

Restrictions on household mixing in Birmingham, Sandwell and Solihull

- Nationwide rule of 6 for social gatherings to be implemented from Monday as cases rise across England, alongside call to the public to remain vigilant
- Additional restrictions on businesses in Leicester lifted, to be in line with the rest of the country

Following further discussions with local leaders, the Health and Social Care Secretary, NHS Test and Trace, the Joint Biosecurity Centre (JBC) and the Chief Medical Officer for England have agreed this week's changes to local restrictions across England.

After seeing cases continue to rise, Birmingham, Sandwell and Solihull have been escalated to areas of national intervention. From Tuesday residents must not socialise with other people outside of their own households from today to control the spread of the virus. Easements in Leicester will continue, with more businesses being able to reopen in the city from Tuesday next week.

These changes are in addition to the nationwide, [6-person limit on social gatherings](#) that will come into place on Monday. This rule is in place across the country and will sit alongside additional restrictions in some local areas, such as banning mixing between different households.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

The reinforcement of the nationwide rule of 6 for social gatherings sends a clear signal to us all – the whole country must continue to stay vigilant and practise social distancing to beat this virus.

After seeing cases in the West Midlands continue to rise, the decision has been taken in collaboration with local leaders to ban households mixing in Birmingham, Sandwell and Solihull. We never take these decisions lightly but social gatherings can spread the virus quickly, and we need residents to abide by the new rules to break the chains of transmission.

Where targeted action has been taken, we are seeing signs of progress, and today's easements in Leicester are proof that the measures we are putting in place in collaboration with local councils have a positive effect.

We will not hesitate to take further action if needed, and my appeal to you all is to get a test if you are symptomatic, stay at home if you are required to self-isolate, and to constantly think: hands, face, space. Only then can we avoid further restrictions, and return to a sense of normality.

New restrictions in West Midlands

The following locations will now be escalated to areas of national intervention. From Tuesday, residents must not socialise with people outside of their own households, unless they're in your support bubble. This does not apply to places of work, schools or childcare.

- Birmingham
- Sandwell
- Solihull

This decision has been made in collaboration with local leaders, who are considering additional local measures to tackle an increase in the number of cases.

Stoke on Trent remains on the watchlist as an area of concern.

Easing of business restrictions in Leicester

Some business will be able to reopen in Leicester from Tuesday 15 September, which will now be subject to the same business restrictions as the majority of England.

Casinos, skating rinks, bowling alleys, exhibition halls, conference centres and indoor play areas (including soft play areas) will be able to lawfully reopen from Tuesday next week.

Guidance will be updated and socially distanced indoor performances will be able to resume, and remaining restrictions on certain close contact services (treatments on the face, such as eyebrow threading or make-up application) will be lifted.

The ban on inter-household gatherings in private homes and gardens remains. The next review of these measures will take place by 24 September.

Removals from the watchlist

Kettering, Oadby and Wigston and Luton have been removed from the watchlist.

PHE, the JBC and NHS Test and Trace are constantly monitoring the levels of infection and other data on prevalence of the virus across the country. As has always been the case, measures are kept under constant review to reduce the spread of the virus and save lives.

The changes announced today are a testament to the hard work of everyone in these areas, with members of the public and local leaders working together to reduce the spread of the virus. To maintain this good progress, it is important local residents continue to wear face coverings where necessary, practise good hygiene and adhere to national social distancing rules.

