

UK-wide Christmas arrangements agreed by the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations

The UK Government and the Devolved Administrations have today agreed on joint arrangements for an easing of social restrictions that will allow friends and loved ones to reunite over the Christmas period.

All four parts of the UK have signed off an aligned approach allowing up to three households to form a 'Christmas bubble' from December 23 to 27.

Individuals will also be able to travel between tiers and across the whole of the UK without restriction within the five-day period, for the purposes of meeting with their bubble. Those travelling to and from Northern Ireland will be permitted to travel an additional day either side.

The approach was agreed by Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Michael Gove, and the First Ministers of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales and the deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland during a COBR meeting he chaired this afternoon.

Speaking following the meeting, Mr Gove said:

The UK-wide agreement reached today will offer hope for families and friends who have made many sacrifices over this difficult year.

We know that the Christmas period this year will not be normal, but following constructive discussions between the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations, families and friends will now have the option to meet up in a limited and cautious way across the UK should they wish.

In coming to this agreement, we have listened to scientific and clinical advice on how best to minimise the risk and reach a balanced and workable set of rules that we hope will allow people to spend time together at this important time of year.

Each administration will clarify their own rules on support bubbles and extended households in due course. In England, support bubbles will continue to be counted as one household.

Christmas bubbles will be able to gather in private homes, attend places of worship together and meet in outdoor public places. Beyond this, people should continue to follow all other local restrictions in the area. Guidance is being published on Gov.uk.

As part of the agreement, each administration will be reminding households

that they should remain alert to the risks still posed by the virus and consider how, where possible, they can celebrate and support more isolated friends and loved ones through alternative approaches such as video calls and meeting outdoors.

When following these new rules, people are reminded to continue to take personal responsibility to limit the spread of the virus and protect loved ones, particularly if they are vulnerable. Forming a bubble for those who are vulnerable or clinically extremely vulnerable carries additional risks.

The four parts of the UK will work together to communicate these new measures across the country and ensure that communities are aware of any variations in approaches.

Details of the new measures can be found in the [joint statement](#), agreed today.

[Joint statement on UK-wide Christmas arrangements from the UK Government and Devolved Administrations](#)

Press release

A joint statement on UK-wide Christmas arrangements from the UK Government and Devolved Administrations.



As 2020 draws to a close, we recognise it has been an incredibly difficult year for us all. We have all had to make significant sacrifices in our everyday lives, and many religious and community groups have already had to change or forgo their customary celebrations to slow the spread of coronavirus and save lives.

This cannot be a 'normal' Christmas. But as we approach the festive period,

we have been working closely together to find a way for family and friends to see each other, even if it is for a short time, and recognising that it must be both limited and cautious.

Even where it is within the rules, meeting with friends and family over Christmas will be a personal judgement for individuals to take, mindful of the risks to themselves and others, particularly those who are vulnerable. We need everyone to think carefully about what they do during this period, balancing some increased social contact with the need to keep the risk of increased transmission of the virus as low as possible. This is particularly important when considering those who are vulnerable, and before deciding to come together over the festive period we urge the consideration of alternative approaches such as the use of technology or meeting outside.

In this context, the four administrations have reached agreement on a single set of UK-wide measures to help people come together with their loved ones in a way that is as safe as possible.

Today we have agreed that:

- Travel restrictions across the four administrations and between tiers will be lifted to provide a window for households to come together between the 23rd and 27th of December.
- Up to three households can form an exclusive 'bubble' to meet at home during this period. When a bubble is formed it is fixed, and must not be changed or extended further at any point.
- Each Christmas bubble can meet at home, at a place of worship or an outdoor public place, but existing, more restrictive rules on hospitality and meeting in other venues will be maintained throughout this period.

It is important that everyone respects and abides by the rules of each nation wherever they choose to spend the festive period. Where there are any variations in our approach, these will be communicated by each administration accordingly. Further [guidance](#) will be provided in due course.

The winter holiday period is a time often spent with family and friends, with schools and offices closing and people travelling over the bank holidays. Many have already begun making their plans, and we are today providing clarity to help people make the right choices for them, and enjoy time with those closest to them while staying within the rules to protect us all.

