

Covid-19: Update

I have received this update from the Government:

Dear John

I would like to update you on the next steps in delivering the UK Government's COVID-19 recovery strategy.

Last week, on 4 July, we took the third step on the UK Government's roadmap, with the reopening of pubs and restaurants, hairdressers, and some leisure facilities and tourist attractions, providing they adhere to COVID-Secure guidelines. We also permitted increased social contact, with two households able to meet up in any setting with social distancing measures, and people able to enjoy staycations in England with the reopening of accommodation sites. The Prime Minister set out that, where it is not possible to stay two metres apart, guidance will allow people to keep a social distance of 'one metre plus'. This means staying one metre apart, plus mitigations which reduce the risk of transmission.

These important, and cautious, steps forward have been made possible by the sacrifices of the whole nation bringing the virus under control, and the continued efforts of businesses and the public to comply with COVID-Secure guidelines and clinical advice on testing to protect against resurgences. It is clear that the vast majority of people embraced their new-found freedoms in a responsible manner, and while there remains a long way to go in tackling this virus, every indicator shows that we continue to head in the right direction.

When the Prime Minister set out the 4 July changes, he said that the Business Secretary and I would work with industry and public health experts to help the remaining sectors and activities to become COVID-secure, and reopen as soon as possible.

Following this work, I can confirm that from Saturday 11 July organised outdoor grassroots team sports and participation events will begin again, starting with cricket. Sports will only be able to resume once their return to play guidelines have been developed in line with government guidance. Outdoor water parks and swimming pools will also be able to open in England from this weekend. To further support the British people in getting active again, from Saturday 25 July, we will allow the safe and COVID-Secure reopening of indoor swimming pools, gyms, fitness and dance studios, leisure centres, and other indoor sports venues and facilities. As we have said all along, we will only allow any further easements if it is safe to do so in line with public health guidance. If it is not, then we will not proceed.

Furthermore, while we are not yet ready to get audiences back into indoor venues like theatres and concert halls, we will allow outdoor performances from Saturday. And while those outdoor performances get underway, we will be piloting a number of indoor performances to work out how we can confidently

usher socially-distanced audiences indoors as soon as possible. Rehearsals and performances for broadcast are already permitted.

Having allowed hairdressers to reopen, we will go further, by reopening beauticians, tattooists, spas, tanning salons and other close-contact services from Monday. However, certain types of high risk treatment, such as threading and facial treatments, are advised against at this stage. Further details are available at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/close-contact-services>.

As ever, we must proceed cautiously, to make sure that the commitment and sacrifice of the British people is not undone by a second peak which could overwhelm the NHS. These changes will be conditional on our ability to control the virus and respond effectively to outbreaks, as we have done so far.

We will remain cautious and measure the effect of changes we make. As stated by the Prime Minister, the Government will not hesitate to apply the brakes if that is what the situation requires as we have had to do in Leicester. For now, the changes outlined in this letter will not apply to those areas subject to local lockdown restrictions.

We know that these continue to be the most challenging of times for people and businesses across the United Kingdom. This Government is committed to supporting those in need, as shown in the Plan for Jobs set out by the Chancellor yesterday.

Everybody must play their part in observing and complying with COVID-Secure and social contact guidelines, if we are to continue to keep the virus under control and maintain our recovery. We are asking people to stay alert, maintain social distancing, keep washing hands, and follow any instructions received from NHS Test and Trace. In doing so, we will together all save lives and continue to rebuild our country.

Rt Hon Oliver Dowden CBE MP
Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport