnant women and mothers with young children, as it will allow grandparents and family or friends who are not part of a support bubble or children bubble to provide additional support in outside settings.
39. Working parents, parents who are seeking work or accessing education, parents of children eligible for free schools meals, and parents who need to attend medical appointments or support groups will be positively impacted by the opening of outdoor childcare and supervised activities for children as well as outdoor youth activities, which will take pressure away from eligible parents needing extra support. Parents of children receiving Free School Meals will additionally benefit from being able to access all youth activities.
40. The measures have a positive impact on the protected characteristic of pregnancy and maternity by providing parents with additional avenues to access support networks.

Sex

41. According to the ONS, male taxi/private hire vehicle/chauffeur drivers suffered more than three times as many deaths per 100,000 than the average male workforce during the first and second waves of the pandemic. The probable cause of high death rates is a combination of occupational exposure to coronavirus in vehicles where social distancing is not possible and the demographic nature of the workforce. Taxi and private hire vehicle drivers are 98% male and 53% are from an ethnic minority background. Taxi and private hire vehicles are an important part

of the transport network during the Covid outbreak. They support essential services including journeys for NHS workers, home to school transport, accessible transport for the disabled and essential mobility for families without access to private cars or public transport services. As demand for travel increases in line with relaxation measures set out in the roadmap, the amount of occupational contact drivers will have with passengers is likely to increase, which may increase the number of infections and associated mortality. This may have a disproportionate impact on male drivers who are overrepresented in this sector. Similar considerations apply to bus drivers and other passenger facing public transport workers during restart.

42. The schedule of priority groups, defining the order in which members of the public should receive the vaccine, was devised by the Government's Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation, made up of scientists, doctors, and others. In line with WHO guidance, the first priority group comprises care home residents and health workers, then older and clinically extremely vulnerable people.²¹ The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has urged some groups who are at higher risk of needing hospital treatment from Covid to take up the offer of vaccination promptly, including men. The Government intends that everyone over the age of 18 will be offered the vaccine by July.
43. We consider any disproportionate impacts are justified on account of the continued rapid rollout of the vaccine and the commitment to keep the epidemiological data and the speed of reopening under review in order to control transmission and protect the health of individuals.

Sexual Orientation

44. Analysis has found that adults who identified as LGBTQ+ were twice as likely as heterosexual adults to experience symptoms of common mental disorder (e.g. anxiety or depression). An online survey commissioned by Stonewall in 2017 found that 52% of LGBTQ+ respondents in Britain reported experiencing depression in the previous year. DHSC and the LGBTQ+ National Health Adviser are working to identify and support the health needs of LGBTQ+ people during the pandemic.
45. Provisional results from a survey by the LGBTQ+ Foundation found that, as of 23 April 2020, 30% of LGBTQ+ respondents reported that they were living alone during the lockdown period, including 46% of respondents aged 50+. The relaxation of the social contact restrictions allowing people to meet in outdoor settings including in gardens (Rule of 6/2 households) is, therefore, likely to have a positive impact on LGBTQ+ groups. There continues to be an exemption to gatherings restrictions for support groups, including groups providing support to those facing issues relating to their sexuality or identity, including those living as lesbian, gay bisexual or transgender. The relaxation of the social contact rules is likely to help relieve loneliness and benefit those who fear being victimised in public

²¹ [Covid-19: How the UK vaccine rollout delivered success, so far | The BMJ](#)

as a result of their sexual orientation and, consequently, may prefer to meet up with larger groups of friends and support networks.

46. The positive impacts of increasing social contact limits on those from the LGBTQ+ community is highlighted by the positive implications this has on mental wellbeing for those within this community to connect with others. We cannot identify any disproportionate negative impacts in relation to the protected characteristic of this group. All impacts are justified on the account of the continued rapid rollout of the vaccine and the commitment to keep the epidemiological data and the speed of reopening under review in order to control transmission and protect the health of individuals.

Gender reassignment

47. The relaxation of the social contact restrictions to allow the rule of 6/2 households to meet in outdoor settings may have a positive impact on individuals experiencing anxiety or depression and who need support from a wider social network. This may include those undergoing gender reassignment or associated worries.
48. Limiting the relaxation of social contact restrictions to outdoor settings may not be as beneficial for those going through gender reassignment who feel unable to go out or who have concerns about public victimisation, as they will continue to have reduced opportunities to engage with their support network. However, allowing the relaxation of the restrictions to apply in gardens will help alleviate anxiety for those who do not wish to leave their homes, as they will still be able to access their support networks on their own properties. It should be noted, that not everyone has a garden, so this positive impact may be limited. In addition, people can continue to access support through support bubbles and support groups for those who identify as LGBTQ+, if applicable.
49. The increasing of social contact limits has had a positive impact on this protected characteristic group as it allows greater social interaction in places of personal choice and settings. We have not identified any disproportionate negative impacts in relation to the protected characteristic of this group. All impacts are justified on the account of the continued rollout of the vaccine and the commitment to keep the epidemiological data and the speed of reopening under review in order to control transmission and protect the health of individuals.

Race

50. Ethnic minority groups are more likely to live in overcrowded households.²² For example, around 30% of East Asian households originally from Bangladesh experience overcrowding compared to around 2% among white groups.²³ The

²² <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/housing/housing-conditions/overcrowded-households/latest>

²³ Ethnicity facts and figures – overcrowded households: <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/housing/housing-conditions/overcrowded-households/latest>

removal of the Stay at Home provisions and the relaxation of the social contact rules to allow the rule of 6/2 households in outdoor settings, including gardens, is likely to have a positive impact on these groups in terms of alleviating pressure on overcrowded households, as well as improvement to mental health by enabling people to see and/or support close, extended family members.

51. Although relaxation of the social contact rules will be beneficial, the rule of six disadvantages larger households. Households comprising more than six people are more prevalent in ethnic minority households, which may also be multi-generational. For example, 40% of British Pakistanis and Bangladeshis live in households of more than six. The policy change to allow 2 households to mix as an alternative to Rule of 6 will positively impact those with larger households such as Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) families. However, some may still be unable to socialise with wider family on account of the 2-household limit.
52. People from Black and Mixed ethnicities are also more likely to be lone parents than White, Asian or Other groups.²⁴ Lone parents from ethnic minorities may struggle more with the unintended consequence of the rule of 6, as it may restrict their ability to access informal childcare as BAME families tend to be bigger. Allowing childcare bubbles and support bubbles for new parents will help to mitigate some of these impacts, as will the exemption for using registered childcare and supervised childcare activities. However, there may be an increased financial burden associated with this.
53. Although there is a positive impact with allowing wedding ceremonies and receptions to take place, BAME families may also be affected disproportionately by the small gathering limit (up to 6 people).
54. The removal of the Stay at Home order will potentially increase demand on local transport workers – particularly those who have a public-facing role. Bus and taxi/PHV drivers are both Disproportionately Impacted Groups in terms of Covid deaths and a high proportion are from BAME communities. Using data from the Annual Population Survey, we can estimate that around 30% bus and coach drivers and 60% of taxi/PHV drivers between the ages of 20-64 are from a BAME background. The Department for Transport (DfT) is engaging with both Operators and Trade Unions on bus driver safety to help mitigate the impact of any increases in demand and thus potential greater risk of Covid. We have regularly written to operators to remind them of the responsibilities set out in the 'Safer Transport' guidance, most recently asking them to review risk assessments to ensure they are still adequate and, encouraging them to use COVID 19 Bus Services Support Grant (CBSSG) to top up Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) for any staff who need to self-isolate, in order to encourage compliance. DfT has also published guidance on

²⁴ <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/uk-population-by-ethnicity/demographics/families-and-households/latest#household-types-by-ethnicity>

actions that taxi and PHV drivers, operators and owners can take to protect against coronavirus, as well as guidance on installing protective screens in taxis and PHVs.

