

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.

[Surge testing to be deployed in an area of Brentwood](#)

Press release

Additional testing and genomic sequencing is being deployed to the CM13 postcode in Brentwood, Essex.



A further targeted area will have additional testing made available to control and suppress the potential spread of a COVID-19 variant.

Working in partnership with the local authority, additional testing and genomic sequencing is being deployed to the CM13 postcode in Brentwood, Essex, where a single case of the COVID-19 variant first identified in South Africa has been found.

Extra testing is being introduced in addition to existing extensive testing, and in combination with following the current lockdown rules and remembering Hands Face Space advice, will help to monitor and suppress the spread of the virus. Positive cases will be sequenced for genomic data to help understand COVID-19 variants and their spread within these areas.

People living within the CM13 postcode area are strongly encouraged to take a COVID-19 test when offered, whether they are showing symptoms or not.

People with symptoms should book a test in the usual way, and those without symptoms should visit their [local authority website](#) for more information.

Published 21 February 2021

[Increased support for fishing and shellfish businesses](#)

The Government has announced [enhanced financial support](#) for the seafood industry with cash grants for seafood and aquaculture businesses across the UK.

In January, the Government made available [£23 million for seafood exporters](#) that suffered a financial loss because of delays related to the export of fresh or live fish and shellfish to the EU during January 2021.

Having listened to concerns from fishing businesses across the UK, Defra will now be expanding the eligibility criteria to target catching and shellfish aquaculture businesses which have been affected by a reduction in demand from the hospitality sector in the UK and abroad, as well as disruption of exports to the EU. These expanded criteria will mean more businesses can get the support they need.

[The scheme](#), which is similar to last year's Fisheries Response Fund set up in response to the coronavirus pandemic, will open in early March and provide a grant payment to cover up to three months of average business fixed costs incurred between January and March 2021. It will help catching and shellfish aquaculture businesses with costs such as insurance, equipment hire and port fees.

Environment Secretary George Eustice said:

Our fishermen are at the heart of many of our coastal communities and we recognise the impact of coronavirus and the end of the transition period on them. This expansion of our £23 million support package will ensure many more businesses can benefit from

government support.

The coronavirus pandemic has led to the closure of critical markets, and this has been exacerbated by issues faced by exporters at the border. We will continue to ensure we are listening to our fishing and seafood industry as we work to resolve these issues, and work with them to build up the industry in the months and years ahead.

UK Government Minister for Scotland, David Duguid said:

Over the last few months, we have been listening to the seafood industry and have continued to monitor the impacts that the pandemic and export disruption has played on prices, exports and the market.

I am confident in the quality of Scottish fish and seafood but for many fishing businesses the lack of demand in the hospitality trade in the UK and further afield has had a real impact on market prices.

While we continue to take steps to beat this virus and work with the sector to resolve export issues – this expanded support scheme will help the many small and medium sized fishing businesses that support so many of our coastal communities.

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Brandon Lewis said:

The fishing industry plays an important role in Northern Ireland for its people and communities, supporting around 2,000 jobs.

This expansion of the government's £23 million response fund will ensure that the fisheries and aquaculture industry in Northern Ireland receives the financial and practical support it needs.

Secretary of State for Wales Simon Hart said:

The expansion of the Seafood Disruption Support Scheme highlights the UK Government's commitment to Welsh exporters who are currently facing a uniquely challenging period.

We want to back our fantastic Welsh businesses and I encourage all who are eligible to apply for this support.

The main features of the scheme are:

- For the UK catching sector, the fund will be open to under 40m vessel owners with fishing licences and who have a track record of fishing in the winter months.
- The scheme will offer support to UK shellfish aquaculture businesses, support will be provided on average ongoing costs based on Full-time equivalent (FTE) employees per business. Businesses who have received a grant under the recent Seafood Producers Resilience Fund in Scotland will not be eligible for the UK scheme.
- The Marine Management Organisation will administer the fund across the UK on behalf of Defra, contacting eligible registered owners and licence holders directly with details of how to apply, starting in early March.
- A single payment will be made to cover a proportion of fixed costs over a three-month period from January to March 2021.