East Midlands and East of England Areas

- Corby and Peterborough remain as areas of concern
- Northampton has been de-escalated from an area of enhanced support to an area of concern
- Kettering and Oadby and Wigston were removed from the watchlist

Lancashire, Merseyside and Yorkshire and Humberside

The following decisions have been made in regards to watchlist categories for the north of England, with no additional restrictions put in place or changes to protected areas:

- Leeds has been escalated to an area of enhanced support
- Merseyside and Sheffield have been added as areas of concern
- designated areas in Bradford, Kirklees, Calderdale, Blackburn with Darwen, Pendle and Greater Manchester where restrictions are already in place remain as areas of national intervention
- Rossendale, Hyndburn and Burnley remain as areas of enhanced support

West Yorkshire

- The ban on indoor household gatherings will continue in urban areas of Bradford where the ban is in place
- In Kirklees, the ban on indoor household mixing will continue in Dewsbury and Batley
- The ban on indoor household mixing will also continue in parts of Calderdale

Greater Manchester (excluding Bolton)

- A ban on households mixing indoors will continue in City of Manchester, Salford, Rochdale, Trafford, Oldham, Bury, Bolton and Tameside
- In Oldham, in addition to a household mixing ban indoors, residents will continue to be advised to avoid mixing with anyone from another household anywhere
- Stockport will remain an area of enhanced support

Bolton

The regulations outlining restrictions announced in Bolton earlier this week came into effect yesterday evening:

- in Bolton, casinos, skating rinks, bowling alleys, exhibition halls, conference centres and indoor play areas (including soft play areas) will remain closed
- socially distanced indoor performances will remain closed, and restrictions on certain close contact services will remain
- all hospitality for food and drink is restricted to takeaway only
- there is a late-night restriction of operating hours in place, meaning

venues will be required to close between 10pm and 5am

Lancashire

- A ban on 2 households mixing indoors will continue in Preston, Pendle and part of Blackburn
- In parts of both Blackburn and Pendle residents will continue to be advised to avoid mixing with anyone from another household

North East

For the North East region:

- South Tyneside, Sunderland, Gateshead and Newcastle upon Tyne have been added to the watchlist as areas of enhanced support
- Hartlepool has been added to the watchlist as an area of concern
- Middlesbrough remains on the watchlist an area of concern

Other changes to the watchlist

- Hertsmere is added to the watchlist as an area of concern
- North Norfolk, South Norfolk, West Norfolk, Kings Lynn, Great Yarmouth, Breckland, Norwich and Broadland are de-escalated from areas of enhanced support to an area of concern
- Swindon is de-escalated from an area of enhanced support to an area of concern

Background information

- PHE's weekly surveillance report includes changes to the watchlist of local authority areas with higher-than-average incidences of COVID-19. Read the full [surveillance report](#), which includes this week's watchlist and what the different categorisations mean
- The 3 definitions for JBC and PHE's watchlist are: 'areas of concern', 'areas of enhanced support' and 'areas of intervention':
 - for 'areas of concern', upper tier local authorities will work with partners, supported by regional PHE and NHS Test and Trace resource, to take additional actions to manage outbreaks and reduce community spread of the virus to more normal levels. Actions taken may include additional targeted testing at high-risk areas or groups – for example care homes – enhanced communications around the importance of social distancing, hand hygiene and other preventative measures, and more detailed epidemiological work to understand where clusters of the virus are occurring so that appropriate action can be taken
 - areas deemed for 'enhanced support' will be provided with increased national support, capacity and oversight, including additional resources deployed to augment the local teams where this is necessary. Actions taken may include significant additional widespread testing deployed to the upper tier local authorities,

national support for local recommendations put in place to manage outbreaks, and detailed engagement with high-risk groups and sectors to help increase the effectiveness of testing and tracing in these areas

- 'areas of intervention' are defined where there is divergence from the lockdown measures in place in the rest of England because of the significance of the spread of COVID-19. There are a range of non-pharmaceutical interventions available to local and national leaders, from extensive communications and expanded testing, to restrictions on businesses and gatherings
- on Tuesday 15 September, regulations will lawfully ban residents in Birmingham, Sandwell and Solihull from socialising with people outside their households in private homes and gardens. If you live in one of the affected areas, in order to help prevent the spread of coronavirus, from Tuesday you must not:
 - host people you do not live with in your home or garden, unless they're in your support bubble
 - meet people you do not live with in their home or garden, whether inside or outside of the affected area, unless they're in your support bubble