55. Individuals from a BAME background, dual, or multiple heritage, as well as any UK resident who is not a British citizen, may be more likely than white Britons to have families living overseas whom they would usually travel abroad to visit. The 'Stay in the UK' provisions would prevent this from taking place unless they were travelling with a valid reason. Those whose family all live in the UK may, therefore, be able to take greater advantage of the loosening of social contact rules and be less affected by the introduction of the 'Stay in the UK' measures.
56. As noted above (para 38), according to the ONS, male taxi/private hire vehicle/chauffer drivers suffered more than three times as many deaths per 100,000 than the average male workforce during the first and second waves of the pandemic. The probable cause of high death rates is a combination of occupational exposure to coronavirus in vehicles where social distancing is not possible and the demographic of the workforce.
57. Taxi and private hire vehicle drivers are 98% male and 53% are from an ethnic minority background. Taxi and private hire vehicles are an important part of the transport network during the Covid outbreak. They support essential services including journeys for NHS workers, home to school transport, accessible transport for the disabled and essential mobility for families without access to private cars or public transport services. As demand for travel increases in line with relaxation measures in the Regulations, the amount of occupational contact drivers will have with passengers is likely to increase, which may increase the number of infections and associated mortality. This may have a disproportionate impact on drivers from minority ethnic backgrounds who are overrepresented in this sector. Similar considerations apply to bus drivers and other passenger-facing public transport workers.
58. With the gradual easing of restrictions, there is a risk that transmission rates of Coronavirus will increase. Considering that the Coronavirus death rates for most ethnic minorities are higher compared to white ethnicities,²⁵ the physical wellbeing of ethnic minorities may have been improved by preventing inter-household mixing, as limiting contact with others may limit the potential for them to contract the disease. Consequently, there may be a disproportionate negative impact on ethnic minorities should the transmission rate increase. This policy, however, has a largely positive impact on mental health and wellbeing in relation to race. We consider any disproportionate impacts are justified on account of the continued rollout of the vaccine and the commitment to keep the epidemiological data and the speed of reopening under review in order to control transmission and protect the health of individuals. Nevertheless, the Government is conscious that certain ethnic groups are more sceptical of the vaccine on account of the perpetuation of

²⁵ [Why have Black and South Asian people been hit hardest by COVID-19? - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandlife/articles/why-have-black-and-south-asian-people-been-hit-hardest-by-covid-19/2020-11-17)

misinformation. Therefore, the Government has been seeking to mitigate this by ensuring that there are increased communications, so people are reassured that the vaccine is safe and does not contravene religious rules. The government have funded over £23 million which has been allocated to 60 councils and voluntary groups across England to expand work to support those most at risk from COVID-19 and boost vaccine take up. This is part of over £7.9 billion government funding provided to councils to help support their communities during the pandemic. The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has urged some groups who are at higher risk of needing hospital treatment from Covid to take up the offer of vaccination promptly, including those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities.

Religion or belief

59. Continuing to allow wedding ceremonies and receptions for up to 6 persons and removing the guidance limiting weddings to exceptional circumstances will have a positive impact on religious communities by allowing both to take place, as these can play an important role in religious life. 76.9% of wedding ceremonies are civil ceremonies in England and Wales in 2017.²⁶ Therefore, the greatest positive impact is on those who have civil ceremonies.
60. There is a requirement that a congregation of at least ten adult Jewish males should be present for the wedding service. Therefore, although weddings are allowed in Step 1B, restricting numbers to up to 6 people may disproportionately impact some religious groups (particularly Orthodox Jewish), who require the presence of a certain number of men for them to be valid under their traditions. Having restrictions on numbers, therefore, is likely to mean that the wedding cannot take place at this time.
61. A funeral commemorative event (FCE), such as a wake, is a meeting primarily for the purpose of gathering socially with friends and family to celebrate the life of the person who has died. These will be limited to no more than 6 people. FCEs are not conceptualised the same way by all communities. In some faiths (such as many Christian faiths), this is an integral post-funeral social gathering. In other groups, a wake is held the night before. They can be religious but may also be a social adjunct to a funeral which is often not religious. This minimal limit to attendance may impact those wishing to socially gather to celebrate a life. Commemorative events may also disproportionately impact certain religious communities which require a certain number of attendees, for example Orthodox Jewish Ceremonies. There is some benefit however, as although attendance for commemorative events is low, they still can celebrate the life of that individual and grieve alongside others and not on their own.

²⁶<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/marriagecohabitationandcivilpartnerships/bulletins/marriagesinenglandandwalesprovisional/2017>

62. The requirement to stay in the UK may mean that some people who were planning to travel for pilgrimages or other religious ceremonies and celebrations, or commemorative events to celebrate the life of a person who has died will now not be able to. However, this change is needed to reduce the risk of transmission and for the UK importing or exporting variants of concern.
63. While continuing to allow weddings and removing the guidance limiting them to exceptional circumstances will have a positive impact on this protected characteristic, there are likely to be continued negative impacts on account of the gathering restrictions on attendance. However, these continued impacts are justified by the need for the Government to reopen in a safe and careful manner in order to control the transmission risk. The Government will continue keep the epidemiological data and the speed of reopening under review in order to protect the health of individuals.

Lower socio-economic groups

64. Rough sleepers are often from lower socio-economic groups, facing economic hardship, and in addition, there is a high rate of physical and mental conditions amongst rough sleepers. The relaxation of restrictions, and an increased risk of infection for those still on the streets, could disproportionately affect those who have increased health vulnerabilities owing to COVID-19. Local authorities continue to support rough sleepers. However, DHSC can mitigate this by maintaining clear communication on the importance of safety and vaccinations, as well as prioritising rough sleepers for vaccination as set out by the recent JCVI announcement.
65. Lower socio-economic status is often associated with other health indicators and, therefore, there are likely to be disproportionate negative impacts associated with an increased transmission risk on account of easing restrictions. However, any impacts are justified on the account of the continued rollout of the vaccine and the Government's commitment that the easing of restrictions will be gradual and carefully controlled, and that the Government will continue keep the epidemiological data and the speed of reopening under review in order to control the transmission risk and protect the health of individuals. JCVI has urged some groups who are at higher risk of needing hospital treatment from Covid to take up the offer of vaccination promptly, including those living in deprived neighbourhoods. The Government intends that the everyone over the age of 18 will receive the first dose of the vaccine by July.

Analysis Step 2 Policy

66. The planned policy changes are as follows:

Social Contact Policy

- All childcare and supervised activities will be permitted.
- All youth activities will be permitted.
- The gathering limit for weddings and outdoor receptions will be increased to up to 15 persons.
- The gathering limit for wakes and commemorative events will be increased to up to 15 people and 30 for funerals.
- All U18 Sport will be permitted (aged 17 as of 01/09/20)
- Organised gatherings (rule of 6, or 2 households) will be permitted outdoors.
- Outdoor events will be permitted with local authority discretion – subject to ‘permitted organised gathering’ restrictions.
- Overnight stays will be permitted in England, but you should continue to minimise travel where possible.
- Pilots of mass events may take place.

