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Guidance

Local COVID Alert level: High

Find out what restrictions are in place if you live in an area where the Local COVID Alert level is High.

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From:

Department of Health and Social Care (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-of-health-and-social-care>)

Applies to:

England

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Check the list of local COVID alert levels to see what level applies in your area.
(<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/full-list-of-local-covid-alert-levels-by-area>)

In all areas of England, you should remember 'Hands. Face. Space':

- HANDS – wash your hands regularly and for 20 seconds

- FACE – wear a face covering (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own>) in indoor settings where social distancing may be difficult, and where you will come into contact with people you do not normally meet
- SPACE – stay 2 metres apart from people you do not live with where possible, or 1 metre with extra precautions in place (such as wearing face coverings or increasing ventilation indoors)

This guidance is for the general public who are fit and well. There is separate guidance for:

- households with a possible or confirmed coronavirus infection
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>)
- people who are clinically extremely vulnerable to coronavirus
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>)

Meeting family and friends

You must not meet socially with friends and family indoors in any setting unless you live with them or have formed a support bubble (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/making-a-support-bubble-with-another-household>) with them. This includes private homes, and any other indoor venues such as pubs and restaurants.

A support bubble (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/making-a-support-bubble-with-another-household>) is where a household with one adult joins with another household. Households in that support bubble can still visit each other, stay overnight, and visit public places together.

Informal childcare can also be provided via childcare bubbles. Find out more about childcare bubbles in the 'Childcare' section below.

You may continue to see friends and family you do not live with (or have not formed a support bubble with) outside, including in a garden or other outdoor space. When you do so, you must not meet in a group of more than 6. This limit of 6 includes children of any age.

Meeting in larger groups is against the law (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2020/684>) - with certain exceptions (see below). The police can take action against you if you meet in larger groups. This includes breaking up illegal gatherings and issuing fines (fixed penalty notices).

You can be fined £200 for the first offence, doubling for further offences up to a maximum of £6,400. If you hold, or are involved in holding, an illegal gathering (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing-after-4-july#meeting-family-and-friends>) of over 30 people, the police can issue fines of £10,000.

If you live in a High alert level area you also cannot meet indoors with people outside of the area, unless exceptions apply.

When meeting friends and family you should:

- follow social distancing rules (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-meeting-with-others-safely-social-distancing/coronavirus-covid-19-meeting-with-others-safely-social-distancing>)

- *limit* how many different people you see socially over a short period of time

There are exceptions where people from different households can gather beyond the limits set out above. These exceptions are:

- in a legally permitted support bubble (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/making-a-support-bubble-with-another-household>)
- in a legally permitted childcare bubble (see section on childcare below for more details)
- for work, volunteering to provide voluntary or charitable services (see guidance on working safely in other people's homes (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/homes>))
- for registered childcare, education or training
- for arrangements where children do not live in the same household as both their parents or guardians
- for prospective adopting parents to meet a child or children who may be placed with them
- for supervised activities provided for children, including wraparound care (before and after school childcare), youth groups and activities, and children's playgroups
- for birth partners
- to see someone who is dying
- to provide emergency assistance, and to avoid injury or illness, or to escape a risk of harm
- to fulfil a legal obligation, such as attending court or jury service
- to provide care or assistance to someone vulnerable
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-providing-unpaid-care/guidance-for-those-who-provide-unpaid-care-to-friends-or-family>)
- to facilitate a house move
- for a wedding or equivalent ceremony and wedding receptions where the organiser has carried out a risk assessment and taken all reasonable measures to limit the risk of transmission of the virus – up to a maximum of 15 people (not to take place in private dwellings)
- for funerals – up to a maximum of 30 people. Wakes and other commemorative events are permitted with up to 15 people present (not to take place in private dwellings)
- for elite sportspeople and their coaches if necessary for competition and training, as well as parents or guardians if they are a child
- for outdoor exercise and dance classes, organised outdoor sport, and licensed outdoor physical activity
- indoor organised team sports for disabled people, and youth sport
- support groups of up to 15 participants – formally organised groups to provide mutual aid, therapy or any other form of support (not to take place in private dwellings)
- protests – if organised in compliance with COVID-secure guidance
(<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>)

Other activities, such as indoor exercise classes and other activity groups can only continue provided that households or support bubbles do not mix. Where it is likely that groups will mix, these activities must not go ahead.

