## Prime Minister announces new local COVID Alert Levels

The Prime Minister has today set out how the government will further simplify and standardise local rules by introducing a three tiered system of local COVID Alert Levels in England.

Addressing MPs before hosting a Downing Street press conference, he confirmed the levels will be set at medium, high, and very high.

He set out how this new approach will be simpler and standardised, and thanked local leaders who have engaged with the government over the weekend.

The "medium" alert level — which will cover most of the country — will consist of the current national measures, which came into force on 25 September.

This includes the Rule of Six, and the closure of hospitality at 10pm.

The "high" alert level will reflect many current local interventions, but there will now be consistency across the country.

This primarily aims to reduce household to household transmission by preventing all mixing between households or support bubbles indoors. The Rule of Six will apply in outdoor spaces, including private gardens.

Most areas which are already subject to local restrictions will automatically move into the "high" alert level.

The "very high" alert level will apply where transmission rates are causing the greatest concern, based on an assessment of all the available data and the local situation.

This includes incidence and test positivity, including amongst older and more at-risk age groups, as well as the growth rate, hospital admissions and other factors.

In these areas, the government will set a baseline of prohibiting social mixing indoors and in private gardens, with the Rule of Six allowed in open public spaces like parks and beaches.

Pubs and bars must close, and can only remain open where they operate as if they were a restaurant — which means serving substantial meals, like a main lunchtime or evening meal. They may only serve alcohol as part of such a meal.

People will be advised not to travel in and out of these areas.

To create local consensus behind this more severe action, the government will work with local leaders on how individual areas should go beyond this

baseline, which may include measures such as the closure of gyms, casinos, and leisure centres.

Non-essential retail, schools and universities will remain open in all levels.

Cases are rising rapidly across the country, particularly in the North East and North West, and this is resulting in increased hospitalisations and deaths.

The Prime Minster said that further action is required now to suppress the virus and make sure the NHS isn't overwhelmed, and can continue providing essential services such as cancer care.

This follows significant local engagement throughout the weekend.

On Sunday, the Prime Minister spoke to Steve Rotheram, Metro Mayor of the Liverpool City Region, following detailed discussions over the last few days between all the region's leaders, Chief Executives and senior government figures.

They discussed the huge challenge from rising numbers of COVID cases in the region and pledged to work together on combatting the virus.

Senior No 10 advisers and the Housing Communities and Local Government Secretary Robert Jenrick also held discussions with local authority leaders and mayors from the highest areas of concern.

As the Prime Minister said, in recent months, local outbreaks have been tackled with targeted restrictions — helping save lives and avoiding the need to apply those measures nationally.

However, over time this has led to different rules in different parts of the country, with some rules becoming increasingly complex and difficult to enforce.

A postcode checker on gov.uk will show which alert level applies in each area and the NHS COVID-19 app will also direct people to this information.

Regulations for all three local alert levels will be laid today and they will be debated and voted on in the House of Commons tomorrow. Subject to that vote tomorrow, they will come into force on Wednesday, subject to the approval of Parliament.

These measures will be kept under constant review, including a four-week sunset clause for interventions in "very high" areas.

The PM also confirmed that the government will also provide Local Authorities across England with around £1 billion of new financial support.

He also said that engagement with other leaders in the North West, the North East and Yorkshire & Humber is continuing.

He also called on local leaders in the areas rated very high to work with the government on these measures, in return for more support for local test and trace, more funding for local enforcement, the offer of help from the armed services, and the job support scheme as announced by the Chancellor.

Full details on what the COVID Alert Levels contain are set out below.