Business and Venues Policy

- All retail will be permitted to reopen. Shops operating in otherwise closed attractions may only open where they are a self-contained unit and can be accessed directly from the street.
- Outdoor hospitality such as such as cafes, restaurants, pubs, bars, social clubs will be permitted to open. However, table service will be required. Shisha pipes will continue to be prohibited.
- Takeaway alcohol will be permitted.
- Hospitality venues operating in otherwise closed attractions may only open where they are a self-contained unit and can be accessed directly from the street.
- Self-contained accommodation will be permitted to open - where indoor facilities for access, catering, sleeping and bathing (unless an exemption applies for campsites and caravan parks) are not shared between households.
- Large outdoor events are permitted with local authority discretion, subject to ‘permitted organised gathering restrictions’, along with drive in events.

- Indoor leisure and sports facilities can open (subject to social contact limits, i.e., no adult classes) these include: indoor gyms and leisure centres, indoor sports courts, dance and fitness studios, indoor swimming pools, indoor riding arenas, indoor climbing centres, spas (not including saunas and steam rooms).
- Previously restricted premises that can open include the following outdoor attractions: adventure parks and activities, animal attractions (such as at zoos, safari parks and aquariums), film studios, funfairs and fairgrounds, model villages, museums and galleries, skating rinks, theme parks, trampolining parks, water and aqua parks and drive-in performance events (cinemas, theatres, circuses).
- Personal care is permitted to open, these include: body and skin piercing services, barbers and hairdressers, beauty and nail salons, tattoo studios, massage studios and tanning salons.
- Public buildings (community centres/halls, libraries) are open for single household/bubble use. However, indoor gatherings are still limited to permitted exemptions.

Age

67. With all childcare and supervised activities, including wraparound care and all youth activities, being permitted for all (not just eligible groups), children and young people of all ages will benefit from the organised activity offered by these settings. These will include co-curricular activities, sport, arts including music and participatory art, social actions, organised uniformed groups, and outdoor education provision, which can have positive effects on the development of skills and attitudes which promote wellbeing, as well as supporting educational attainment.
68. Allowing all under-18 sport, instead of limiting it to educational purposes, will benefit younger adults and children who participate in sports outside their schools, such as in their local communities or for separate teams, etc. There will be positive impacts on both physical and mental wellbeing of this provision, which are crucial for development and socialising with peers. Transmission between this age group remains low, and so the negative impacts of increased infection are generally low. However, there may be negative impacts on those who are more vulnerable (and cannot access vaccination for certain reasons), as the increased interaction may put them at risk. However, serious illness and hospitalisation amongst this group remain low, and Covid-secure measures will be put in place to mitigate some of these risks.
69. The re-opening of non-essential retail is likely to have a positive impact on the youngest members of the workforce, aged between 16 and 24 who make up 28% of the non-essential retail workforce, over twice their total share of the UK

workforce of 12%. This is also true for those aged 25 to 34 who make up 23% of the non-essential retail workforce.²⁷

70. The re-opening of hospitality venues with outdoor capacity is likely to be beneficial for young adults, whilst the continued closure of indoor hospitality and leisure is likely to remain disproportionately harmful as hospitality workers aged 16-24 years old comprise 37% of the workforce, compared to 11% across the UK economy. Conversely, the share of older workers is lower in hospitality with 14% between 55-64 years old (29% across the UK economy). This is especially true for beverage serving activities, where 46% of employees are 16-24 years old; more than four times as many “young” workers than across the UK economy (11%).
71. Reducing limitations on outdoor hospitality, personal care, leisure and entertainment venues may affect customers from a range of age groups who rely on certain business services for mental and physical health benefits, resulting in decreased feelings of social isolation.
72. The re-opening of personal care services is likely to be beneficial for young adults aged between 16 and 24 who make up 17% of the workforce, those aged 25-29 who make up 13% of the workforce and those aged 30-34 who make up 15% of the workforce. However these positive impacts are likely to be reduced by the continued closure of spas, which whilst permitted to open are unlikely to do so due to continued restrictions on the use of saunas and steam rooms.²⁸
73. Apprenticeships are also very important for the personal care sector – especially hair and beauty. Social distancing restrictions have reduced operational capacity, meaning that some salons may not be able to take on apprentices, which will negatively impact younger workers who make up the majority of apprentices.²⁹
74. Driving lessons restarting will have a greater positive impact on younger adults, and also any other age groups who are partaking in this activity. The risk of transmission in a close contact area (vehicle) may be higher, however mitigations through COVID secure measures should help minimise some of those risks. It is possible that due to the delays and restrictions young adults may struggle to pass their tests as they have had large gaps in their practical lessons.
75. The Events Research Pilot (EPR) scheme will enable pilot events that will cover a range of settings in order to provide generalisable results that can be applied across sectors. As such, the events programme will cover different types of events such as large sports events as well as smaller indoor settings such as a club night. The range of events will therefore attract a range of age groups. Learnings from the pilot events will support policy development for events for all ages. Whilst under-18s may not be able to attend certain pilots planned (e.g. club

²⁷ BEIS calculations based on ONS Labour Force Survey data, June 2020 – August 2020. Retail sector defined as SIC 47

²⁸ BEIS calculations based on ONS Labour Force Survey data, June 2020 – August 2020.

²⁹ UK Parliament – Apprenticeship Statistics, 2019

nights) they will benefit from longer term application to future events as the pilots target different settings rather than sectors. We consider any disproportionate impacts are justified on the basis that the policy aims to provide evidence on how to return to events safely and, therefore, protect the health of individuals.

76. Opening all supervised activities for children has a largely positive impact on mental health and wellbeing specifically for younger children, especially as transmission and risk remains low with this age category. The reopening of businesses will have a largely positive impact on younger adults who work in this sector. They are, however, at risk of becoming infected and transmitting disease, as they are one of the last target age groups (due to the lower risk of serious illness and hospitalisation) to receive vaccination. This means that compared to other age groups who may have already received vaccination they are disproportionately impacted by this. With greater relaxation of restrictions comes the possibility of disproportionate impacts on older people, on account of increasing transmission risks. However, we consider any disproportionate impacts are justified on account of the successful rollout of the vaccine to older people, which reduces the risk of hospitalisation and death, and the commitment to keep the epidemiological data and the speed of reopening under review in order to control transmission and protect the health of individuals.

Disability

77. Opening supervised activities, wraparound childcare and youth activities both indoors and outdoors for everyone (not just eligible groups) should have a positive impact for those disabled children and young people attending – specifically, where they benefit from access to non-stigmatising provision.
78. Those with certain disabilities can potentially face a greater risk to infection. Therefore, taking part in indoor activities may not be beneficial to this group if they cannot be vaccinated for health reasons or have not yet had the vaccination. However, as outdoor attractions are open and outdoor areas pose a lesser risk on account of better ventilation, they will still be able to access venues, and thus benefit from any improvements to mental and physical wellbeing that accessing these activities can bring.
79. All retail opening may offer better access for those with disabilities, such as those with vision impairment who may struggle using online services. There are mitigations in place, such as COVID-secure measures, to help provide safety to these groups, who may be more prone to complications if infected with Coronavirus.
80. Outdoor events, including drive-in events such as drive-in cinemas, can only be attended by those with access to a car. Therefore, those from less advantaged

socio-economic backgrounds or who are unable to drive (e.g., some people with disabilities) are less likely to benefit from the reopening of these events.

