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# Coronavirus: Maximum size of gatherings in Scotland cut to six

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| Scotland sets 'rule of six' for people meeting up

## **The number of people allowed to meet up in Scotland has been cut to six amid concerns about the coronavirus pandemic "accelerating".**

It came as First Minister Nicola Sturgeon announced a "tightening and extension" of lockdown rules.

Changes planned for next week have been put back until at least 5 October.

It means that theatres, live music venues, indoor soft play facilities and indoor contact sports will not now open next Monday.

Until now, eight people from three households had been allowed to meet indoors in Scotland, and up to 15 from five households outdoors.

This will change to six people from two households, and will apply both indoors and outdoors - including in homes, gardens, pubs and restaurants.

Children under the age of 12 will not count towards the total, however.

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The changes also mean spectators will not be able to return to sports stadia and other venues over the next three weeks - although two pilot events due take place at the weekend will still happen.

Scotland is currently recording three times more positive cases of the virus on average each day than it was three weeks ago - with a further 161 cases being logged on Thursday.

Ms Sturgeon said the spread of the virus was accelerating - albeit from a low base and not as rapidly as it was back in March and April.

She said this was "not entirely unexpected" given the recent steps to reopen the economy - but that further planned moves to lift lockdown had to be put on pause for now.

The first minister said: "Right now, given the rise in cases, it's the only responsible decision we can reach."



Ms Sturgeon also said the reopening of offices and call centres will "definitely not take place" before October, saying that "for now, working from home will remain the default position".

The move to cut the number of people who can meet follows **a similar move announced for England** on Wednesday.

There will be "limited exceptions" to the rules for organised sports, places of worship and wedding and funeral services - which will be capped at 20 guests.

The new limits will officially come into force on Monday, although Ms Sturgeon said that she was asking people to immediately abide by the stricter new limits on gatherings.



Scotland's music industry has warned many venues may not survive the coronavirus lockdown

It will also become mandatory for staff working in hospitality premises such as pubs and restaurants to wear face coverings, and for customers to wear them while moving around.

Ms Sturgeon admitted the new announcements would be "hard for people to hear", but said they were necessary.

She said the rise in new cases was "not as rapid as it was earlier in the year" and that prevalence of the virus was lower "thanks to the individual sacrifices that so many of you have made for the greater good".

She said: "We have grounds for cautious hope, but we have no grounds for complacency. It is vital to do everything we can to stop cases rising further before winter.

"These steps are necessary to help curb a virus that we know spreads rapidly whenever it gets the chance."

She insisted that the Test and Protect contact tracing system was "working well", adding that without this "the virus would be spreading further and faster, and we would require to apply much stricter lockdown measures again".

The Scottish Conservatives asked the government to consider moving more towards a strategy of mass community testing to complement Test and Protect.

The party's Holyrood leader, Ruth Davidson, said: "Experts have said that mass community testing must also be part of the solution, if we are going to succeed in keeping the virus suppressed through the winter.

"I would also urge the government to continue their work with Scotland's airports on a testing regime.

"The aviation sector needs all the help it can get, and stopping the virus will only be possible if we reach everyone coming into the country who may need to quarantine."

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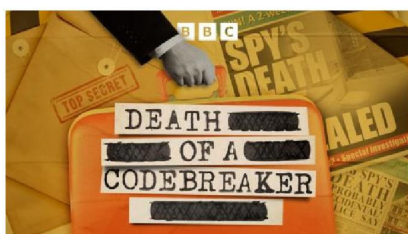
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