

Government announces further measures on social distancing

- Measures to close entertainment, hospitality and indoor leisure premises across the country to take place from the end of trading hours today (Friday 20 March) to limit spread of coronavirus
- New measures will further limit people's sustained social contact as we tackle the spread of coronavirus, guided by scientific evidence
- Public urged to stay at home and limit all but essential travel – people who can work from home should do so

To delay the spread of coronavirus, the government has instructed some businesses and venues including all pubs, bars and restaurants to close from tonight.

This follows expert advice that more needs to be done in order to tackle the spread of infection – following the call to action to isolate or socially distance.

The closures will help limit the spread of coronavirus by helping to stop non-essential contact and unnecessary travel, in line with the public guidance announced earlier this week.

The measures will be reviewed on a monthly basis, and are being implemented across the whole of the UK in agreement with the devolved administrations. If needed, the government will enforce these measures by law.

This will not affect supermarkets or retailers that supply fuel, medicines and other vital goods, which will continue to be open as normal for the public.

The following businesses and venues have been asked to close:

- Food and drink venues for consumption on-site, such as restaurants and cafes.
- Drinking establishments, including pubs, bars, nightclubs.
- Entertainment venues, including cinemas, theatres, concert halls, and bingo halls.
- Museums and galleries.
- Spas and massage parlours.
- Casinos and betting shops.
- All indoor leisure and sports facilities, including gyms.

This measure will not impact the relaxation of planning rules announced earlier this week which will allow pubs and restaurants to operate as hot food takeaways during the coronavirus outbreak, which will help to support people who are staying at home through this period.

The government has also urged the public to take further steps to protect

themselves and the wider population from the coronavirus, including:

- Everyone to stay at home unless they need to get essential supplies such as food and medicines.
- All those able to work from home to do so, unless their work is essential.
- Only traveling if absolutely necessary – while public transport won't stop, this should only be used for essential travel – for example by key workers to travel to and from work.

The closures announced today will not impact the running of public transport, and government continues to work closely with transport operators to ensure that people who need to get to work can continue to do so.

Yesterday, the government and rail industry agreed a plan that will see a gradual reduction in train services across the country to reflect lower passenger demand as people change their travel patterns to help reduce the spread of coronavirus, while keeping vital rail services running.

The decision to introduce further measures has been taken based on the latest advice from the world-leading health and scientific experts advising the government.

When infection rates come down, the government will remove measures as soon as it is safe to do so, guided by scientific advice.

The government is working urgently to further improve testing and monitoring, which will also help in relaxing the measures as soon as possible.

Communities Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

We will do whatever it takes to protect people across this country as we tackle the coronavirus outbreak.

While people have responded well to calls for social distancing and self-isolation, we must go further if we are to be able to stop the spread of the virus and protect the most vulnerable people in our society, and our NHS.

That is why we are now telling entertainment and hospitality premises to close temporarily, and people to only travel if absolutely essential, to help protect each other from the further spread of the virus.

We stand behind businesses and their employees and are offering an unprecedented range of support as we tackle this huge challenge together.