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News story

Rule of six comes into effect to tackle coronavirus

Rule applies across indoor and outdoor settings, with police able to disperse gatherings of over six people and fine individuals involved.

From:

[Home Office \(/government/organisations/home-office\)](/government/organisations/home-office) and [The Rt Hon Priti Patel MP \(/government/people/priti-patel\)](/government/people/priti-patel)

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New laws prohibiting social gatherings of more than six people come into effect today (Monday 14 September) as the Government calls on the public to remain vigilant in the fight against coronavirus.

The new “rule of six” simplifies and strengthens the rules on social gatherings, making them easier to understand and easier for the police to enforce.

It means that – apart from a set of limited exemptions including work and education – any social gatherings of more than six people will be against the law.

Police will be able to disperse any such gatherings and fine individuals involved £100, doubling up to a maximum of £3,200.

Home Secretary Priti Patel held a call with Chief Constables to support police enforcement of the law.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

“ Across the country, we have all made enormous sacrifices in the fight against coronavirus. However, the recent rise in cases makes it clear that more needs to be done to stop the spread of this disease.

“ From Monday new laws will enable the police to fine anyone in breach of the rule of six. As we continue to fight this virus, I urge the public not participate in social gatherings of more than six people in any setting, indoors or outdoors.”

The rule of six will be enforceable in law from Monday.

The change follows a rapid increase in the number of daily positive cases. The Government, Chief Medical Officer and Chief Scientific Advisor all agreed that urgent action was necessary to stop the virus spreading and continue to protect the NHS.

The rule applies across England and replaces the existing ban on participating in gatherings of more than 30 and the current guidance on allowing two households to meet indoors.

Now the only rule that people need to remember is to not participate in social gatherings of more than six people in any setting, indoors or outdoors.

It remains the case that organisers and facilitators of larger gatherings of more than 30 people – such as unlicensed music events – can be subject to fines of up to £10,000.

The Prime Minister has spoken to police forces about enforcement and the new lower limit will make it easier for police to identify illegal gatherings.

Police have continued to step up patrols in recent weeks and have cracked down on illegal gatherings during the pandemic. Deployments in some areas of concern – such as Leicester and Greater Manchester – have been larger than on New Year’s Eve.

The police will continue their tried and tested approach of engaging with the public, explaining the rules, encouraging gatherings to disperse, but will be empowered to enforce the rules and issue fines where needed.

Exemptions include cases where a single household or support bubble is larger than six people. The rule also does not apply to gatherings for work or education purposes, and to other gatherings including weddings, funerals, and team sports organised in a COVID-19 secure way.

Venues following COVID-19 secure guidelines – such as places of worship, gyms, restaurants and other hospitality venues – can still hold more than six people in total. But within those venues, there must not be individual groups larger than six, and groups must not mix socially or form larger groups.

The rule will be kept under constant review and will only remain in place as long as is necessary.

The most important thing everyone can do is remember the basics: Hands. Face. Space.

Everyone should continue to follow guidance on:

- Washing your hands regularly and for 20 seconds
- Wearing a face covering in settings where it is required and where it is difficult to maintain social distancing
- Staying 2 metres apart from people you do not live with or 1 metre with extra precautions, such as a face covering

[View the full list of exemptions \(https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-meeting-with-others-safely-social-distancing/coronavirus-covid-19-meeting-with-others-safely-social-distancing\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-meeting-with-others-safely-social-distancing/coronavirus-covid-19-meeting-with-others-safely-social-distancing).

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