Where a group includes someone covered by an exception (for example, someone who is working), they are not generally counted as part of the gatherings limit. This means, for example, a tradesperson can go into a household without breaching the limit, if they are there for work.

Visiting other venues, including shops, restaurants, pubs and places of worship

venues following COVID-19 secure guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>) can host more people in total, but no one must mix indoors with anyone who they do not live with (or have formed a support bubble with) unless exemptions apply. Outdoors, you can meet in groups of up to 6 people.

This includes in:

- pubs and restaurants
- shops
- leisure and entertainment venues
- places of worship

At least one person in your group should give their contact details to the venue or check in using the official NHS COVID-19 app so NHS Test and Trace (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/nhs-test-and-trace-how-it-works>) can contact you if needed.

Protecting people more at risk from coronavirus

If you have any of the following health conditions, you may be clinically vulnerable, meaning you could be at higher risk of severe illness from coronavirus. If you are clinically vulnerable you:

- can go outside as much as you like but you should still try to keep your overall social interactions low
- can visit businesses, such as supermarkets, pubs and shops, whilst keeping 2 metres away from others wherever possible or 1 metre plus other precautions
- should continue to wash your hands carefully and more frequently than usual and maintain thorough cleaning of frequently touched areas in your home and/or workspace

Clinically vulnerable people are those who are:

- aged 70 or older (regardless of medical conditions)
- under 70 with an underlying health condition listed below (that is, anyone instructed to get a flu jab each year on medical grounds):
 - chronic (long-term) mild to moderate respiratory diseases, such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), emphysema or bronchitis
 - chronic heart disease, such as heart failure
 - chronic kidney disease
 - chronic liver disease, such as hepatitis
 - chronic neurological conditions, such as Parkinson's disease, motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis (MS), or cerebral palsy
 - diabetes
 - a weakened immune system as the result of certain conditions or medicines they are taking (such as steroid tablets)
 - being seriously overweight (a body mass index (BMI) of 40 or above)
- pregnant women

There is a further group of people who are defined, also on medical grounds, as clinically extremely vulnerable to coronavirus – that is, people with specific serious health conditions. At each local COVID alert level, there is additional advice that clinically extremely vulnerable people must follow (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>).

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-covid-alert-level-high#childcare>

Business and venues

All businesses and venues should follow COVID-19 Secure guidelines

(<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>) to protect customers, visitors and workers.

Restrictions on businesses and venues in High alert level areas include:

- certain businesses selling food or drink on their premises are required to close between 10pm and 5am. Businesses and venues selling food for consumption off the premises, can continue to do so after 10pm as long as this is through delivery service, click-and-collect or drive-through. Orders must be made via phone, online or by post. Hospitality venues in ports, on transport services and in motorway service areas do not need to close at 10pm, but must not serve alcohol after that time. There is full guidance on what businesses are permitted to remain open (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/further-businesses-and-premises-to-close/closing-certain-businesses-and-venues-in-england>)
- businesses must ensure that they operate in a COVID-19 Secure manner, including restrictions on table service and group bookings
- certain businesses and venues are required to collect customer, visitor, and staff data to support NHS Test and Trace
- the wearing of face coverings for customers and staff in certain indoor settings (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own>)
- businesses must ensure that if their workers are required to self-isolate, they do not work outside their designated place of self-isolation
- businesses and venues must ensure people do not meet in their premises with people from outside of their household or support bubble
- businesses and venues that fail to comply with these restrictions may face fines of up to £10,000, prosecution, or in some cases closure.

See full guidance on which businesses and venues are permitted to be open where the local COVID alert level is High. (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/further-businesses-and-premises-to-close/closing-certain-businesses-and-venues-in-england>)

Going to work

To help contain the virus, office workers who can work effectively from home should do so over the winter. Where an employer, in consultation with their employee, judges an employee can carry out their normal duties from home they should do so.

Public sector employees working in essential services, including education settings, should continue to go into work where necessary.