#### Local COVID Alert Level - Medium

This is for areas where national restrictions continue to be in place. This means:

- All businesses and venues can continue to operate, in a COVID-Secure manner, other than those that remain closed in law, such as nightclubs.
- Certain businesses selling food or drink on their premises are required to close between 10pm and 5am.
- Businesses and venues selling food for consumption off the premises can continue to do so after 10pm as long as this is through delivery service, click-and-collect or drive-thru.
- Schools, universities and places of worship remain open
- Weddings and funerals can go ahead with restrictions on the number of attendees
- Organised indoor sport and exercise classes can continue to take place, provided the Rule of Six is followed
- People must not meet in groups larger than 6, indoors or outdoors

#### Local COVID Alert Level - High

- This is for areas with a higher level of infections. This means the following additional measures are in place:
- People must not meet with anybody outside their household or support bubble in any indoor setting, whether at home or in a public place
- People must not meet in a group of more than 6 outside, including in a garden or other space.
- People should aim to reduce the number of journeys they make where possible. If they need to travel, they should walk or cycle where possible, or to plan ahead and avoid busy times and routes on public transport.

#### Local COVID Alert Level — Very High

This is for areas with a very high level of infections. The Government will set a baseline of measures for any area in this local alert level.

Consultation with local authorities will determine additional measures.

The baseline means the below additional measures are in place:

• Pubs and bars must close, and can only remain open where they operate as if they were a restaurant — which means serving substantial meals, like a main lunchtime or evening meal. They may only serve alcohol as part of such a meal.

- Wedding receptions are not allowed
- People must not meet with anybody outside their household or support bubble in any indoor or outdoor setting, whether at home or in a public space. The Rule of Six applies in open public spaces like parks and beaches.
- People should try to avoid travelling outside the 'Very High' area they are in, or entering a 'Very High' area, other than for things like work, education, accessing youth services, to meet caring responsibilities or if they are in transit.
- People should avoid staying overnight in another part of the UK if they are resident in a 'Very High' area, or avoid staying overnight in a 'Very High' area if they are resident elsewhere.

#### Full list of Local COVID Alert Levels by area

#### Local COVID Alert Level: Medium

#### **England**

• All areas, excluding those listed below

#### Local COVID Alert Level: High

#### Cheshire

- Cheshire West and Chester
- Cheshire East

#### **Greater Manchester**

- Manchester
- Bolton
- Bury
- Stockport
- Tameside
- Trafford
- Wigan
- Salford
- Rochdale
- Oldham

#### Warrington

#### Derbyshire

High Peak — the wards of:

- Tintwistle
- Padfield
- Dinting
- St John's
- Old Glossop

- Whitfield
- Simmondley
- Gamesley
- Howard Town
- Hadfield South
- Hadfield North

#### Lancashire

- Lancashire
- Blackpool
- Preston
- Blackburn with Darwen
- Burnley

#### West Yorkshire

- Leeds
- Bradford
- Kirklees
- Calderdale
- Wakefield

#### South Yorkshire

- Barnsley
- Rotherham
- Doncaster
- Sheffield

#### North East

- Newcastle
- South Tyneside
- North Tyneside
- Gateshead
- Sunderland
- Durham
- Northumberland

#### Tees Valley

- Middlesbrough
- Redcar and Cleveland
- Stockton-on-Tees
- Darlington
- Hartlepool

#### West Midlands

- Birmingham
- Sandwell
- Solihull

- Wolverhampton
- Walsall

#### Leicester

- Leicester
- Oadby and Wigston

#### Nottingham

- Nottinghamshire
- Nottingham City

#### Local COVID Alert Level: Very High

#### Liverpool City Region

- Liverpool
- Knowsley
- Wirral
- St Helens
- Sefton
- Halton

## UK statement to the WTO Trade Negotiations Committee

Thank you very much, Chair and thanks very much to you and your fellow Deputy DGs for your leadership during this transition period.

Chair, in the face of continuing uncertainty with regards to COVID-19, the United Kingdom commends the Secretariat for the steps they have taken to enable work to continue, while keeping staff and delegates safe. This has enabled our work to progress in an inclusive manner despite an evolving situation in Geneva and across capitals.

The United Kingdom would once again like to reiterate the importance of forging ahead with ongoing work at the WTO, including efforts to reinstate a fully functioning dispute settlement system as soon as possible. The United Kingdom welcomes Members' engagement on the draft consolidated text on fisheries subsidies, circulated by Ambassador Wills, as a basis for developing effective disciplines.

