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# Covid in Scotland: Hugs and indoor socialising as rules ease

🕒 17 May 2021 · 💬 Comments

## Coronavirus



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| Pubs in Edinburgh are able to serve alcohol indoors

**All mainland council areas in Scotland - with the exception of Glasgow and Moray - have moved from level three to level two Covid restrictions.**

The easing allows limited numbers of people to socialise indoors and lets pubs and restaurants serve alcohol inside until 22:30.

Cinemas, theatres, concert halls, music venues, comedy clubs and bingo halls can all open with restrictions.

Most islands have moved straight to level one.

The requirement for social distancing during meetings indoors or in private gardens has also been dropped in levels one and two.

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- [What level will you be in from 17 May?](#)
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It means hugs between loved ones are now permitted - but First Minister Nicola Sturgeon has said it is "vital to be cautious".

Limits on foreign travel have also eased slightly, with the introduction of a traffic light system.

Deputy First Minister John Swinney told [BBC Radio's Good Morning Scotland](#) said there were grounds for optimism but the rising infection rates in areas like Glasgow showed that any progress is "fragile".

People should tread "carefully and cautiously and warily" as restrictions are relaxed, he said.

"As we enjoy some of the restrictions we now have, we have to treat them with a great deal of care."

## What does level two allow people to do?



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- People can meet socially in private homes in groups of up to six adults from three households
- A maximum of eight people from up to eight households can socialise outside
- Restaurants, cafés, pubs and bars can open indoors and serve alcohol until 22:30 with two-hour pre-booked slots
- Cinemas, theatres, concert halls, music venues, comedy clubs and bingo halls can open with restrictions, as can outdoor performing arts activities
- However, soft play, funfairs, nightclubs and adult entertainment must remain closed

## 'People were looking forward to having a pint'





Paul Russell, owner of the Bank Bar in Dundee city centre, said he felt "some trepidation" ahead of reopening - although his customers have other thoughts.

"You can safely say most of them were looking forward to getting back, having a pint," Paul said.

"More people want to get out and speak to people and have that engagement again.

"If you can provide a safe environment for people to come in, there shouldn't be any problems."

He said that providing a takeaway food service during lockdown had kept the pub in touch with its regulars.

"It's been very, very difficult," he said. "We are a bit of a community pub, we do a lot of fundraising for charity.

"I think a lot of people missed that when we opened three weeks ago. When you came in you had to have a meal with a soft drink, rather than an alcoholic drink.

"Even when people went outside to drink alcohol and it rained, it was quite a difficult situation to be in."

# 'People can get their banter going again'



Damien McLaughlin, a supermarket security guard, was enjoying a pint on his day off in the Bank Bar.

He said the social aspect of people being allowed to drink indoors in pubs again was "massive."

He said: "Not just doing a Zoom chat or a video chat, people can just sit and catch up and get their banter going again.

"They're more comfortable socialising because they've been inside so long."

Damien thought people might feel "a bit awkward" returning to the pub, but that would be short-lived.

"People slip back into it quite easily," he said.

"They'll have a laugh, maybe take the mickey out of each other.

"That makes everybody feel a lot more friendly, takes away the anxiety that people were feeling."

## 'Another step back to normality'





Stuart McPhee, director of Siberia Bar in Aberdeen, said that being able to serve alcohol indoors again was "another step back towards normality.

"We have a healthy booking pipeline. People are keen to get back indoors and enjoy socialising again and we are looking forward to it."

He said the outdoor opening had been "really encouraging. People are not scared to get out and about".

There are still restrictions on opening times, and the bar has Covid safety measures in place.

He said: "We have everybody doing a mandatory track and trace at the front door and we have to display a capacity notice and we have a curfew time of 22:30.

"Those times are quite restrictive and the sooner we can get back to normal the better things will be for us in terms of viability."

## 'There's a definite buzz'



The isle of Raasay is among the islands which have moved down to level one - although its larger neighbour, Skye, is still in level two because of its road bridge link to the mainland.

"There is a definite buzz and feeling of expectation," says Alasdair Day, of Raasay Distillery.

Alasdair says: "Monday is the first time since the end of March last year we have been able to open our accommodation.

"We've been busy making sure the painting and decorating, cleaning and staffing is already."

The increase in activity following lockdown will see the workforce grow from 20 to almost 30.

**'It's a delight to be back together'**





PA MEDIA

The National Youth Choir of Scotland was last allowed to meet and perform together in March last year.

But the move to level two restrictions means that up to 30 people are again able to meet outside to sing.

The choir's founder and artistic director, Christopher Bell, was joined by 29 singers on Calton Hill in Edinburgh at 06:00 so they could be the first to sing in Scotland this year.



| Covid in Scotland: Choir perform together for first time in 14 months



He said the last 14 months had been "incredibly hard" - and that it was "a huge relief and delight to be back together making music".

Singer Mollie Quigley said: "On Zoom it doesn't feel like you're singing together, it feels isolated. This morning has been wonderful hearing everyone together again."

## 'Surprising but welcome'



Roy Macphail runs a soft play as part of his Adventure Island children's activities centre in Stornoway, Lewis, in the Western Isles.

But Roy says the "surprising but welcome" announcement that the islands would be moving to level one did not give him enough time to open the soft play area on Monday.

"The soft play has been closed since March last year. The announcement was surprising as we hadn't expected to move to tier one at this stage, but it's great to see things moving in the right direction," he said.

He now hopes to reopen the soft play early next month.

"There's a huge amount required to get the facility operational again after being closed for so long and to ensure we meet with government guidelines to provide a safe and fun environment for our customers and staff."

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