

Prime Minister to publish roadmap for cautiously easing COVID restrictions

The Prime Minister will today set out the government's roadmap for cautiously easing lockdown restrictions in England.

Cabinet will meet virtually this morning to discuss the plan, the Prime Minister will give a statement to Parliament in the afternoon, and host a televised press conference in the evening.

He will set out the latest data on infection rates, hospitalisations and deaths, as well as early data showing the efficacy of vaccines.

The roadmap for leaving lockdown, which will be published on gov.uk on Monday, will seek to balance health, economic and social factors with the very latest epidemiological data and advice.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

Today I'll be setting out a roadmap to bring us out of lockdown cautiously. Our priority has always been getting children back into school which we know is crucial for their education as well as their mental and physical wellbeing, and we will also be prioritising ways for people to reunite with loved ones safely.

Our decisions will be made on the latest data at every step, and we will be cautious about this approach so that we do not undo the progress we have achieved so far and the sacrifices each and every one of you has made to keep yourself and others safe.

We have therefore set four key tests which must be met before we can move through each step of the plan.

The roadmap outlines four steps for easing restrictions. Before proceeding to the next step, the government will examine the data to assess the impact of previous easements. This assessment will be based on four tests which are that:

- 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.

The four tests are currently being met so the first step will proceed from 8 March, at which point the top four priority cohorts for vaccinations – as

determined by the independent JCVI – will have received a degree of immunity, three weeks after being offered their first dose.

Due to the current, relatively uniform spread of the virus across the country, restrictions will be eased step-by-step across the whole of England at the same time.

The roadmap seeks to balance between social and economic impacts, whilst preserving the health and safety of the country.

Outdoor settings are known to be lower risk than indoor, so outdoor activities will be opened earlier than indoor ones.

MPs will have an opportunity to vote on the regulations that will enable this roadmap in Parliament in the coming weeks.

We continue to work closely with the Devolved Administrations as we have throughout the pandemic. They are setting out approaches for easing for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.