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Covid in Scotland: Sturgeon to draw up 'three-tier' lockdown system

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Coronavirus



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Bars and restaurants in Scotland's central belt have had to close under new restrictions

The Scottish government will implement a three-tier framework of Covid restrictions later in October, similar to that being introduced in England.

First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said her devolved administration was aiming to "align as closely as possible with other UK nations" on a strategic level.

New measures were imposed chiefly in Scotland's central belt at the weekend.

However, Ms Sturgeon said these "reset" restrictions were "temporary" and would be replaced with a multi-tier system.

This will feature different levels of measures which could be introduced either across the country or in specific health board areas, depending on where outbreaks of coronavirus are detected.

The first minister stressed that tighter restrictions than are currently in place were not "inevitable".

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New lockdown rules for England were announced by Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Monday, with a "three-tier" system that classifies different areas as being on "medium", "high" or "very high" alert.

Mr Johnson held talks with the leaders of the devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland on Monday morning, saying that governments were "working closely" together to tackle the virus.

Scotland's first minister said she would be carefully examining the English system before drawing up her own.

Ms Sturgeon said: "We intend to develop our own tiering framework and bring that to parliament after the October recess, and that will coincide with the ending of the temporary restrictions.

"At a strategic level we will be looking to align as closely as possible with other UK nations - although I would stress that decisions will be taken at a devolved level."



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| Nicola Sturgeon said the new plan would be put to a vote of MSPs after Holyrood's October recess

Pubs and restaurants in Scotland's **central belt were closed on Friday** as part of a package of short-term measures designed to arrest a sharp rise in coronavirus cases.

Ms Sturgeon said these tougher restrictions probably represent "what will be roughly tier three", while the rest of the country was currently "more in tier two, where there are household restrictions" and lighter curbs on hospitality.

She said there could be "different levels within that" which would "give people greater clarity about the levels of intervention that will be required".

Details will be set out in the coming weeks, before MSPs debate and vote on the proposals when Holyrood resumes business in the week of 26 October.

'Really tough' rules

Ms Sturgeon said her government was also using the two weeks of increased restrictions to "strengthen compliance" with other government rules and guidelines, amid concerns that many are not self-isolating when asked to.

She said the "early anecdotal evidence" from police was that compliance with the new rules had been "good" over the weekend.

The politician added that she was aware the new rules were "really tough for everyone" and hospitality businesses in particular, but said "they are vital for helping to stem the increase in new cases and bring it back under control".



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Bar owners in affected areas have protested that the restrictions could kill off the hospitality industry

A further 961 Covid cases were registered in Scotland on Monday, with 17% of first-time tests coming back positive.

The number of people in hospital with the virus rose by 38 to 487, with 36 people being treated in intensive care.

However, the first minister said she did not think it was unavoidable that tougher measures would be introduced as the country moves deeper into winter, saying: "In a pandemic nothing can be ruled out, but I emphatically don't think that is inevitable".

She said the two week "reset" had not been "overtaken" by the virus, saying the government still intends to lift them before the end of October.

Scottish Conservative leader Douglas Ross has called on the Scottish government to do more to support firms hit by lockdown restrictions, saying that "we don't have to choose between backing business and protecting public health - we need to do both".

The MP called for a minimum of a week's notice to be given for any further changes to lockdown rules, saying that "it's unfair to force businesses to shut on a few days' notice".

Asked about this at her daily briefing, Ms Sturgeon said she agreed in principle that firms should be consulted about measures, but that "the virus doesn't stop spreading while we give people notice of changes".

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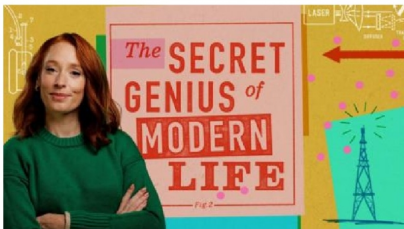


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