

COVID-19: Government announces moving out of contain phase and into delay

The Government has announced that we are moving out of the contain phase and into delay, in response to the ongoing coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

The UK Chief Medical Officers have now raised the risk to the UK from moderate to high.

As per the current advice, the most important thing individuals can do to protect themselves remains washing their hands more often, for at least 20 seconds, with soap and water. Make sure you cough or sneeze into a tissue, put it in a bin and wash your hands.

We are asking anyone who shows certain symptoms to self-isolate for 7 days, regardless of whether they have travelled to affected areas. This means we want people to stay at home and avoid all but essential contact with others for 7 days from the point of displaying mild symptoms, to slow the spread of infection.

The symptoms are: * A high temperature (37.8 degrees and above) * A new, continuous cough

You do not need to call NHS 111 to go into self-isolation. If your symptoms worsen during home isolation or are no better after 7 days contact NHS 111 online at 111.nhs.uk. If you have no internet access, you should call NHS 111. For a medical emergency dial 999.

In the coming weeks, we will be introducing further social distancing measures for older and vulnerable people, asking them to self-isolate regardless of symptoms.

If we introduce this next stage too early, the measures will not protect us at the time of greatest risk but could have a huge social impact. We need to time this properly, continue to do the right thing at the right time, so we get the maximum effect for delaying the virus. We will clearly announce when we ask the public to move to this next stage.

Our decisions are based on careful modelling.

We will only introduce measures that are supported by clinical and scientific evidence.

Over-70s and at-risk Brits advised against travelling on cruise ships

- new advice applies to those aged over 70 and with relevant pre-existing health conditions
- advice based on medical concerns around the unique environment of cruise ships and the risk they can pose to vulnerable passengers
- announcement part of wider government advice to support the health and safety British nationals overseas including new recommendation against school trips overseas

British nationals aged 70 and over, and those with underlying health conditions such as chronic diseases and diabetes, have been advised not to travel on cruise ships in response to the coronavirus outbreak.

The new advice is based on guidance from the Chief Medical Officer and follows a number of cases around the world of cruise ships experiencing outbreaks on board.

The Chief Medical Officer has advised that over-70s and vulnerable travellers with pre-existing health conditions should not travel on cruise ships. Travellers with existing cruise travel plans should speak to their operator, transport and accommodation provider for further advice.

As has been seen in a number of high-profile cases, transmission of COVID-19 on board cruise ships is more likely due to the nature and design of a ship's environment, the higher volume and density of people on board, and the social mixing.

A Foreign & Commonwealth Office spokesperson said:

Based on the recommendation of the Chief Medical Officer, we are now advising against all travel on cruise ships for passengers aged 70 years and over, and those with high-risk conditions.

Our first priority is the safety of British nationals. The nature and design of cruise ships – where passengers are contained and the virus can spread faster – makes them a particularly risky environment for vulnerable people. We've already seen the impact a coronavirus outbreak can have on board a cruise ship and we have changed this advice with the safety of British nationals in mind.

This list is not exhaustive – if in doubt and you have a chronic health condition ask your doctor.

Further information

Ministry of Defence confirms the death of Lance Corporal Brodie Gillon

It is with great sadness that the Ministry of Defence must confirm the tragic death of Lance Corporal Brodie Gillon whilst on duty in the Middle East on 11 March 2020.

LCpl Gillon, 26, served as a Reserve with the Scottish and North Irish Yeomanry. She joined the regiment in September 2015 as a Combat Medical Technician (CMT), where she quickly progressed through her trade and military training to qualify as a Class 1 Combat Medical Technician in 2018.

Always looking for new opportunities to challenge herself and develop more experience, LCpl Gillon volunteered to be part of the Royal Guard at Ballater, Scotland in 2019 and then again to be part of the Irish Guards Battle Group during their deployment to Iraq in 2020. It was during her time with the Irish Guards Battle Group that she was tragically killed in action following an incident at Camp Taji on 11 March.

LCpl Gillon was a fit, energetic and compassionate individual, who played an active role in all aspects of military life. She juggled her military training with her career as a self-employed sports physiotherapist, and clearly excelled and was committed to both.