We have been strong supporters of the Joint Initiative on E-commerce since its inception. We welcome the resumption of monthly negotiating sessions in small groups and in plenary, and we stand ready to intensify our efforts towards achieving a consolidated negotiating text by the end of the year. The

pandemic has shown us that digital trade lies right at the heart of the global economy — and will continue to be of fundamental importance as we look to build back better from this crisis. We need to ensure that this Initiative delivers an outcome that benefits developed, developing and least-developed members.

The United Kingdom has been a ready participant in the reinvigorated efforts on the Joint Initiatives on Services Domestic Regulation and Investment Facilitation for Development. On domestic regulation, we urge members to reinvigorate their efforts to resolve the small number of issues that remain. We look forward to working with Members to finalise the draft Reference Paper by the end of the year and encourage others to join this important Initiative. We also welcome the shift to negotiating mode in investment facilitation for development which is testament to Members' commitment to progressing this initiative.

Finally, on MSMEs, the United Kingdom thanks the Facilitator and Secretariat for the further progress on texts made since the beginning of summer. With MSMEs accounting for 99.9% of British businesses, we strongly support this initiative, and we hope for an ambitious outcome in December.

Thank you, Mr Chair.

## Reserves mobilised to support COVID-19 response efforts

News story

Senior Aircraftman Geetha Ramesh supports the UK Military's response to COVID-19.



Senior Aircraftman Geetha Ramesh reservist from the Royal Auxiliary Air Force in support of COVID-19. RFCA Copyright 2020.

Based at RAF Brize Norton, 4624 (County of Oxford) Squadron is the only Movements squadron within the Reserves and normally employs its specialist personnel to handle and move freight and passengers worldwide. A busy squadron providing ongoing support to enduring operations, it has stepped outside of its usual role to mobilise 22 Reservists for Operation RESCRIPT within a very short timescale. Initially held on 48 hours stand-by as part of the high-readiness contingency force to support the NHS, 20 personnel have recently assumed responsibility for mobile testing in Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Buckinghamshire working alongside personnel from 606 Squadron, RAF Benson.

Senior Aircraftman Geetha Ramesh, who works for Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs (HRMC) as an Intelligence Development Officer, volunteered to be mobilised and is currently deployed as part of one of the numerous Mobile Testing teams working on a daily basis around the three counties. She joined the RAF Reserves in 2017 and Operation RESCRIPT is her first mobilisation.

#### Geetha said:

As soon as I heard from the Squadron that they were seeking volunteers for COVID-19 operations, I consulted my managers in HMRC, who were very supportive with my intention to assist during the difficult pandemic times.

I also cancelled my pre-booked holiday and organised domestic matters swiftly as I did not want to miss the opportunity to render my services to the nation. I feel satisfied and proud that I am a little drop in the mighty ocean of selfless people helping the country to overcome this disaster.

Published 12 October 2020

# 28 south-east employers have been recognised in the 2020 Silver Employer Recognition Scheme Awards

News story

The Defence Employer Recognition Scheme encourages employers to support defence and inspire others to do the same.



Armed Forces Covenant logo. RFCA Crown Copyright.

The scheme encompasses Bronze, Silver and Gold awards for employer organisations that pledge, demonstrate and advocate support to defence and the armed forces' Community, and align their values with the Armed Forces' Covenant.

SE RFCA are proud to announce, 28 employers have been awarded the prestigious Silver Award. The Award Ceremony should have taken place aboard the historic ship HMS Victory Portsmouth in early September. Despite the current restrictions of COVID-19, SE RFCA will continue to host a virtual ceremony congratulating the awardees.

The Lord-Lieutenant of Hampshire, Nigel Atkinson Esq will virtually present 28 businesses (21 private, 3 public and 5 not for profit organisations) with their Silver Employer Recognition Award.

Lord-Lieutenant of Hampshire, Nigel Atkinson Esq said:

I would like to congratulate each of the 2020 Silver Employer Engagement Award winners. The quality of nominations was again extremely high this year and to make the final selection is a real testament to their company's dedication, enthusiasm and hard work to support and advocate for the Armed Forces community. As President of the south-east Reserve Forces' & Cadets' Association, I am sorry that I was unable to thank these individuals in person due to covid-19, however it should not steer away from the importance of the positive and tangible help these businesses give to the armed forces family and their wonderful support to defence.