The funding follows targeted support to help exporters with new processes. This includes the Seafood Exports Working Group, meeting twice a week to troubleshoot issues raised by the industry; and a newly established [Scottish Seafood Exports Task Force](#).

The UK fishing and seafood sector is also set to benefit from significant government investment with a £100 million fund to help modernise fishing fleets, the fish processing industry, and rejuvenate an historic and proud industry in the UK, on top of the £32 million that will replace EU funding this year.

The Government also continues to seek urgent resolution to export issues, including the EU ban on the import of class B live bivalve molluscs and will explore further ways producers can continue to export this valuable seafood. UK mussels and oysters are highly sought after, at home and abroad. The sector has been highly impacted by Covid restrictions, and now barriers to trade imposed by the EU.

There is also wider support from the Government to the sector including the on-going Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, the furlough scheme and the recently launched [SME Brexit Support Fund](#) to help businesses deal with export requirements.

Information about the Seafood Response Fund and scheme guidance is [published on GOV.UK](#).

[Government announces plan to scrap EU law, ensuring British drivers avoid £50 a year insurance hike](#)

- government plans to bin the EU's 'Vnuk' motor insurance law – which

requires insurance even on private land for a wider range of 'vehicles', including ride-on lawnmowers and mobility scooters

- move will ensure every British driver is spared an estimated £50 annual increase in insurance premiums
- decision to scrap Vnuk from British law would reiterate benefits of leaving the EU, as we take back control of our own laws and regulations

British drivers will avoid an estimated £50 a year increase in motor insurance costs as the government confirms it plans to do away with the controversial EU 'Vnuk' law, Transport Secretary Grant Shapps announced today (21 February 2021).

The Vnuk law requires a wider range of vehicles than those such as cars and motorbikes to be insured, including ones previously not requiring insurance, such as golf buggies, mobility scooters and quad bikes.

The law also extends to vehicles on private land, meaning people with a ride-on lawnmower at home would require insurance where it would have previously not been needed.

Had the EU law been implemented in Great Britain, it would have meant the insurance industry would have been liable for almost £2 billion in extra overall costs. These costs would likely have been passed onto their customers – British road-users.

Now we have left the EU, the measures no longer need to be implemented, helping road-users across the country steer clear of increased premiums – a clear win for motorists in Britain.

Bypassing Vnuk will also protect the existence of the UK's world-leading motorsports industry. The EU rules would have meant any motorsports collision involving vehicles from go-karting to F1 would have been treated as regular road traffic incidents requiring insurance. This could have decimated the industry due to the additional insurance costs of roughly £458 million every single year. Scrapping the rules will save the industry from potential collapse and secure hundreds of thousands of jobs in the sector in the process.

[Video about plans to Scrap the EU Vnuk Law](#)

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

We have always disagreed with this over-the-top law that would only do one thing – hit the pockets of hard-working people up and down the country with an unnecessary hike in their car insurance. I am delighted to announce that we no longer need to implement it.

Scrapping this rule would save the country billions of pounds and is part of a new and prosperous future for the UK outside the EU – a future in which we set our own rules and regulations.

As well as the likely financial burden on British road-users, the Vnuk rules are considered unnecessary as there are already insurance packages available to Brits that cover certain risks on private land.

The UK officially left the EU on 31 January 2020, with the formal transition period coming to an end on 31 December 2020, after the ratification of the UK–EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement – allowing us to control our own rules and regulations and recover our economic and political independence.

PHE launches new Psychological First Aid training

From Monday 22 February, people who care for or work with children and young people aged up to 25 who have been affected by COVID-19 (or other emergencies or individual crises) will be able to access a new online [Psychological First Aid \(PFA\) training course](#).

The [COVID-19 pandemic has had a huge impact on children](#), with many reporting that it has made them feel more stressed, lonely and worried.