81. While disabled employees are only slightly over-represented in the hospitality sector, greater restrictions on businesses may have had a disproportionate impact on their employment and high unemployment may have a negative impact on employment prospects for disabled people more widely. Therefore, the reopening of outdoor hospitality is likely to have a benefit for this group. However, this may be limited depending on the number of disabled people who were furloughed. For those who were made unemployed, there may be a limited benefit, as only outdoor hospitality is being opened in Step 2, and so businesses may not yet be taking on new staff, and there will be a high number of applicants for any new jobs. Therefore, it is likely that, despite the reopening of outdoor hospitality, the continued restrictions on businesses and the impact of lockdown will continue to have a negative impact on disabled people and on individuals experiencing anxiety or depression, particularly if they work in the affected hospitality sector.
82. The pilot events will not discriminate based on disability and events and any testing or non-pharmaceutical interventions used at pilot events will be considered from this perspective. Access requirements to events remain the same as pre-Covid and running a pilot does not exempt these venues from any existing requirements. The pilot events will cover a range of settings, some of these settings will be more accessible to those with physical disabilities and therefore allowing them to open sooner will have a positive impact. Therefore, we consider any disproportionate impacts are justified on the basis that the policy aims to provide evidence on how to return to events safely and, therefore, protect the health of individuals.
83. The gradual easing of business restrictions will largely have a positive impact on mental health and wellbeing in relation to disability and a positive impact on disabled people by supporting their return to work in newly opened sectors, and the ability for them to have better access to services.
84. The increase of gathering limits for attendance at weddings and outdoor receptions from up to 6 to up to 15 people, will have a positive impact on couples (see below). However, with the increase in potential number of households attending weddings and that people often travel to attend a wedding, there is a risk that transmission rates of Coronavirus in a wedding setting will increase, and this increased risk of transmission is likely to have a disproportionately negative impact on disabled people, due to the range of complex vulnerabilities associated with disabilities. We consider any disproportionate impacts are justified on account of the continued rollout of the vaccine, and the prioritisation of clinically extremely vulnerable people for receiving the vaccine; the commitment to keep the epidemiological data and the speed of reopening under review in order to control transmission and protect the health of individuals; and given the positive impact on mental wellbeing of enabling them to marry, and removing severe restrictions on guest lists.

Marriage and Civil Partnership

85. The increase of gathering limits for attendance at weddings and outdoor receptions from up to 6 to up to 15 people, will have a generally positive impact on couples. However, with the increase in potential number of households attending weddings and that people often travel to attend a wedding, there is a risk that transmission rates of Coronavirus in a wedding setting will increase, and this increased risk of transmission is likely to have a disproportionately negative impact on disabled people, due to the range of complex vulnerabilities associated with disabilities.
86. Public buildings being open will have a positive impact on this group as it will allow people who wish to get married or form a civil partnership a greater choice of venues, which will facilitate the wedding.
87. The increase of the social gathering limit from up to 6 to up to 15 for weddings and civil partnerships, including receptions, will have a positive impact on the protected characteristic of marriage and civil partnership, as previous policy was limited to 6 persons. There may be a higher risk associated with the increase to the gathering restrictions of infection. However, this is mitigated by the gathering restrictions for weddings and receptions remaining limited, which ensures that the transmission risk is kept low. However, for this reason, there are likely to continue to be negative impacts on this protected characteristic on account of the limited number of attendees. Nevertheless, we consider any disproportionate impacts in relation to continued restricted numbers are justified on the basis that the policy aims to reduce disease transmission and protect the health of individuals, as well as ensuring that the economy can be reopening in a careful and safe way.

Pregnancy and Maternity

88. Parents will be able to benefit from parent and child groups being permitted in all settings (except private dwellings), both indoors and outdoors, as previously it was only allowed outdoors, which would have limited the settings and places that parents and children could access these groups. This measure provides also an informal support network for parents, and promotes and improves social and wellbeing of children, which is crucial for their development. These groups also help parents who may be struggling to engage with other parents. Transmission continues to remain low for younger children, which means they are at less of risk compared to other age groups. Parents must still take precautions however, to ensure indoor venues are as COVID secure as possible, as transmission may be passed on in indoor settings.
89. Opening non-essential retail will enable those who are expecting or have new-born children – and their families – more choice of where to shop and offer greater affordability. This positive impact will also provide positive mental impacts. However, pregnant individuals may wish to be more cautious, as the reopening of

non-essential retail is likely to result in a higher risk. However, this will be mitigated by the COVID-secure measures that businesses are required to have in place.

90. The opening of outdoor attractions will particularly benefit and have a positive impact on this group as they will be able to spend time as a family at venues such as zoos, safaris, and aquariums, which, in turn, may improve social, mental, and physical wellbeing of families. This is particularly true of new parents who are more prone to suffer post-natal depression in isolation, and so are likely to benefit from being able to access attractions and spend time outside of their home with their families and friends.
91. Indoor leisure may also help pregnant individuals, as it can lead to an improvement in physical health and mental wellbeing, as physical exercise is known to reduce anxiety. COVID secure measures will mitigate the higher transmission risk.
92. Pregnant individuals are classified as 'clinically vulnerable' and at a moderate risk. As a precaution, pregnant individuals are advised to stay at home as much as possible, follow social distancing and stay away from anyone who has coronavirus symptoms. The pilot events will use a combination of testing and non-pharmaceutical interventions, which will allow those at higher risk of contracting COVID-19 to attend the pilot events safely. Therefore, there is likely to be a neutral impact for these communities. All participants will have to provide informed consent to take part and all risks will be made clear to them. Therefore, we consider any disproportionate impacts are justified on the basis that the policy aims to provide evidence on how to return to events safely and, therefore, protect the health of individuals.
93. The gradual reopening of different sectors and services is likely to have a positive impact on the protected characteristics of pregnancy and maternity, as being able to access relevant services is likely to positively impact mental wellbeing. While there is an increased transmission risk to this group, there is no evidence that pregnant women are any more likely to get seriously ill from coronavirus. Nevertheless, pregnant individuals are considered to be in the 'moderate risk' (clinically vulnerable) group as a precaution. Any negative impacts from easing of the restrictions are justified on account of the commitment to keep the epidemiological data and the speed of reopening under review in order to control transmission and protect the health of individuals.

Sex

94. Wedding ceremonies and receptions up to 15 people may disproportionately impact women as some religious wedding ceremonies (particularly Orthodox Jewish) require the presence of a certain number of men for them to be valid under their traditions (there is a requirement that a congregation of at least ten adult Jewish males should be present for the wedding service.). Having restrictions on

numbers, therefore, may mean that more spaces are available for men to attend wedding ceremonies, even if the women are more closely related to the marrying couple.

