

Promoting corporate partnerships for arts and culture

News story

New roundtables between cultural and corporate sectors to boost the arts' recovery from Covid-19 following the Culture Recovery Fund.



Lord Mendoza

On behalf of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, Lord Neil Mendoza the Commissioner for Cultural Recovery and Renewal will host a series of roundtables with Boster Group, bringing together leaders from the corporate and arts and culture worlds, to consider innovative models for sustainable cultural recovery.

The Boster Group is an independent consultancy that creates innovative and sustainable partnerships between global corporations, world class arts institutions and social impact foundations.

The roundtables will feature senior leaders from global companies and Britain's cultural sector to share objectives and best practice for successful partnerships, outline challenges collaborating across industries and consider practical, innovative solutions to the creative sector's long term recovery from Covid-19.

Lord Neil Mendoza, the Commissioner for Cultural Recovery and Renewal, said:

Throughout the pandemic, our cultural sector has faced significant challenges and adapted to major changes. Over the past year, the Government has supported culture in this country with nearly £2 billion so that many of our performance venues, heritage sites and independent cinemas can now prepare to reopen.

These roundtables with Boster Group will bring together cultural and business leaders to ensure the continued recovery of our world-

renowned arts sector.

Find out more about the work of the Culture Recovery Fund and [#HereForCulture campaign](#).

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Good afternoon,

I want to begin by thanking everyone again for your patience

and for the sacrifices you've been making –

businesses, pubs and restaurants that have been waiting to welcome customers back through their doors

grandparents who have gone for months without seeing their grandchildren,

weddings postponed,

funerals sadly constrained,

and religious festivals – such as Eid – yet again facing restrictions.

And I want to thank you because your efforts have so visibly paid off

giving us the time to vaccinate more than two thirds of all adults across the UK

with more than one third – nearly 18 million people – also receiving their second dose –

and thereby unquestionably saving many lives.

So it is precisely because of your efforts, that I can confirm today we have met our four tests for further easing the lockdown in England.

Chris will run through the details in a minute,

but with deaths and hospitalisations at their lowest levels since last July,

and the UK's four Chief Medical Officers today agreeing a reduction in the alert level,

the data now support moving to step 3 in England from next Monday 17th May.

This means the Rule of Six or two households that has applied outdoors, will now apply indoors

and the limit for outdoor meetings will increase to 30.

From next Monday you will be able to sit inside a pub and inside a restaurant.

You'll be able to go to the cinema and children will be able to use indoor play areas.

We're re-opening hostels, hotels, and B&Bs.

We'll re-open the doors of our theatres, concert halls and business conference centres

and unlock the turnstiles of our sports stadia,

subject to capacity limits.

And from next week everyone will be able to travel within Britain and stay overnight,

meaning schools will also be able to organise trips with overnight stays.

We will no longer require face coverings in classrooms – or for students in communal areas in secondary schools and colleges.

All remaining University students will be able to return to in-person teaching, where they should be tested twice a week.

We will increase the number of named visitors for those in care homes from two to five,

and residents will have greater freedoms to leave their home without having to isolate on their return.

This unlocking amounts to a very considerable step on the road back to normality

and I am confident we will be able to go further.

Subject to the impact of step 3 on the data, we remain on track to move to step 4 on 21st June

and to give businesses more time to prepare,

we'll be saying more later this month about exactly what the world will look like and what role there could be – if any – for certification and social distancing.

And today we are taking a step towards that moment when we learn to live

responsibly with Covid –

when we cease eventually to rely on detailed government edicts,
and make our own decisions – based on the best scientific advice – about how
to protect our families and those around us.

So from next Monday we are updating the guidance on close contact between
friends and family,

setting out the risks for everyone to make their own choices.

This does not mean we can suddenly throw caution to the winds.

In fact, more than a year into this pandemic, we all know that close contact,
such as hugging, is a direct way of transmitting this disease.