The online course, developed by Public Health England (PHE), offers training on how to provide practical and emotional support to children and young people affected by emergencies or crisis situations. Children and young people can be very resilient, but crises such as COVID-19 can severely impact their mental health. Getting the right support early on can help prevent problems occurring or worsening.

Those completing the training will be equipped to better identify those children that are in distress and provide support to help them feel safe, connected and able to take steps to help themselves during the pandemic or other crisis situations.

It's available for all frontline workers such as teachers, health and social workers, charity and community volunteers and anyone who cares for or is regularly in contact with children and young people aged up to 25, including parents and caregivers. It's free, takes about 3 hours to complete (split into 3 sessions that the learner can complete at their own pace) and no previous qualifications are required.

On completion, participants will have an understanding of what PFA is, be able to identify who would benefit from support and how best to give help across the different age groups and also for those who might need extra support because of different needs.

Clare Perkins, Director of the Mental Health Programme at PHE, said:

The pandemic has caused significant disruption to all of our daily lives. Children are among the worse impacted, being stuck at home and not able to have the essential social interactions with their friends. Many young people are anxious and worried about their future in these uncertain times.

Children and young people will react to the COVID-19 pandemic in different ways. The PFA training course will help professionals, volunteers, parents and carers better identify the signs of those who are struggling and give them timely effective support that is right for them – helping them feel safe and able to help themselves.

PFA is a globally recognised training programme designed to support people during or in the aftermath of a serious event. PHE has adapted this training for those supporting children and young people with advice from a range of experts, including NHS England, the Department for Education and the British Red Cross and is being made available online by social learning platform, [Future Learn](#).

This new course follows the success of the [PFA training for COVID-19](#) that PHE launched in June 2020 which to date has received over 100,000 sign-ups from frontline workers and volunteers. The UK Public Health Rapid Support Team also launched last week [an adaption of the PFA course for use in African countries affected by COVID-19](#).

Children and Families Minister Vicky Ford said:

This new training module is being introduced at an important time. I know how difficult the pandemic has been for children and young people across the country, and this additional support for those working with them every day – whether they are parents and carers, teachers, health and social care workers, or volunteers – is timely and necessary.

It builds on our commitment to supporting children and young people's mental health now and over the long-term, and the expertise already available like our £8 million Wellbeing for Education Return programme. This includes a webinar for education staff that draws on and complements this Psychological First Aid e-learning. They will both be of enormous value to those who want to help and improve children and young people's mental wellbeing, including teachers.

Minister for Mental Health Nadine Dorries said:

Children and young people have been uniquely challenged by the events of the last year. I remain absolutely committed to supporting them through this pandemic and beyond, ensuring we equip

them with the tools and support they need to stay mentally well.

This training will ensure those who work with children and young people – including parents and caregivers – can support their wellbeing by identifying signs of distress and helping them access the support they need.

We know that while children can be very resilient, crises or emergencies can have a huge impact on their mental health and we must continue to ensure they can access the support they need.

Claire Murdoch, NHS Mental Health Director, said:

The pandemic has turned our lives upside down and hit children and young people particularly hard. Working with our partners, we have been doing everything possible to make sure that they are fully supported and this online training will be invaluable in helping people to understand how best to offer the right support at the right time.

It has been a tough year, but the NHS is here for children's mental health, so anyone who is struggling should come forward for the help they need.

Dr Sarah Davidson, Head of Psychosocial and Mental Health, British Red Cross, said:

This resource from PHE enables a thoughtful, developmentally appropriate response to children and young people who have experienced a crisis. Clear and including helpful links to other resources, it will help people to know how to be supportive whilst avoiding further harm.

The course is free for all who care for and work with children and young people aged between 0 and 25. No previous qualifications are required to enrol.

For guidance for the public on the mental health and wellbeing aspects of coronavirus please visit [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) and [Every Mind Matters](https://www.everymindmatters.org/).

The PFA course is a training resource to equip people with information to help others. It is not intended as a therapeutic intervention for those who are experiencing distress or crisis. Anyone needing help should visit [NHS 111 website](https://www.nhs.uk/111/), call 111 or contact their GP.

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