95. It is likely that both men and women who have children will benefit from their children being able to access childcare and supervised activities. However, we know that women still tend to shoulder greater childcare responsibilities than men.³⁰ The percentage of women reporting that they are responsible for 90-100% of childcare has increased from 27% before lockdown to 45%.³¹ Data from Wave 2 of the Parent and Pupil survey shows that female respondents were more likely to say that they had used childcare since the start of the autumn term 2020 (57% vs 43%).³² As a result, the easing of restrictions around childcare and supervised activities, including wraparound care and all youth activities is likely to benefit women who have children more than men who have children.³³
96. The initial pilot events are likely to include the World Snooker Championship and the FA Cup Finals. Women only make up 37% of football fans in the UK. We expect that this could lead to a negative disproportionate impact on females, as they make up a relatively smaller proportion of the fans of these sports. However, the range of events included in the programme will not be focused on either sex.
97. Outdoor hospitality is reopened, but shisha pipes remain prohibited due to the nature of their sharing and passing between one another, meaning the risks are high in terms of transmission between one another. Shisha bars tend to have a male-oriented customer base. Therefore, the continued prohibition of shisha pipes may negatively impact men.
98. Women are likely to benefit from retail and outdoor hospitality opening as they make up a large proportion of the workforce and so they will benefit from returning to work. However, only outdoor hospitality is opening, and so there may be a limited return to work for a large proportion of the workforce. Therefore, while this will negatively affect both sexes, women may still disproportionately face reduced hours and the threat of unemployment.
99. Women account for the majority of those employed within the Personal Care Services sector, accounting for 80% of the workforce, compared with a total UK employment share of 47%. This means that more women are likely to benefit from the re-opening of Personal Care Services when compared to men. In this sector, there is a mix of employed and self-employed workers. A large proportion of the latter are female mobile workers, who will be disproportionately impacted by not being able to enter clients' homes.

³⁰ Parent and Pupil Panel Survey October 2020 (Wave 2)

³¹ Parent and Pupil Panel Survey October 2020 (Wave 2)

³² University of Sussex study: <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/broadcast/read/52267>

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100. Women also tend to benefit from flexible working arrangements and part-time work offered by jobs within the Personal Care, Retail and Hospitality sectors which allow for the accommodation of childcare burdens. As such, if these sectors re-open in advance of all child-care settings – both formal and informal – there may be negative consequences for women balancing work and childcare responsibilities.³⁴
101. Women tend to make up the larger proportion of spa users as well as employees in this industry. Therefore, both female employees and customers should see positive impacts. Employees returning to work will see a greater improvement to mental wellbeing (reduction in financial pressure and worry), and customers will see an improvement in mental wellbeing through being able to use these services for relaxation purposes.
102. There appears to be a positive impact on both men and women in relaxing social contact restrictions as they both benefit from the greater ability to socialise and access support. There are particular benefits for women working in hospitality and personal care sectors. However, with greater relaxation of restrictions, there may be a disproportionate impact on men on account of the potential increase in transmission risk, as data suggests that men are more likely to die from Coronavirus than women.³⁵ The Government is mitigating negative impacts posed by increased transmission risks by continuing to rollout the vaccine programme at pace.

Sexual Orientation

103. Based on data from the National LGBT Survey 2018, 10% of LGBT respondents were working in hotels, restaurants, cafes and bars. A comparison of data from the Labour Force Survey, the National LGBT Survey 2017 and the Business Impact of Covid-19 Survey (BICS) published by ONS found that LGBT people are over-represented in the sectors that have seen the highest proportions of short-term staff lay-offs during the pandemic, including the 'Arts, entertainment, and recreation' sector.
104. Therefore, it is likely that the gradual lifting of business restrictions may have positive impacts in relation to the protected characteristic of sexual orientation.

Gender reassignment

105. Data on gender reassignment, or more broadly, gender identity or trans status is not collected in major employment or labour market surveys which means that we are unable to provide analysis on the equalities impacts for transgender staff.

³⁴ IPPR – Women and Flexible Working Report

³⁵ [Men and COVID-19: A Biopsychosocial Approach to Understanding Sex Differences in Mortality and Recommendations for Practice and Policy Interventions \(cdc.gov\)](#); [The COVID-19 vaccine: who gets it first? | The Health Foundation](#).

106. We have not identified any disproportionate impacts in relation to the protected characteristic of gender reassignment.

Race

107. Children, young people, and families from some BAME groups may experience a disproportionately positive impact from the removal of restrictions around childcare and supervised activities. For instance, data shows that children from Black African, Black Caribbean or Black British backgrounds are more likely to have parents that want to use childcare than children who are white (32% vs 23%).³⁶

108. COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted BAME communities, and those in these communities can be at higher risk of contracting COVID-19. The pilot events will use a combination of testing and non-pharmaceutical interventions, which will allow those at higher risk of contracting COVID-19 to attend the pilot events safely, therefore leading to a neutral disproportionate impact for these communities. All participants will have to provide informed consent to take part and all risks will be made clear to them.

109. Ethnic minorities make up 15% of the food and beverage services workforce, compared to the UK average of 12%, and are, therefore, likely to disproportionately benefit from the outdoor hospitality, because returning to work will help mental wellbeing and finance. However, they are also more likely to be disproportionately negatively impacted from the continued closure of indoor hospitality. In addition, there is likely to be continued uncertainty and negative impacts on account of potential job losses and reduced working hours as businesses that have not been open for a long time may no longer be viable. The Government's Budget announcement of the continuation of the furlough scheme for the next six months will provide some mitigation for the continued financial uncertainty nationwide.

110. Ethnic minorities account for 14% of the Personal Care Services workforce, compared with 13% of the UK workforce. Therefore, there are unlikely to be disproportionate positive impacts as a result of reopening Personal Care Services.

111. There are predominantly positive impacts for those from a BAME background working in sectors that are reopening, such as retail, personal care services and outdoor hospitality. However, with the reopening of these major sectors, there is a likelihood that there will be a concomitant increase in the transmission risk. The BAME community have a higher risk of becoming seriously ill with Coronavirus, which could lead to hospitalisation. Consequently, there may be a disproportionate

³⁶ Parent and Pupil Panel Survey October 2020 (Wave 2)

negative impact on race should the transmission rate increase. However, any disproportionate impacts are justified on account of the continued rollout of the vaccine and the commitment to keep the epidemiological data and the speed of reopening under review in order to control transmission and protect the health of individuals.

112. Nevertheless, the government is conscious that certain ethnic groups are more sceptical of the vaccine on account of the perpetuation of misinformation. Therefore, the Government has been seeking to mitigate this by ensuring that there are increased communications so that people are reassured that the vaccine is safe and does not contravene religious rules. The government have introduced the UK COVID-19 Vaccine Uptake Plan, which aims to improve uptake across all communities. The approach sets out a plan that is underpinned by four enablers at national, regional and local level. These are: working in partnership; removing barriers to access; data and information; and conversations and engagement. Communication channels have been targeting information and advice via TV, radio and social media; this has been translated into 19 languages. Print and online material, including interviews and practical advice has appeared in hundreds of national, regional, local and specialist titles including BAME media for Asian, Bangladeshi, Bengali, Gujarati and Pakistani communities. JCVI has urged some groups who are at higher risk of needing hospital treatment from Covid to take up the offer of vaccination promptly, including those from BAME communities.

