

2020 Christmas Arrangements

Dear John,

Further to yesterday's announcement by the Prime Minister and the COVID-19 Winter Plan, we have reached agreement between the UK Government and the devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland on arrangements for the Christmas period. Christmas is an important time of year for many people in the UK, regardless of their faith.

COVID-19 continues, however, to pose a very real and ongoing threat. It will not be possible to take full advantage of the winter holiday season and to celebrate Christmas in the normal way.

We recognise that there will be some hard choices for families and friends, and that there will be situations where it is not possible to gather in the way many usually would. In this context, we 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.

- Between 23 and 27 December, up to three households will be able to join together to form an exclusive Christmas bubble.
- Everyone can be in one bubble only, and cannot change bubble during this time period (an exemption to this is children, aged under 18, of separated parents).
- People (e.g. nannies, cleaners, tradespeople) can continue to work in someone's home where necessary during this period. To reduce risk, they should observe social distancing wherever possible, and where it can be avoided should not go into homes that are hosting Christmas bubbles.
- A Christmas bubble will be able to spend time together in private homes, to attend places of worship, or meet in a public outdoor place.
- Travel restrictions across the UK will be lifted to allow people to travel to and from their bubble. But beyond this, people should follow local restrictions in the area in which they are staying.

Even where it is within the rules, meeting with friends and family over Christmas will be a matter of personal judgement for individuals, mindful of the risks to themselves and others.

People should as much as possible reduce unnecessary social contact with those with whom they do not live in the two weeks before forming their Christmas bubble. We need everyone to think carefully about what they do during this period, balancing some increased social contact with the need to keep risk of increased virus transmission as low as possible. This is particularly important when considering those who are vulnerable and elderly.

The clinically extremely vulnerable can form part of a Christmas bubble, but this would be a personal choice and should be balanced against the increased

risk of infection for those people.

Given the additional risks, visits out of care homes should only be considered for care home residents of working age, where the home is in agreement, and has completed an individual risk assessment.

Parents should continue to send their children to school and students should continue to attend college, in line with local guidance. The UK's four Chief Medical Officers continue to advise that the best place for children and young people is in education. There is no need for children to be taken out of school early.

It is essential that everyone follows the rules applicable to where they are in the UK. In England, that means continuing to follow the local tiers that will apply from 2 December. It will be particularly important for everyone to follow the social distancing guidelines early in the new year. Historically, this period is when the NHS sees the greatest pressure on services such as Accident & Emergency, and the highest rates of bed occupancy, and this year the NHS is dealing with COVID-19 as well.

Further information and guidance can be found on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk):

While this will not be a normal Christmas, we hope that this UK-wide agreement will offer hope for families and friends who have made many sacrifices over this difficult year.

With every good wish,

Rt Hon Michael Gove MP

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and

Minister for the Cabinet Office