Anyone else who cannot work from home should go to their place of work.

The risk of transmission can be substantially reduced if COVID-19 Secure guidelines (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>) are followed closely. Extra consideration should be given to those people at higher risk.

Those classed as clinically extremely vulnerable (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>) can go to work as long as the workplace is COVID-19 Secure, but should carry on working from home wherever possible.

There is no limit to the group size when you are meeting or gathering for work purposes, but workplaces should be set up to meet the COVID-19 Secure guidelines.

For more information, follow the guidance on how to return to work safely (<https://www.gov.uk/check-how-to-return-to-work-safely>).

Going to school, college and university

The government has prioritised ensuring all children can attend school safely, to support their wellbeing and education and help working parents and guardians.

You can find out more about the government's approach to education (<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus/education-and-childcare>) and how schools have prepared. This is applicable in all the local COVID Alert Levels.

Universities have welcomed students back and we have published guidance advising universities on reopening (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-reopening-buildings-and-campuses/higher-education-reopening-buildings-and-campuses>) to ensure they have safety measures in place to minimise the spread of the virus.

You can move home and travel to go to university but there are some stricter rules in place for areas in high alert level areas:

You must not move backward and forward between your permanent home and term time address during term time – subject to limited exemptions set out in law.

Students living at their university term time address in a High alert level area should follow the same guidance on meeting other people and travel as others in that area.

Commuter students (those who live at a family home and travel to/from university each day) should be able to continue to travel to/from their university as required, this being for education purposes. If you commute into a High alert level area to go to university you must not:

- meet people you do not live with in their home inside the area, unless they're in your household, childcare or support bubble
- host people you do not live with in your home, if they live in the affected area, unless they're in your childcare or support bubble
- meet people you do not live with in their student halls, whether inside or outside of the area, unless they're in your childcare or support bubble

If you move out of, or currently live outside of, an affected area you should not:

- host people you do not live with in your home or student halls if they live in a High alert level area (unless they're in your household, support bubble or childcare bubble)

Childcare

There are exceptions from legal gatherings limits for registered childcare, education or training, and supervised activities provided for children, including wraparound care, youth groups and activities, and children's playgroups. This means you can continue to use early years and childcare settings, including childminders, after-school clubs and nannies. See guidance on working safely in other people's homes (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/homes>).

The following people can provide childcare support in private homes and gardens:

- registered childcare providers, including nannies
- people in your support bubble
- people in your childcare bubble

A childcare bubble is where someone in one household provides informal (unpaid and unregistered) childcare to a child aged 13 or under in another household. For any given childcare bubble, this must always be between the same 2 households.

Friends or family who do not live with you and are not part of a support or childcare bubble must not visit your home to help with childcare. Childcare bubbles are to be used to provide childcare only, and not for the purposes of different households mixing where they are otherwise not allowed to do so.

The tiers of restriction for education and childcare, summarised in annex 3 of the contain framework (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/containing-and-managing-local-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreaks/covid-19-contain-framework-a-guide-for-local-decision-makers#annex-3-tiers-of-national-restriction>) and in guidance on higher education (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-reopening-buildings-and-campuses/higher-education-reopening-buildings-and-campuses#infection-control>), are separate to the local COVID alert level framework. Decisions on any restrictions necessary in education or childcare settings are taken separately on a case-by-case basis in the light of local circumstances, including information about the incidence and transmission of COVID-19.

Visiting relatives in care homes

You should not visit a care home except in exceptional circumstances, for example to visit an individual who is at the end of their life. See the guidance on visiting relatives in care homes (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/visiting-care-homes-during-coronavirus/update-on-policies-for-visiting-arrangements-in-care-homes>).

Travel

You may continue to travel to venues or amenities which are open, for work, voluntary, charitable or youth services, or to access education, within a High alert level area, but you should and aim to reduce the number of journeys you make where possible. If you need to travel we encourage you to walk or cycle where possible, or to plan ahead and avoid busy times and routes on public transport. This will allow you to practise social distancing while you travel.

If you need to use public transport, you should follow the safer travel guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-travel-guidance-for-passengers>).