#### The following businesses are now recognised as Silver Awardees:

- Aspire Oxfordshire, Oxford
- Cherwell District Council, Banbury.
- Content Guru, Bracknell
- Diamond Light Source Ltd, Didcot
- Forces Family Finance, Chatham
- The HPower Group, Windsor
- i3 Gen Ltd, Alresford

- ITURRI, Banbury
- Made to Measure Mentoring Ltd, Leatherhead
- Mobile Broadband Network Limited, Reading
- MLL Telecom, Marlow
- Models for Heroes, Newbury
- Quadratek Infrastructure Limited, Hartley Wintney
- SDR Strength Ltd, Basingstoke
- STS Defence, Gosport
- Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, Worthing
- Thames Water, Reading
- UKCloudX, Farnborough
- 3M UK Plc, Bracknell
- BAM Nuttall. Camberley
- Capgemini UK Plc, Woking
- Civil Nuclear Constabulary, Abingdon
- Costain Group Plc, Maidenhead
- Lockheed Martin UK, London
- Naval Families Federation, Portsmouth
- NHBS, Milton Keynes
- Oracle Corporation, Reading
- The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity, Portsmouth.

#### MBNL's Managing Director, Gervase King:

I am the Managing Director of MBNL and empathise with many of my ex-Military colleagues that the transition from being a member of the armed services into a civilian job and life can be hard for some. This is why I have continued to ensure our recruitment policies support Reservists and am proud to have 10% of our colleagues being Veterans at MBNL. I am a great supporter of the work that the Armed Forces resettlement teams do and I hope that seeing MBNL's commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant will reassure members of the serving and reserve Military that we are a great place to work.

#### Naval Families Federation:

We are absolutely thrilled to have been awarded the Silver ERS Award. Through our engagement with Royal Navy and Royal Marines families we have a deep understanding of the challenges that they face with regard to securing meaningful employment and career progression. It is, therefore, incredibly important to us that we demonstrate good employment practice in support of this community.

### Negotiations on the UK's Future Trading Relationship with the Australia: Update

Talks were productive, and good progress was made towards a comprehensive deal between our two nations.

Both sides shared draft chapter text or papers outlining their preferred approach, and the groundwork was laid for an initial exchange of tariff offers. Officials from 12 different UK government departments held discussions with Australian officials, with some further sessions coming over the next week that will mean talks will have spanned the breadth of the FTA.

Both countries are committed to removing trade barriers and creating new opportunities for business, and believe a deep and dynamic agreement can send a clear signal to the world that both the UK and Australia are prepared to fight protectionism and advance free and fair trade.

Discussions were productive over all chapter areas, including Digital and Telecoms, where there is a shared willingness to go even further than CPTPP and consider more ambitious proposals.

The number of discussions has now totalled 73 sessions over the first two rounds of talks and both sides have committed to further discussions ahead of round three. This includes on Competition, Digital, Goods, Government Procurement, and Rules of Origin.

The UK and Australia are both keen to continue the momentum of discussions, and the third negotiating round is expected to take place in November.

Below is a summary list of those areas discussed in the round, which continued to take place by video conference:

- Anti-Corruption and Transparency
- Competition
- Cross-cutting general provisions
- Digital/e-commerce
- Environment
- Financial Services
- Trade in Goods
- Good Regulatory Practice
- Government Procurement
- Intellectual Property
- Investment
- Labour
- Trade Remedies

- Rules of Origin
- Services, including Movement of Natural Persons, Professional Business Services, and Transport Services
- Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
- State Owned Enterprises
- Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures
- State-to-State Dispute Settlement
- Technical Barriers to Trade
- Telecommunications

We also had further positive discussions on Clean Growth, Development, Women's Economic Empowerment, and Innovation.

Any deal the Government strikes must be fair, reciprocal, and ultimately in the best interests of the British people and the economy.