Religion or belief

113. The reopening of community assets (such as community centres and libraries) will benefit smaller religious groups who use these spaces for worship meetings and promote equality of treatment, as places of worship have remained open throughout lockdown. This may have a particularly positive impact on BAME and lower socio-economic groups who are less likely to have their own worship space and are more likely to rely on community assets for this purpose.
114. Wedding ceremonies will be permitted for up to 15 attendees, and outdoor wedding receptions can continue with the same attendance limit. This will have a positive impact on religious communities by allowing a larger number of weddings to take place, as these can play an important role in religious life. 76.9% of wedding ceremonies are civil ceremonies in England and Wales in 2017.³⁷ Therefore, the positive impact felt by all groups who are able to get married with more people attending will benefit a larger number of people who have civil ceremonies.
115. There is a requirement that a congregation of at least ten adult Jewish males should be present for the wedding to be valid. The increase of the gathering limit for weddings from up to 6 to up to 15 people would allow for the wedding to take

³⁷<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/marriagecohabitationandcivilpartnerships/bulletins/marriagesinenglandandwalesprovisional/2017>

place, and, therefore, will satisfy the religious requirement. However, we recognise that due to restrictions in religious calendars that weddings may not be possible during this period which may limit the positive impact of these measures. There may still be other impacts, for example in relation to sex (see above).

116. A funeral commemorative event (FCE), such as a wake, is a meeting primarily for the purpose of gathering socially with friends and family to celebrate the life of the person who has died. The limit on attendance at FCEs will be increased from 6 to 15. This will have a positive impact on all religious and belief communities and on their mental health by allowing more people to participate in the grieving process and to support mourners. The increased attendance limit for FCEs will also have a positive impact on certain religious communities which require a certain number of attendees, for example Orthodox Jewish Ceremonies. However, as numbers remain limited, there will still be negative impacts.
117. In testing a variety of settings (potentially including a wedding or civil partnership ceremony), the pilots will provide evidence that can be applied to other locations which will allow for celebrations for all religions and beliefs, which will lead to a neutral impact for those of different religions or beliefs.
118. Removing the limits around which children and young people may attend out-of-school settings (which includes supplementary schools offering education in their own faith) will mean that some religious groups benefit from being able to access educational provision in their own faith. For example, Jewish and Torah studies for Jewish pupils and Islamic and Koran studies for Muslim pupils often take place after school and on weekends in religious supplementary schools.
119. Permitting outdoor events at Step 2 will have a positive impact on all religious communities who will be able to celebrate festivals outdoors (i.e., in public outdoor spaces and private gardens) with small groups of friends and family. Permitting certain larger outdoor gatherings may allow religious communities to organise larger festive celebrations with the cooperation of Local Authorities.
120. While allowing weddings, receptions and other significant life events will have a positive impact on this protected characteristic, there are still likely to be negative impacts on account of the continued restrictions on gathering limits. However, these continued impacts are justified by the need for the government to reopen in a safe and careful manner in order to control the transmission risk. The government will continue keep the epidemiological data and the speed of reopening under review in order to protect the health of individuals.

Lower socio-economic groups

121. The pilot events themselves do not have a disproportionate impact on less advantaged socio-economic groups, however as pilot events may be ticketed this

group may be less able to participate than other groups who can afford to purchase tickets. The events are scientific trials and each event may have different criteria for the selection of participants and the costs of events will vary but will not differ to their usual cost. The government envisages working with event organisers to identify suitable participants from their usual customer base.

Analysis of Step 3 Policy

Social Contact Policy

122. The elements of the policy are as follows:

- Social contact restrictions will be eased to allow up to 30 persons to meet outdoors.
- Social contact restrictions will be eased to allow the rule of 6/2 households to meet indoors, including in private homes.
- Elite sport outdoors will be permitted, subject to large events being permitted with a number cap on spectators which will be set out in guidance.
- Indoor and outdoor business events will be permitted, subject to a cap which will be set out in guidance.
- Large outdoor events will be permitted subject to a cap which will be set out in guidance.
- The gathering limit for weddings, receptions, wakes, and other significant life events will be increased to allow up to 30 persons to attend.
- All organised sport and exercise classes will be permitted.
- Organised outdoor and indoor gatherings will be permitted.

Businesses and Venues Policy

- Pilots for larger events will take place. *All Pilot events will be considered in a separate Public Sector Equality Duties assessment.*
- Pilots for festivals will take place.
- All hospitality such as such as cafes, restaurants, pubs, bars, social clubs will be permitted to open, but table service will be required. Shisha pipes will remain prohibited.
- All accommodation (hotel, hostel, campsite, caravan park, members' club, boarding house or BnB's) will be permitted to open.
- Leisure and indoor team sports will be permitted.

- Saunas and steam rooms will be permitted to open.
- The remaining outdoor performance events will be permitted to open (cinemas, theatres, circuses and performance)
- Indoor attractions will be permitted to open (animal attractions; sculpture parks; stately or historic homes, castles or other heritage sites; model villages; botanical gardens, biomes or greenhouses; landmarks including observation decks and viewing platforms; and theme parks and water parks).
- Indoor entertainment such as: adventure activities, bowling alleys, cinemas, theatres and concert halls, Indoor play (soft play centres and trampolining parks), casinos, bingo halls, amusement arcades and adult gaming centres, museums and galleries, snooker and pool halls, skating rinks, laser quest, escape rooms and other indoor games/recreational venues and visitor attractions at film studios will be permitted to open.
- Large, seated venues indoors and outdoors, business events, large indoor and outdoor events will be limited to a capacity number. Conference centres will also open for events in line with wider limits and business events guidance.
- Public buildings such as community centres, halls and libraries will open, including for permitted indoor gatherings.

Age

123. Younger adults who tend to socialise more will see a positive impact on the easing of social contact policy to allow up to 30 persons to meet outdoor and being permitted to socialise indoors with the rule of 6/up 2 households. As previously stated, it has been consistently found that young people have experienced a greater deterioration in their mental health than middle aged and older adults³⁸. The PHE analysis of the UCL COVID-19 Social Study also shows that throughout the course of the pandemic, 18-29-year olds on average scored higher for depression, anxiety, and loneliness in their questionnaires than 30-59-year-old and 60+ year olds. The lowest average scores were consistently the over 60's age group.³⁹

124. All ages will benefit from the easing of social contact restrictions. Clubs for older adults/elderly, such as outdoor walking groups, will have a positive impact on mental wellbeing, as they will facilitate communication and social interaction with a greater number of people.

