

Further easing of COVID restrictions confirmed for 17 May

- Planned easements at Step 3 of the Roadmap to go ahead from 17 May
- Infection rates and hospital admissions continue to decrease in line with scientific modelling
- Prime Minister praises efforts of the public but continues to urge caution

The Roadmap is on track and planned Step 3 easements will go ahead on 17 May, the Prime Minister has confirmed.

The data shows that the government's "four tests" for easing restrictions have been met. Infection rates are at their lowest level since September, while hospital admissions and patients in hospital continue to decrease – with levels now similar to July last year.

Hospital admissions and cases of severe illness also remain in line with modelling provided by scientific experts for the Roadmap.

From the 17 May, the majority of the indoor and remaining outdoor economy can reopen, and gathering limits will increase indoors and outdoors. Guidance for close contact between friends and family will be updated, with people exercising their own personal judgement in line with the risks.

The Stay in the UK restriction will be lifted and people will be able to travel to green list countries, if they permit inbound travel.

The Prime Minister continued to urge caution. The aim of the Roadmap is to be cautious but irreversible and unlocking too fast, too soon, risks a resurgence of the virus.

The assessment to move to Step 3 was based on four tests:

- The vaccine deployment programme continues successfully
- Evidence shows vaccines are sufficiently effective in reducing hospitalisations and deaths in those vaccinated
- Infection rates do not risk a surge in hospitalisations which would put unsustainable pressure on the NHS
- Our assessment of the risks is not fundamentally changed by new Variants of Concern

As set out in the Roadmap, 4 weeks is needed to fully understand the impact of each step. The Government also committed to provide a further weeks' notice to businesses.

From Monday 17 May indoor hospitality can reopen and indoor entertainment can resume, including cinemas, museums, and children's play areas.

Up to 6 people or 2 households will be able to meet indoors and up to 30 people outdoors.

All remaining outdoor entertainment can reopen, such as outdoor cinemas and performances. Some larger events will be able to take place, including conferences, theatre and concert performances, and sports events. Restrictions on the number of attendees will remain as set out in the Roadmap.

Guidance on meeting family and friends will be updated. The public can make informed, personal decisions on close contact, such as hugging, with their friends and family. Close contact continues to carry a risk of catching or spreading COVID-19, and people must consider the risk to themselves and to others. COVID-secure rules remain for the workplace and businesses, such as in shops and hospitality.

The Transport Secretary has confirmed that international travel can begin to safely reopen from 17 May, allowing people to go on foreign holidays to 'green' list countries. Strict border control measures will remain in place, including pre-departure tests and a PCR test on or before day two of their arrival back in the UK.

Face coverings will no longer be needed in classrooms or for students in communal areas in secondary schools and colleges. Twice weekly home testing will remain to control infection rates.

All remaining university students will be eligible to return to in-person teaching and learning from May 17, and should get tested twice a week upon return.

Up to 30 people will now be able to attend weddings, receptions, and commemorative events including wakes, as well as standalone life-cycle events. These can take place outdoors or at any indoor Covid secure venue that is permitted to open. The number of people able to attend a funeral will be determined by the number that can be safely accommodated in the venue with social distancing in place.

30 people will be able to attend a support group or parent and child group. The limit will not apply to children under 5.

Organised adult sport and exercise classes can resume indoors and saunas and steam rooms may reopen.

Care homes residents will be able to have up to five named visitors, with two visitors able to attend at once provided they are tested and follow infection control measures. Residents will also have greater freedoms to leave their home without having to isolate on their return.

The successful vaccination rollout continues, with over 35 million people receiving at least one dose, and nearly 18 million receiving both doses. One quarter of all adults have now received the strongest protection available.

The latest data shows that the estimated reduction in symptomatic disease is

60% and hospitalisations 80% for one dose of the Pfizer or AstraZeneca vaccine for people aged 80 and over. Data published by PHE today estimates that for the over 80s, two doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine reduces the risk of hospitalisation by 93%.

Step 4 is due to take place no earlier than 21 June. Further detail on Step 4 will be set out at the end of the month