

New rules on gatherings in some parts of Northern England

The Health Secretary Matt Hancock has this evening announced that new rules on social gatherings will be introduced in Northern England to stop the spread of COVID-19. These changes will also apply in Leicester city.

This is in response to an increasing trend in the number of cases per 100,000 people in the area, and data from PHE and the JBC which suggests transmission among households is a key infection pathway in the area.

The areas that these changes apply to are:

- The Greater Manchester area
- Pendle
- Hyndburn
- Burnley
- Rossendale
- Blackburn with Darwen
- Bradford
- Calderdale
- Kirklees
- Leicester City

It means people in these areas will not be permitted to mix with other households (apart from those in their support bubbles) in private homes or gardens.

Some exemptions will be put in place, including for the vulnerable.

The government will sign new regulations to make these changes legally enforceable.

The regulations will give local authorities and police forces the powers to enforce these restrictions and more details on these will be set out when the regulations are published.

Households may go to hospitality, for instance bars and pubs, but new guidance will make clear that two households should not go to hospitality together.

Meanwhile local leaders and government have today agreed a number of changes to local restrictions in other areas.

While social gathering restrictions remain in place in Leicester City, the area will benefit from the lifting of restrictions that took place on 4 July in England, and all local restrictions currently in place in the neighbouring borough of Oadby and Wigston will end.

It means from Monday 3 August restaurants, cafes, bars and hairdressers in

Leicester City can get back to business but leisure centres, gyms and pools will remain closed. In addition, cinemas and museums will open and religious ceremonies will be able to take place.

And on Saturday 1 August, Luton will be brought in line with the rest of the country after significant progress has been made in controlling the virus.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock said:

We're constantly looking at the latest data on the spread of coronavirus, and unfortunately we've seen an increasing rate of transmission in parts of Northern England.

We've been working with local leaders across the region, and today I chaired a meeting of the Local Action Gold Committee. Based on the data, we decided that in Greater Manchester, parts of West Yorkshire and East Lancashire we need to take immediate action to keep people safe.

The spread is largely due to households meeting and not abiding to social distancing. So from midnight tonight, people from different households will not be allowed to meet each other indoors in these areas.

We take this action with a heavy heart, but we can see increasing rates of coronavirus across Europe and are determined to do whatever is necessary to keep people safe.

The restrictions currently in place in Blackburn, announced last Friday, which saw indoor swimming pools, indoor fitness and dance studios, indoor gyms and sports facilities remaining closed, will continue.

From Saturday, these leisure facilities will open in Luton, bringing it in line with the rest of the country.

We have been working closely with local leaders across Greater Manchester, West Yorkshire and East Lancashire and have made the decision to bring in new restrictions on social gatherings for selected areas.

For those preparing to celebrate Eid Al Adha this weekend with friends and family these restrictions will come as a blow but everyone is being urged to follow the new rules and to protect the ones they love from catching coronavirus.

Mosques and other places of worship have reopened for prayer and communal worship, but in a different socially distanced and COVID-19 Secure way. This means that while mosques can remain open, many will not be able to welcome as many worshippers as before.

Anyone with any symptoms must isolate immediately and get a test for free by going online or ringing 119. Everyone must continue to socially distance and regularly their wash hands to help bring this virus down further so all areas of Leicester can return to normal as soon as possible.

Notes to editors:

- Full guidance will be published on [gov.uk/DHSC](https://www.gov.uk/dhsc)