³⁸ [Age Spotlight - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk) – updated December 2020

³⁹ [Wider Impacts of COVID-19 \(phe.gov.uk\)](https://phe.gov.uk)

125. A 2019 CGA industry study⁴⁰ found that the social aspect of visiting pubs was the main driver behind most pub visits. This is reinforced by a 2017 One Poll study⁴¹ that found the top reason for visiting a pub was to catch up with friends. Therefore, reducing restrictions on social contact and household mixing will increase the likelihood of individuals returning to hospitality venues. This is likely to be beneficial for young adults aged 16-24 years old who comprise 37% of the hospitality workforce, compared to 11% across the UK economy.⁴² Conversely, the share of older workers is lower in hospitality with 14% between 55-64 years old (29% across the UK economy). This is especially true for beverage serving activities, where 46% of employees are 16-24 years old; more than four times as many young workers than across the UK economy (11%).
126. The reduced audience capacity for performing arts venues will mean reduction in people working from pre-pandemic levels associated with the capacity reduction, but an increase from step 2 when these venues were closed. This will affect hospitality staff at these venues and may have a disproportionate effect on younger workers, with workers aged 16-24 years old comprising 37% of the workforce, compared to 11% across the UK economy.⁴³
127. Allowing spectators at sport events with reduced capacity is likely to impact young people (16-24) and the elderly (over 65) who account for approximately a third of attendants between them and so would be positively impacted by this.
128. With the gradual easing of restrictions, there is a risk that transmission rates of Coronavirus will increase. As older people are most at risk of serious illness and death from Coronavirus, it is likely that this will have a disproportionate negative impact on this group in relation to age. However, the Government has prioritised the vaccination of older people with over 90% of 70+ year olds having received vaccination. This mitigates potential negative impacts as a consequence of loosening restrictions. In addition, the epidemiological data will continue to be reviewed by the Secretary of State every week, and the Government has committed to ensure that four tests are met before further loosening restrictions. This will allow the Government to consider the need for any contingency action should the transmission rate begin to increase significantly.

Disability

129. Those suffering with dementia may find the increase in the number of people they can meet beneficial as they can be reunited in a regular setting with familiar faces. However, there is a concern that the overall length of time away from previous routines and settings may have further worsened and negatively impacted those who suffer with dementia. Those with disabilities such as autism may also

⁴⁰ CGA – The British Pub Market, Reasons to Be Optimistic for 2019

⁴¹ Beertoday – Why do so many of us enjoy the pub? - 2017

⁴² BEIS calculations based on ONS Annual Population Survey data Jan 2019 – Dec 2019.

⁴³ BEIS calculations based on ONS Labour Force Survey data, June 2020 – August 2020.

find previously familiar settings unfamiliar and busier than before, which may have a negative impact on their wellbeing.

130. The ability to meet up to 30 people to partake in any outdoor activity and the relaxation of social contact restrictions indoors will improve mental and physical wellbeing for those with disabilities, such as those who have Downs syndrome, who will benefit from increased socialisation, especially in informal settings with their support networks.

131. The full opening of attractions and entertainments will be beneficial for the mental and physical wellbeing of those with disabilities. Reopening may negatively affect those who are more vulnerable to transmission (such as those who are unable to have vaccinations). However, many attractions have Covid-secure measures in place to mitigate the risks of transmission to these groups and minimise the level of risk of potential infection.

132. Disabled workers are overrepresented in the creative arts, entertainment, and activities sector (18% of workers, compared to a 14% UK average). Some health conditions, including diabetes, have been shown to be particularly vulnerable to Covid-19. However, not all disabilities under the Equality Act 2010 are associated with a higher risk of a severe Covid-19 outcome. The reopening of these sectors for those with disabilities will positively impact their mental and physical wellbeing by providing routine and a return to their work pattern, which will also start to provide financial stability. The working safety guidance and performing arts guidance highlights the importance of ensuring a safe operation while people are at work in consideration of this.

133. The further easing of social contact and business restrictions will largely have a positive impact on mental health and wellbeing in relation to disability and a positive impact on disabled people by supporting their return to work in newly opened sectors. However, with the easing of restrictions, there is a risk that transmission rates of Coronavirus will increase. Due to the range of complex vulnerabilities associated with disabilities, the increased risk of transmission is likely to have a disproportionately negative impact on disabled people. We consider any disproportionate impacts are justified on account of the continued rollout of the vaccine, the prioritisation of clinically extremely vulnerable people for receiving the vaccine, combined with the commitment to keep the epidemiological data and the speed of reopening under review in order to control transmission and protect the health of individuals.

Marriage/ civil partnership

134. The increase of social gatherings limit for weddings from up to 15 to up to 30 will benefit the protected characteristic of marriage/civil partnership, as it will facilitate more people choosing to get married or form a civil partnership given the increased number of permitted guests.

135. The impacts of the increased social gathering limit for weddings are largely beneficial. However, it also poses an increased transmission risk. This is mitigated by the continued restrictions on gathering limits (up to 30 for weddings), which form part of the Government's strategy of reopening in a safe and careful manner in order to control the transmission risk. The Government will continue to keep the epidemiological data and the speed of reopening under review in order to protect the health of individuals.

Sex

136. With further relaxation of social contact and business restrictions, there may be a disproportionate impact on men on account of the potential increase in transmission risk, as data suggests that men are more likely to die from Coronavirus than women.⁴⁴ The Government is mitigating negative impacts posed by increased transmission risks by continuing to rollout the vaccine programme. JCVI has urged some groups who are at higher risk of needing hospital treatment from Covid to take up the offer of vaccination promptly, including men. The Government intends that everyone over the age of 18 will be offered the vaccine by July. We consider any disproportionate impacts are justified on account of the continued rollout of the vaccine and the commitment to keep the epidemiological data and the speed of reopening under review in order to control transmission and protect the health of individuals.

Sexual Orientation

137. It was reported previously that those from the LGBTQ+ community felt more comfortable and safer in larger groups. Therefore, the increase in social contact limits allowing people to meet in groups of up to 30 outdoors will benefit this group. Also, the addition to the rule of 6 indoors or 2 households minimum will allow people to meet in the comfort and safe space of their own home.

138. The impacts of further relaxation of social contact restrictions are largely beneficial in respect of the protected characteristic of sexual orientation.

Gender Reassignment

139. We have not identified any disproportionate impacts in relation to the protected characteristic of gender reassignment.

Race

140. Engagement with the arts is much higher in white and mixed ethnic groups compared to other groups, with 78% and 81% of respondents engaging with the

⁴⁴ [Men and COVID-19: A Biopsychosocial Approach to Understanding Sex Differences in Mortality and Recommendations for Practice and Policy Interventions \(cdc.gov\)](#); [The COVID-19 vaccine: who gets it first? | The Health Foundation](#).

arts, respectively. Therefore, indoor entertainment such as theatres re-opening could provide extra benefits to some groups.

141. While there will be a positive impact on the protected characteristic of race in terms of the employment benefits arising from greater relaxation of business restrictions, along with the gradual easing of restrictions, there is a risk that transmission rates of Coronavirus will increase. Considering that the Coronavirus death rates for most ethnic minorities are higher compared to white ethnicities,⁴⁵ there may be a disproportionate negative impact on race should the transmission rate increase. However, we consider any disproportionate impacts are justified on account of the continued rollout of the vaccine and the commitment to keep the epidemiological data and the speed of reopening under review in order to control transmission and protect the health of individuals.

142. Nevertheless, the Government is conscious that certain ethnic groups are more sceptical of the vaccine on account of the perpetuation of misinformation. Therefore, in order to combat this, the Government has been seeking to mitigate this by ensuring that there are increased communications to ensure that people are reassured that the vaccine is safe and does not contravene religious rules. The UK COVID-19 Vaccine Uptake Plan aims to improve uptake across all communities. The approach sets out a plan that is underpinned by four enablers at national, regional and local level. These are: working in partnership; removing barriers to access; data and information; and conversations and engagement. Communication channels have been targeting information and advice via TV, radio and social media; this has been translated into 19 languages. Print and online material, including interviews and practical advice has appeared in hundreds of national, regional, local and specialist titles including BAME media for Asian, Bangladeshi, Bengali, Gujarati and Pakistani communities. JCVI has continued urging groups who are at higher risk of needing hospital treatment from Covid to take up the offer of vaccination promptly, including those from BAME communities. JCVI has urged some groups who are at higher risk of needing hospital treatment from Covid to take up the offer of vaccination promptly, including those from BAME communities.

