

Prime Minister urges caution as England moves to Step 4

- Cases continue to rise but link with hospitalisations and deaths substantially weakened due to vaccination programme
- Prime Minister urges caution and calls for all adults to come forward for both vaccine doses
- Test, trace and isolate system remains in place to reduce transmission

England has today (Monday) moved to Step 4 of the Roadmap. This means the majority of Covid restrictions have now ended, replaced with guidance emphasising personal judgement and responsibility. People are expected to protect themselves and others through informed choice and move to Step 4 cautiously.

The Prime Minister has today called for all adults who have not yet received their first or second dose of the vaccine to come forward, to help protect themselves and others.

All over 18s are now able to book a vaccine, and nearly 60% of under 25s have received at least one dose. Young adults can be key drivers of transmission and are urged to come forward for both doses.

Cases will continue to rise as set out from the start of the Roadmap, but the vaccination programme has substantially weakened the link between infection and hospitalisation or death. Data from PHE suggests that one dose of either the Pfizer-BioNTech or Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine is 80% effective against hospitalisations with the Delta variant, increasing to 96% after two doses.

The Prime Minister has emphasised the need to remain cautious as restrictions are lifted. The pandemic is not yet over and moving to step 4 is a balance of risks. Cases across the UK and Europe are increasing, and the threat of a new variant remains.

The move to Step 4 was delayed by 4 weeks so more adults could be vaccinated. Nearly 8 million vaccines have been administered during the delay. Over two thirds of all adults have received two doses and every adult has been offered a first dose.

The delay to Step 4 has also moved the end of restrictions closer to the school summer holidays. Lifting restrictions later in the year when the weather gets colder carries further risks as viruses tend to spread more easily in the winter months, and flu will be circulating.

The Prime Minister has set out a five point plan for living with Covid as restrictions are eased:

- Reinforce vaccine defences by reducing the dosing interval from 12 to 8 weeks for all adults.

- The majority of legal restrictions have been lifted and replaced with guidance to enable people to make their own informed decisions to manage the virus, emphasising caution and personal responsibility as cases continue to rise.
- The test, trace and isolate system will remain, with all positive cases legally required to self-isolate. Contacts of positive cases are required to self-isolate until the 16 August, after which adults who have received two vaccine doses and all under 18s will be exempt.
- Border controls will be maintained, including quarantine for all those travelling from a red list country, and for amber list countries unless double vaccinated.
- Data will be continually assessed and contingency measures retained if needed during higher risk periods, but restrictions will be avoided if possible.

The vaccination programme and test, trace and isolate system continue to be the most effective way of reducing transmission, along with practicing good hygiene, keeping spaces well ventilated, and wearing a face covering in enclosed or crowded spaces.

All data will be kept under review, and the government will review the current guidance in September.