So I urge you to think about the vulnerability of your loved ones –

whether they have had a vaccine, one or two doses, and whether there has been
time for that vaccine to take effect.

Remember outdoors is always safer than indoors. And if you are meeting
indoors, remember to open a window and let in the fresh air.

Keep getting tested regularly, even if you don't have symptoms, so you don't
spread the virus without knowing it.

And whatever you decide, I must ask that you continue to follow social
distancing when not with friends and family

including in workplaces, shops, pubs, restaurants and other settings.

We only have to look at the very sad situation in other countries to see the
lethal potential of this virus

and we must continue to fight the spread of variants here in the UK.

While we have no evidence yet to believe these variants are completely
vaccine resistant, we must remain vigilant.

So please remember hands, face, space and fresh air.

And as we mark Mental Health Awareness week,

perhaps also take a moment to check in on friends and family and see how they
are doing after all that we have been through together,

or if you are struggling yourself, get the support you need.

Today we are announcing the single biggest step on our roadmap

and it will allow us to do many of the things we've yearned to do for a long
time.

So let's protect these gains by continuing to exercise caution and common sense.

People smuggling gang found guilty

A Salford man who charged asylum seekers thousands of pounds to bring them to the UK on false documents has been sentenced to 8 years and 6 months imprisonment, after appearing at Manchester Crown Court on Friday, 7 May.

Behnam Farzaneh-Baghbanan, 40, was the leader of a criminal business built around the exploitation of Iranian nationals. Migrants would arrive at UK airports having flown from Europe using false documentation to board the flights. During the flight they would destroy or discard the fake documents and then claim asylum when they arrived at passport control in the UK.

Farzaneh-Baghbanan admitted a charge of conspiracy to help asylum seekers enter the UK when he appeared at Manchester Crown Court on 23 April, 2019. He has been remanded in custody since that point.

Three other men – Kaveh Sharifat (18 months suspended for 18 months), 41, Mojtaba Salehi, 39 (18 months suspended for 18 months), and Mohammad Naderi (12 months suspended for 18 months), 38 – pleaded guilty at a hearing at the same court on 16 February this year to money laundering.

Minister for Immigration Compliance and Justice Chris Philp said:

It is because of criminals like Farzaneh-Baghbanan who seek to bring people to the UK illegally that the most vulnerable asylum cases get pushed to the back of the queue.

This is unacceptable which is why the reforms set out in our New Plan for Immigration are desperately needed to fix the UK's broken asylum system.

Let this sentence be an example of the government's long-term fair, but firm commitment to bring these ruthless criminal groups to justice.

The scam was exposed by Immigration Enforcement officers based overseas in early 2016 and referred to the specialist Immigration Enforcement Criminal and Financial Investigation (CFI) team in Liverpool.

CFI officers, liaising with Europol and the National Crime Agency, began an investigation in April 2016. CFI formed a Joint Investigation Team, with the French Border Police Unit, authorised by the Crown Prosecution Service and an Investigative Judge, based in Lille France.

Officers identified a pattern of flights carrying undocumented Iranian nationals and further analysis found that seats on these flights had been booked using a handful of the same email addresses and bank cards. From this, they identified a suspect, Farzaneh-Baghbanan, who lived in Salford.

On 5 December, 2016, officers arrested Farzaneh-Baghbanan at his home in Rosseau Place, Salford. Evidence was seized which showed he controlled a number of email addresses which had been used to make multiple flights bookings, paid for using various bank cards.

Officers later discovered that these bookings were all for flights on which there was at least one person who was an undocumented asylum seeker.

Officers also discovered that Farzaneh-Baghbanan had no legitimate income, but controlled five bank accounts through which more than £170,000 had passed between January 2015 and December 2016. Transactions included some individual deposits of up to £3,500 in cash.

In the days following his arrest Farzaneh-Baghbanan fled the country in a bid to avoid justice. His details were circulated on a European Arrest Warrant and he was arrested on 1 November 2018 as he attempted to enter Greece from Turkey. He was extradited to the UK on 22 March 2019.