Religion or belief

143. Wedding ceremonies will be permitted for up to 30 attendees, and wedding receptions can take place with the same attendance limit. This will have a positive impact on religious communities by allowing a larger number of weddings to take place, as these can play an important role in religious life. 76.9% of wedding ceremonies are civil ceremonies in England and Wales in 2017.⁴⁶ Therefore, the positive impact felt by all groups who are able to get married with more people

⁴⁵ [Why have Black and South Asian people been hit hardest by COVID-19? - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/marriagecohabitationandcivilpartnerships/bulletins/marriagesinenglandandwalesprovisional/2017)

⁴⁶ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/marriagecohabitationandcivilpartnerships/bulletins/marriagesinenglandandwalesprovisional/2017>

attending will benefit a larger number of people who have civil ceremonies. However, this will also include a positive impact on some religious groups, as certain religious ceremonies are not legally binding. Increasing the attendance limit from 15 to 30 will have a positive impact on communities which require a minimum number of attendees for the ceremony to be valid, such as Orthodox Jewish communities.

144. In addition, allowing up to 30 attendees for other significant life events (e.g., christenings, bar mitzvahs) will also benefit religious groups by allowing such events to take place and to enable others to share these moments with friends and family as part of their religion and culture.

145. A funeral commemorative event (FCE), such as a wake, is a meeting primarily for the purpose of gathering socially with friends and family to celebrate the life of the person who has died. Funeral commemorative events are particularly important for Islam, as 'after the body is buried, all guests usually stay for the entire day, family members must stay for the whole week, and during this time family members socialise, in which the socialising helps to ease suffering'.⁴⁷ The limit on attendance at FCEs will be increased from 15 to 30. This will have a positive impact on all religious and belief communities and on their mental health by allowing more people to participate in the grieving process and to support mourners.

146. The easing of social contact restrictions to allow up to 6/2 households to meet indoors will have a positive impact on all religious communities who will be able to celebrate festivals indoors (i.e., in private homes) with small groups of friends and family. Letting certain larger indoor gatherings to take place with the cooperation of Local Authorities may allow religious communities to organise larger festive celebrations.

147. The further easing of social gathering restrictions will have a largely positive impact on the protected characteristic of religion or belief, as it will allow for greater communal participation in festivals and religious events.

Step 4 Policy

148. Step 4 will be legislated for at a later date. However, the Government's Roadmap indicates that the following policies will form part of Step 4 (subject to the outcomes of the four reviews):

- The Government aims to remove all legal limits on social contact and to reopen the remaining premises and ease restrictions on large events and performances that apply in Step 3. This will be subject to the results of a scientific Events Research Programme to test the outcome of certain pilot

⁴⁷ [Islamic Funeral Customs and Service Rituals: What you need to know. \(funeralwise.com\)](https://www.funeralwise.com)

events through Spring and Summer, where trials of testing and other techniques will take place to reduce the risk of infection.

- The same Events Research Programme will guide decisions on whether all limits can be removed on weddings and other life events.
- Large events will also be reviewed by the Opening up Taskforce.
- Subject to internal Social Distancing reviews and Baseline Non-Pharmaceutical Intervention reviews, measures such as Work from Home will be also assessed, along with international travel which will be subject to the Global Travel Taskforce review (which will be reviewed in Step 3 also).

Conclusion

149. The gradual easing of social contact and gatherings restrictions will have positive impacts on all protected characteristics, as it will facilitate greater social contact that positively impacts on mental health and wellbeing. This is particularly important for those groups who have been negatively impacted by the lockdown through increased isolation and loneliness, such as older people and disabled people.

150. The gradual reopening of the economy will also have a largely positive impact on all groups, both on account of those groups who benefit financially and mentally from working in reopened sectors, and those who benefit from accessing a greater range of shops and services, which can have a knock-on effect on mental wellbeing.

151. There is, however, an increasing risk of transmission as the steps progress and restrictions are progressively lifted. While everyone is at risk of transmission, certain protected characteristics are likely to be disproportionately impacted on account of being at greater risk of hospitalisation and morbidity. We have identified that there are four groups at risk of being disproportionately impacted by increased transmission:

- age – older people are most at risk of serious illness and death from Coronavirus;
- disability – disabled people are more at risk of complications from Covid owing to the range complex vulnerabilities associated with disabilities;
- sex – men are more likely to die from Coronavirus than women; and
- race – coronavirus death rates for most ethnic minorities are higher compared to white ethnicities.

152. The Government's vaccine programme continues to rollout swiftly and successfully while the country gradually reopens. Older people and disabled

people have been prioritised as part of the vaccine programme, and there is evidence that the vaccine has already started to have a marked impact on reducing hospital admissions. As all adults over the age of 18 are expected to have been offered a vaccine by July, it is anticipated that the vaccination programme will continue to have a significant impact on reducing complications arising from coronavirus and transmission rates.

153. The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation has urged some groups who are at higher risk of needing hospital treatment from Covid to take up the offer of vaccination promptly, including men and those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities. In addition, the Government has been rolling out a targeted communications campaign in order to combat the misinformation surrounding vaccines and to increase the vaccine take-up of ethnic minorities.

154. In addition, Covid-secure measures remain in place at venues and businesses in order to mitigate the risk of transmission, and the Government continues to keep these under review in order to consider whether further mitigation is needed.

155. The Government has made a commitment only to progress through the steps set out in the Regulations should the epidemiological data indicate that it is safe to do so and that the four tests are met before progressing. The four tests that determine the movement between steps and easing of measures and restrictions are based on: the vaccine deployment programme continuing successfully; evidence showing vaccines are sufficiently effective in reducing hospitalisations and deaths in those vaccinated; infection rates not risking a surge in hospitalisations which would put unsustainable pressure on the NHS and; that government assessment of the risks is not fundamentally changed by new Variants of Concern. In order to inform the pace and sequencing of movement through the steps, the government will be taking scientific advice from SAGE. This is to ensure that the reopening of the country is sustainable and transmission rates remain under control to ensure the safety of individuals. The Government is undertaking four reviews in order to inform progression through the steps in the Regulations.

156. Although the Government anticipates that the Regulations represent an irreversible reopening of the country, should there be a significant increase in transmission rates, there are a number of contingency plans that the Government can pursue, which may include:

- Regional de-escalation (leaving some areas with higher transmission rates at a lower Step);
- Re-escalation into a lower step (increasing social contact, social gathering and business restrictions);
- Reintroducing a national lockdown;

- Introducing regional lockdowns;
- Regional action to contain localised outbreaks.

157. The Regulations include the obligation to review the regulations every 35 days. The review will include an assessment of the national data to decide whether the country can move into the next step. The Government will keep the epidemiological data under review more frequently, which will ensure that any contingency action that needs to be taken can be taken swiftly to prevent significant spread of the virus and the concomitant negative health impacts on society.

For the record

Name of person who carried out this assessment: Name Redacted

Date assessment completed:20.03.2021

Name of responsible Deputy Director: Sarah Harriss