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Attorney General speech at the London Panel Induction Event

Checked against delivery.

The role of the Attorney General is one which I hold with great pride. It is one of the most interesting posts a lawyer can hold, and it comes with a varied and deeply interesting range of responsibilities.

As the Attorney General, I act simultaneously as the chief legal adviser to the Government, the superintending minister of the Government Legal Department, and the guardian of the public interest in our constitutional democracy. This means that I work closely with the Bar, with its well-earned reputation for legal and professional excellence; and together with our renowned judiciary, which is rightly admired around the world for its impartiality and independence, its intellectual rigour and its essential importance to the rule of law.

An aspect of my role which I am very passionate about is appointing and maintaining the Panel Counsel system.

That is why I am delighted to be here today at this induction event to congratulate and welcome panel members who were successful in the London Panel competition this year.

To appear as an advocate on behalf of the Crown is a great privilege. I was a member of the then Attorney General's C panel from 2010-2015. I found the work hugely rewarding then, and incredibly varied and in my role as Attorney General I continue to see the value in having counsel of the highest quality representing Her Majesty's Government in front of the judiciary. It is vital that we have able advocates to represent the Government to the best of their ability.

It is a great achievement to have been successful in this competition. Appointment is, as you know, on the basis of merit through fair, open and rigorous competition. This year 105 applicants were successful out of 267 applications.

I believe that in casting the net as widely as possible and encouraging applications from the widest possible range of those who are eligible to apply, we are able to catch the best new panel members. I am proud of the work done in recent years by myself, the Solicitor General and previous Law Officers to increase the number of Chambers who have members on the panels. Membership is certainly not limited to a few privileged sets, we now have 405 London A, B and C panel members from 82 Chambers.

Being a panel member can give advocates the opportunity to work on some of the most important and high profile cases of the day, and the panel system means that whether junior counsel are acting for the Government in relation

to an inquiry such as Grenfell, a judicial review against a planning decision, a claim for defective construction of a motorway, an injunction against a newspaper, or any indeed other aspect of contentious and non-contentious legal work for which advocates are needed, the Government can be reassured the highest quality advocates appear before the judiciary on its behalf.

It may come as no surprise that membership of the panels, and progressing through the levels from C Panel, to B Panel and then on to A Panel, offers exposure to cases of great public interest and legal complexity. The progression does not stop at A panel. This year 12 QCs were appointed from the panel. I am confident this uniquely interesting work and opportunity for progression is what attracted many of you to apply for the prestigious positions you now occupy.

I regret I cannot stay for the rest of the induction. You are now going to be hearing from some great colleagues of mine, including First Treasury Counsel, Sir James Eadie.

I would again like to offer my sincere congratulations to you all. I look forward to seeing your careers progress as you undertake the wide variety of complex and exciting work available as a panellist.

[Housing Minister's speech at PlaceShapers annual conference](#)

Good morning. It is a pleasure to address you at the first ever virtual PlaceShapers annual conference.

I would like to begin by thanking the PlaceShapers network for your tireless efforts in supporting the social housing sector, including the two million people who rely on you and the essential services you provide.

I would also like to pay tribute to the many housing associations, housing providers and professional organisations involved in this vital sector for your incredible resilience and forbearance during this challenging time.

Since the onset of COVID-19, you have shown professionalism and commitment in utilising your expertise and providing support to millions of social housing tenants. You should be proud of what you have achieved.

This pandemic has made us rethink, in so many ways, how we live and how we want to live.

It has starkly reminded us of the importance of having a decent, safe and secure home with access to green spaces in which people can exercise, relax

and unwind.

That is especially the case for social housing and the millions of people who call it home.

As many of you will know, on Tuesday 17 November 2020, we published our [Social housing white paper: the charter for social housing residents](#).

Developed in consultation with residents across the country, the white paper will deliver a transformational change for social housing, giving tenants a much stronger voice and re-focusing the sector on its founding ideals.

It empowers residents through quicker redress and more meaningful regulation that allows residents to see how their landlord is performing on the measures that matter most, including the length of time to action repairs.

It also mandates regular performance inspections of the country's largest landlords.

But the most profound change will be cultural: in the way landlords listen and respond to residents, ensuring they are treated with dignity and respect, with complaints handled promptly and fairly.