It is difficult to socially distance during car journeys and transmission of coronavirus can occur in this context. So you should avoid travelling with someone from outside your household or your support bubble (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/making-a-support-bubble-with-another-household>) unless you can practise social distancing. See the guidance on car sharing (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-travel-guidance-for-passengers#private-cars-and-other-vehicles>).

You can still travel within High alert level areas to hotels and other guest accommodation, but you should only do this with people in your household or support bubble.

You can still go on holiday outside of High alert level areas, but you must only do this with people in your household or support bubble.

When travelling, it is important that you respect the rules in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and do not travel to different parts of the UK where their intended activities there would be prohibited by legislation passed by the relevant devolved administration. You should also avoid travelling to any

part of the country subject to higher local COVID alert levels.

There is guidance on what to do if you've booked holiday accommodation in a local restriction area (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/guidance-on-holidays-in-areas-with-local-coronavirus-covid-19-restrictions>).

Weddings, civil partnerships, religious services and funeral

You can attend places of worship for a service if you're in a High alert level area. However, you must not mingle with anyone outside of your household or support bubble. You should follow the national guidance on the safe use of places of worship (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-during-the-pandemic-from-4-july/special-religious-services-and-gatherings-covid-19-checklist>).

Wedding and civil partnership ceremonies and receptions must only take place in COVID-19 Secure venues or in public outdoor spaces unless in exceptional circumstances. Weddings, civil partnership ceremonies and wedding receptions are restricted to 15 people. Receptions should be sit down meals to ensure people can keep their distance from each other, and mustn't take place in private dwellings.

Funerals must only take place in COVID-secure venues or in public outdoor spaces with up to 30 people in attendance. Wakes or linked ceremonial events (such as stone-settings) before or after the funeral are limited to 15 people and must not take place in private homes. Where food or drink is consumed, this should be in the form of a sit down meal.

Anyone working at a wedding, civil partnership ceremony, reception, wake or funeral is not generally counted as part of the limit. Within these larger gatherings, people do not need to limit their interaction to groups of 6 or their own household, but social distancing should still be followed between people who do not live together or share a support bubble.

People living outside of a high alert level area can travel to this area to attend an event, but they must not meet with another household indoors.

Read the guidance on small marriages and civil partnerships (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-small-marriages-and-civil-partnerships/covid-19-guidance-for-small-marriages-and-civil-partnerships#key-principles-for-planning-covid-19-secure-marriages-and-civil-partnerships>) and managing a funeral during the coronavirus pandemic (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-a-funeral-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-a-funeral-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic>).

Sport and physical activity

In line with guidelines (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-phased-return-of-sport-and-recreation/guidance-for-the-public-on-the-phased-return-of-outdoor-sport-and-recreation#organising-outdoor-sport-and-physical-activity-events>) from national sporting bodies, you can take part in sport and physical activity outdoors.

Organised indoor exercise classes are only permitted if it is possible for people to avoid mixing in with people you do not live with or share a support bubble with). There are exceptions to enable disability and youth sport and physical activity indoors, in any number.

You should follow the guidance on:

- the return of recreational team sport (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-phased-return-of-sport-and-recreation/return-to-recreational-team-sport-framework>)

- the return of outdoor sport and recreation in England (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-phased-return-of-sport-and-recreation/return-to-recreational-team-sport-framework>)
- the return of outdoor sport and recreation in England (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-phased-return-of-sport-and-recreation/guidance-for-the-public-on-the-phased-return-of-outdoor-sport-and-recreation>)

Moving home

You can still move home if you're in a High alert level area. Estate and letting agents and removals firms can continue to work and people looking to move home can continue to undertake viewings.

Follow the national guidance on moving home safely (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/government-advice-on-home-moving-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>) which includes advice on social distancing and wearing a face covering (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own>).

Financial support

Wherever you live, you may be able to get financial help through the:

- Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (until 31 October) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-what-to-do-if-youre-employed-and-cannot-work>)
- Job Support Scheme (from 1 November) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/job-support-scheme>)
- New Style Employment and Support Allowance (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/new-style-employment-and-support-allowance>)

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Explore the topic

- Protecting yourself and others from coronavirus (<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-taxon/protecting-yourself-and-others>)