The other 3 gang members were also arrested on 5 December 2016 or soon afterwards. Investigators found that all the men were associated with email addresses linked to booking of seats on the suspect flights. The men's bank accounts also contained unexplained large deposits.

Mobile phone and social media records showed that the group were in contact with each other on a daily basis and were led by Farzaneh-Baghbanan. The Iranian nationals who the gang assisted flew into the UK from European locations such as Alicante, Madrid, Nice, Lyon and Barcelona arriving at airports including Gatwick, Stansted, Newcastle, Liverpool and Manchester.

Farzaneh-Baghbanan is believed to have been involved in more than 260 attempts to reach the UK between January 2015 and December 2016. Not all of these individuals reached the UK.

Deputy Director of CFI Dave Magrath said:

This was a well drilled, ruthlessly efficient and lucrative criminal operation. It is testament to the effective work of CFI, Border Force and Immigration Enforcement International colleagues that the gang has been brought to justice.

The large unexplained amounts of cash in the men's bank accounts showed that while they were all making substantial profits from abusing the UK's immigration laws, Farzaneh-Baghbanan was the kingpin. It is thanks to painstaking and forensic analysis of evidence that we have been able to bring him and his accomplices to justice.

Anyone with information about suspected immigration abuse can contact Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111 anonymously or visit the [Crimestoppers website](#).

All remaining university students to return to in-person teaching from 17 May

University students received a boost today (Monday 10 May) with the launch of a new employment and skills guide alongside the confirmation that all remaining students can return to in-person teaching from the 17 May.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced that the country can progress to Step 3 of the Government's roadmap which will see a further easing of restrictions on indoor mixing and social contact.

Some students, including those doing practical courses such as science and engineering, and who need to access specialist facilities and equipment, are already back on campus.

Before the remaining students return, they are encouraged to take a test either through home or community testing at least one day before they travel back to their term time accommodation.

Upon arrival at their term time accommodation, all students and staff will be encouraged to take three supervised Lateral Flow Devices (LFD) tests 3 to 4 days apart at an on-campus asymptomatic testing site, and will be expected to be tested two times a week throughout the rest of the summer term.

Home testing kits will be available to help those who are unable to attend the on-campus testing facilities. Further advice and support for universities is included in our updated guidance.

In addition to confirming the return for all remaining students, the Department for Education has worked with the Office for Students (OfS) and universities to deliver support and advice for those students who have graduated during the pandemic and might not have had access to the opportunities needed to take the next steps in their lives.

The Graduate Employment and Skills Guide brings together a broad range of tools, advice and resources into a five-step plan which will help pandemic graduates consider their post-university choices, identify and develop their critical skills, gain professional experience, and further their career while maintaining good mental wellbeing.

Universities Minister Michelle Donelan said:

Our priority from the very start of this pandemic has been to help students complete their courses and graduate as planned which is why I am pleased that the Prime Minister has today confirmed all remaining students can return to in-person teaching from the 17 May as part of Step 3 of the Government's road map.

It is vital that we make every effort to keep us all as safe as possible, and every student will be offered three tests on return to campus. I would strongly encourage students to make use of the free tests available to them.

To further support those beginning the next chapter in their lives we have published our Graduate Employment and Skills Guide, created with universities and designed with prospective employers in mind, which will give students the help and advice they need to build their skills and kickstart their careers.

I know that entering the jobs market can be daunting, particularly during a global pandemic, but I know that employers will recognise the resilience and strength of this year's graduates and the essential role they will play in this country's recovery.

Upon return, all tests for students will be free, through both the Government's offer of free rapid LFD tests twice weekly to everyone in England, and 'University Collect' services, under which universities will distribute tests from communal locations on campus, such as libraries. This is in addition to the onsite testing already offered.

All students and staff who test positive from an LFD test will need to self-isolate for 10 days, unless they receive a negative PCR test result within two days of the LFD test being taken.