Her Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel William Leek, Commanding Officer Scottish and North Irish Yeomanry, said:

LCpl Brodie Gillon was a hugely popular character in the Scottish and North Irish Yeomanry and we are proud and humbled to have served with her in our ranks.

She was a larger than life soldier who was determined to deploy on operations, help others, develop herself and gain practical experience. She had already achieved a great deal in her relatively short time with us and it was abundantly clear that she was destined for great things in her civilian and military careers. Her loss is keenly felt.

My deepest condolences go to her family and loved ones. They are in my thoughts and prayers, and those of the wider Regimental family.

And her Squadron Leader, Major Craig Powers, Squadron Leader of A Squadron,

said:

LCpl Brodie Gillon will be remembered with great fondness as an utterly professional soldier, an outstanding medic, and loyal friend to all in A (Ayrshire) Squadron.

She was a hugely popular and very much respected member of the Squadron. She will be deeply missed by all who knew her.

Our thoughts and prayers are with her whole family.

The Deputy Commander Field Army, Major General Celia Harvey OBE QVRM TD DL, said:

It is with a heavy heart that one of my first duties as Deputy Commander Field Army is to report the very sad loss of one of our brave soldiers. Lance Corporal Brodie Gillon, an Army Reservist, had been fulfilling a long-term ambition to serve her country on an operational tour in Iraq when their military base came under rocket attack.

LCpl Gillon, a much-loved soldier had been an Army Reservist for 5 years, serving with the Scottish and North Irish Yeomanry. As a Combat Medical Technician, she was carrying out an essential role as part of a closely knit team, helping to bring stability to Iraq.

She was a soldier who showed fantastic commitment and determination, combined with a fun-loving personality. On behalf of the British Army, I offer my deepest condolences to LCpl Gillon's family and loved ones for their loss. She made the ultimate sacrifice and will always be remembered.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

From the warm testimonies of those who served with her, it's clear that LCpl Gillon was held in the highest regard and was a shining example of what our Armed Forces and Reserves stand for, inspiring those around her and always putting others first.

My thoughts go out to her loved ones at this incredibly difficult

time and we will ensure they receive all the necessary support.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) prison preparedness: Lucy Frazer statement

The Government is doing everything it can to combat the COVID-19 outbreak, based on the very latest scientific and medical advice. This includes in our prisons, where we are working closely with Public Health England, the NHS and the Department of Health and Social Care to manage the challenges we face.

The safety and wellbeing of staff, prisoners and visitors is paramount and at the heart of our approach.

Prisons have existing, well-developed policies and procedures in place to manage outbreaks of infectious diseases. This means prisons are well prepared to take immediate action whenever cases or suspected cases are identified, including isolating individuals where necessary.

Basic hygiene is a key part of tackling the virus and good practice is being promoted on posters throughout the estate. Handwashing facilities are available to all prisoners – not just in cells but other shared areas such as education blocks and kitchens. Staff and visitors also have access to handwashing facilities and we have worked closely with suppliers to ensure adequate supply of soap and cleaning materials.

We understand that prisoners and their loved ones might be concerned about the situation. But we can assure them that we will continue to operate normal regimes, with the minimum disruption, for as long as we can. This will include visits to prisoners but, in line with Public Health advice for the general public, we urge any friend or family member not to come to a prison for visit if they have any symptoms associated with COVID-19 – a fever or new, persistent cough. We are also looking into ways to keep prisoners in close contact with their families in all eventualities, and will share further information as and when necessary.

We have procedures agreed with our public health colleagues for protecting staff in the workplace but, like any member of the community, some prison staff may need to self-isolate in line with public health advice, or may become infected. We are taking steps to boost staff availability and so enable us to look after prisoners properly and minimise the impacts on prison regimes of staff absences.

There is a huge amount of work taking place, and I want to thank all those who have been striving tirelessly to make sure we are ready to do all we can to respond over the coming weeks.

Joint statement by UK and EU negotiators on next week's round of negotiations

Given the latest COVID-19 developments, UK and EU negotiators have today jointly decided not to hold next week's round of negotiations in London, in the form originally scheduled.

Both sides are currently exploring alternative ways to continue discussions, including if possible the use of video conferences.