I believe it is this change in particular – making sure that the residents' voice is truly heard – which will strongly resonate across all levels of the sector, from board members and senior officers to all those who have daily contact with tenants.

The government is fulfilling its commitment to improve the quality of social housing, but we are also solving the decades-long problem of housing demand consistently outstripping supply.

Our £12.2 billion of investment in affordable housing represents the highest single funding commitment for the sector in over a decade.

That includes our new £11.5 billion Affordable Homes Programme, which will be delivered over 5 years from 2021.

It will provide a real boost to the national housing stock with up to 180,000 new homes, economic conditions permitting.

10% of delivery will also be used to increase the supply of much needed specialist and supported housing too – helping individuals and families who need this kind of housing the most.

But our ambition is for social housing to not only be a safety net, but a ladder that provides residents with more opportunities to own their home.

Around half of the homes delivered through our new Programme will therefore be available for home ownership, and will make use of our new model of Shared Ownership in which we have greatly reduced the minimum initial share people can buy in their property.

This will also introduce a 10-year period for new shared owners where the landlord will cover the cost of any repairs and maintenance.

These are measures which give a people a much greater stake in their own homes and their own communities while helping them build a more equitable and prosperous future.

We recognise, however, that central government programmes can only go so far in delivering the homes this country needs.

And we acknowledge that during these unprecedented times, there are significant financial pressures on councils, holding them back from realising their own housing ambitions.

Which is why, in response to the impacts of COVID-19, we extended the deadline for councils to spend Right to Buy receipts, to help them catch up with spending plans and deliver replacement social housing.

And it is not just councils who are benefitting from our reforms in this area.

Social landlords will also be better off as a result of our longer-term rent deal for 5 years which came into force in April of this year, providing a more stable investment environment to deliver new homes for the future.

The supply of good quality, affordable housing lies at the very heart of this government's mission to unite and level up the country as we recover from this pandemic.

Together, with your support, your passion and your expertise, we will deliver nothing short of a new deal for social housing, ensuring that every social home in this country is decent, safe and secure.

Tenants expect, and deserve, nothing less.

Thank you and enjoy the conference.

Govt writes to Brits in Europe before transition period ends

The UK Government has written to 365,000 UK nationals living in Europe with advice on the actions they need to take to prepare for the end of the UK transition period on 31 December.

The letters, sent to UK state pensioners and benefit recipients, give advice on how to register for residency and healthcare, exchange driving licences and check new passport validity rules online. It is one of the largest-ever

mail outs by the Government to UK nationals living in the EU, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said:

Protecting the rights of UK nationals living across Europe is an absolute priority for this Government. That is why we are issuing one of the largest Government mail-outs to ensure people know what actions they need to take wherever they live.

There is further help for those who may have difficulty completing their residency applications from our UK Nationals Support Fund, delivered by charities and community organisations.

Work and Pensions Secretary Thérèse Coffey added:

As we regain our political and economic independence we have been clear we want to protect citizens' existing rights and help people prepare for the changes and opportunities ahead. I'd encourage UK nationals living in the EU to visit GOV.UK and get ready for the end of the transition period.

British Ambassador to Italy, Jill Morris, said:

Since 2017, British embassies across Europe have organised 853 outreach events, with more than 510,000 Brits attending in person or online. We will continue to support them, including through our ongoing public information campaign.

The Foreign Office has been running a public information campaign featuring online, radio and newspaper adverts across 30 countries informing UK Nationals of the actions they need to take. This is in addition to the hundreds of town hall meetings, street surgeries and online Q&As run by the UK's Embassies, High Commissions and Consulates across Europe.

The UK Government has also allocated £3 million for charities and community voluntary organisations across Europe to assist UK nationals that may need additional help to register or apply to protect their residency rights.

This includes potentially at-risk groups, such as pensioners and disabled people and those living in remote areas or who have mobility difficulties. Beneficiaries include SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity, the Church of England diocese in France and Age in Spain.

UK nationals can find the most up-to-date information on actions they may need to take in the 'Living in Guide' for their country at:

[gov.uk/livingguides](https://www.gov.uk/livingguides)