The Government has made available an additional £85m in hardship funding for those students most in need, such as those struggling to pay accommodation costs due to the pandemic. International and postgraduate students will be eligible for this funding along with domestic undergraduates. This is on top of an existing £256 million that universities can draw on.

[Further easing of COVID restrictions](#)

confirmed for 17 May

- Planned easements at Step 3 of the Roadmap to go ahead from 17 May
- Infection rates and hospital admissions continue to decrease in line with scientific modelling
- Prime Minister praises efforts of the public but continues to urge caution

The Roadmap is on track and planned Step 3 easements will go ahead on 17 May, the Prime Minister has confirmed.

The data shows that the government's "four tests" for easing restrictions have been met. Infection rates are at their lowest level since September, while hospital admissions and patients in hospital continue to decrease – with levels now similar to July last year.

Hospital admissions and cases of severe illness also remain in line with modelling provided by scientific experts for the Roadmap.

From the 17 May, the majority of the indoor and remaining outdoor economy can reopen, and gathering limits will increase indoors and outdoors. Guidance for close contact between friends and family will be updated, with people exercising their own personal judgement in line with the risks.

The Stay in the UK restriction will be lifted and people will be able to travel to green list countries, if they permit inbound travel.

The Prime Minister continued to urge caution. The aim of the Roadmap is to be cautious but irreversible and unlocking too fast, too soon, risks a resurgence of the virus.

The assessment to move to Step 3 was based on four tests:

- 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

As set out in the Roadmap, 4 weeks is needed to fully understand the impact of each step. The Government also committed to provide a further weeks' notice to businesses.

From Monday 17 May indoor hospitality can reopen and indoor entertainment can resume, including cinemas, museums, and children's play areas.

Up to 6 people or 2 households will be able to meet indoors and up to 30 people outdoors.

All remaining outdoor entertainment can reopen, such as outdoor cinemas and performances. Some larger events will be able to take place, including conferences, theatre and concert performances, and sports events. Restrictions on the number of attendees will remain as set out in the Roadmap.

Guidance on meeting family and friends will be updated. The public can make informed, personal decisions on close contact, such as hugging, with their friends and family. Close contact continues to carry a risk of catching or spreading COVID-19, and people must consider the risk to themselves and to others. COVID-secure rules remain for the workplace and businesses, such as in shops and hospitality.

The Transport Secretary has confirmed that international travel can begin to safely reopen from 17 May, allowing people to go on foreign holidays to 'green' list countries. Strict border control measures will remain in place, including pre-departure tests and a PCR test on or before day two of their arrival back in the UK.

Face coverings will no longer be needed in classrooms or for students in communal areas in secondary schools and colleges. Twice weekly home testing will remain to control infection rates.

All remaining university students will be eligible to return to in-person teaching and learning from May 17, and should get tested twice a week upon return.

Up to 30 people will now be able to attend weddings, receptions, and commemorative events including wakes, as well as standalone life-cycle events. These can take place outdoors or at any indoor Covid secure venue that is permitted to open. The number of people able to attend a funeral will be determined by the number that can be safely accommodated in the venue with social distancing in place.

30 people will be able to attend a support group or parent and child group. The limit will not apply to children under 5.

Organised adult sport and exercise classes can resume indoors and saunas and steam rooms may reopen.

Care homes residents will be able to have up to five named visitors, with two visitors able to attend at once provided they are tested and follow infection control measures. Residents will also have greater freedoms to leave their home without having to isolate on their return.

The successful vaccination rollout continues, with over 35 million people receiving at least one dose, and nearly 18 million receiving both doses. One quarter of all adults have now received the strongest protection available.

The latest data shows that the estimated reduction in symptomatic disease is 60% and hospitalisations 80% for one dose of the Pfizer or AstraZeneca vaccine for people aged 80 and over. Data published by PHE today estimates that for the over 80s, two doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine reduces the

risk of hospitalisation by 93%.

Step 4 is due to take place no earlier than 21 June. Further detail on Step 4 will be set out at the end of the month