

Prime Minister sets out plan to ease restrictions at step 4

- Social distancing to end, facemasks no longer mandatory, and no limits on gatherings
- All venues currently closed can safely reopen with no capacity limits
- PM: We must find a new way of living with the virus

COVID restrictions are set to end in England from step 4 of the Roadmap after the Prime Minister set out how life will soon return close to normal.

The decision to open up will be made in a balanced and careful way, with the Prime Minister being clear that people's personal judgement will now be key in learning to live with the virus.

Subject to a final review of the data next week, legal restrictions will end on Monday 19 July.

Limits on social contact will end, meaning there will be no restrictions on indoor or outdoor gatherings. Weddings, funerals and other life events able to take place without limits or restrictions.

All venues currently closed will be allowed to reopen, including nightclubs, and there will be no legal requirement for table service in hospitality settings.

Face coverings will no longer be legally required in shops, schools, hospitality, or on public transport although guidance will be in place to suggest where people might choose to wear one, such as where you come into contact with people you don't usually meet in enclosed and crowded places.

The government reviews into social distancing and Covid-status certification have also now concluded. The 1m plus rule will be lifted other than in specific places such as at the border to help manage the risks of new variants coming into the country.

There will be no legal requirement on the use of Covid-status certification as a condition of entry for visitors to any domestic setting.

As a result of the delay to the final step of the roadmap, the vaccination programme has saved thousands more lives by vaccinating millions more people.

Over 79 million vaccine doses have now been administered in the UK, every adult has now been offered at least one dose, and 64% of adults have received two doses.

The government has also today confirmed the rollout will accelerate further, by reducing the vaccine dose interval for under 40s from 12 weeks to 8. This will mean every adult has the chance to have two doses by mid-September.

The Prime Minister made clear that learning to live with the virus meant cases would continue to rise significantly, even if the success of the vaccination programme meant hospitalisations and deaths will rise at a lower level than during previous peaks.

He set out how cases could rise to 50,000 per day by 19 July, with daily hospital admissions and deaths also rising although more slowly.

The guidance to work from home where possible will also end, to allow employers to start planning a safe return to workplaces.

The cap on the number of named visitors for care home residents will be removed from the current maximum of five per resident, although infection prevention and control measures will remain in place to protect the most vulnerable.

While NHS Test and Trace will continue to play an important role in managing the virus, the PM also signalled the government's intention to move to a new regime whereby fully vaccinated people would no longer need to self-isolate if identified as a contact. Further details will be set out in due course.

The Education Secretary will also update on new measures for schools and colleges later this week, which will minimise further disruption to education but maintain protection for children.

Proof of vaccination or a negative test will still be required for international travel, with the Prime Minister confirming that the Transport Secretary will provide a further update later this week on removing the need for fully vaccinated arrivals from an amber country to isolate.