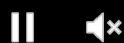


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Dominic Raab wrong to claim individuals can meet two people from another household at same time, government admits

'They can see both parents – but not at the same time,' *The Independent* is told – in embarrassing U-turn

Rob Merrick Deputy Political Editor • Monday 11 May 2020 10:25 BST • 0 Comments



Dominic Raab says people can meet up with their parents in a park



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People will only be allowed to meet one of their parents after the **lockdown** is eased, the government has said in an embarrassing U-turn.

Moments after **Dominic Raab** suggested that it would be possible to meet two people from another household in some circumstances – provided it was in a park, at two metres apart – the public was told that that advice was wrong.

The U-turn comes amid other confusion over the date **when staff will be urged to go back to work if they can, and whether some pubs could reopen** from July.

On Sunday, Downing Street provoked fears of people being forced to “pick a parent”, if the relaxation of the lockdown, from Wednesday, allowed them to meet only one other person from another household.

Mr Raab, when asked whether someone could meet up with both their parents in a park, told BBC Radio 4: “Well, you could if there’s two metres apart.”

However, a government source quickly withdrew the statement, telling *The Independent*: “They can see both parents but not at the same time – they would have to see them individually.”

The episode is certain to increase criticism that **Boris Johnson**, in his determination **to make a prime-time TV address before full details were published**, further muddled the government’s message.

At one point, Mr Raab said ministers recognised that “people want to get outdoors” – even as Scotland and Wales insist on retaining their “stay home” message.

“If you’re out in the park and you’re two metres apart, we’re saying now – and use some common sense and you socially distance – you can meet up with other people,” the foreign secretary said.

“The key thing is people want to get outdoors, particularly with this weather, particularly I think for mental health and, frankly, the frustration people feel if they’re cooped up for too long, for protracted periods.”

Mr Raab also sparked further confusion about the controversial instruction for staff to return to work from today if possible – saying it would now come in on Wednesday.

He referred only to people “in construction and manufacturing” returning to work, with guidance on creating secure workplaces not to be published until Tuesday.

One of the biggest overnight criticisms of the prime minister’s TV address was that it gave some workers only 12 hours to prepare for an apparent resumption, with public transport largely shut down.

Labour continued to attack the chaotic messages being sent out to worried

be able to work in safety.

“People shouldn’t be in the uncertain position that they are today. Certainty helps workers; it helps employers. And that’s what the government should actually be providing.”

Mr Raab ducked repeated questions about whether workers had the right to walk out if they believed they were in unsafe conditions, saying: “It’s very difficult to answer that.”

On Sunday, the prime minister said: “We now need to stress that anyone who can’t work from home, for instance those in construction or manufacturing, should be actively encouraged to go to work.”

However, the government is now downplaying any significant change, saying the workers affected can already go to work under existing rules.

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