

Update on Step 3 of our Covid-19 Response

Dear John

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I want to thank you and your constituents for your patience and sacrifices that continue to be made as we progress along our Roadmap. Businesses, pubs, and restaurants have been waiting to welcome customers back through their doors; grandparents have endured months without seeing their grandchildren; weddings have been postponed; funerals sadly constrained; and religious festivals such as Eid are yet again facing restrictions.

I want to thank everyone because our collective efforts have so visibly paid off, giving us the time to vaccinate more than two thirds of all adults across the UK. More than one third – nearly 18 million people – have also received their second dose. This has unquestionably saved many lives.

It is thanks to these efforts that I was able to confirm today that we have met our four tests for further easing lockdown in England. With deaths and hospitalisations at their lowest levels since July, and the UK's four Chief Medical Officers today agreeing a reduction in the alert level, the data now support moving to Step 3 in England from Monday 17 May.

As a reminder, these tests are:

- The vaccine deployment programme continues successfully
- Evidence shows vaccines are sufficiently effective in reducing hospitalisations and deaths in those vaccinated
- Infection rates do not risk a surge in hospitalisations which would put unsustainable pressure on the NHS
- Our assessment of the risks is not fundamentally changed by a new Variants of Concern.

This means the rule of six or two households that has applied outdoors will now apply indoors – and the limit for outdoor meetings will increase to 30. From next Monday, we will be able to sit inside a pub or restaurant; we will be able to go to the cinema; and children will be able to use in door play areas. We are reopening hotels, hostels, and B&Bs and reopening the doors of our theatres, concert halls, and business conference centres. We will unlock the turnstiles of our sports stadia, subject to capacity limits.

From next week groups of up to six people or two households will be able to travel within the UK and stay overnight, meaning schools and colleges will also be able to organise trips with overnight stays. We will no longer require face coverings in classrooms – or for students in communal areas in secondary schools and colleges – and all remaining university students will be able to return to in-person teaching, where they should be tested twice a

week.

We will increase the number of named visitors for those in care homes from two to five, and residents will have greater freedoms to leave their homes without having to isolate on their return.

This unlocking amounts to a considerable step on our Roadmap back to normality. To give businesses time to prepare, I will be setting out our approach to moving to Step 4 later this month, including the conclusions of our reviews on domestic certification and social distancing.

Today, we are taking a step towards that moment when we learn to live responsibly with Covid – when we cease to rely on detailed Government edicts and learn to make our own decisions, based on the best scientific advice, about how best to protect our families and those around us.

From next Monday we are updating the guidance on close contact between friends and family, setting out the risks for everyone to make their own choices.

I would urge everyone to think about the vulnerability of their loved ones – including whether they have had a vaccine, one or two doses, and whether there has been time for that vaccine to take effect.

We must encourage everyone to keep getting tested regularly and continue to follow social distancing when not with friends and family including in workplaces, shops, pubs, restaurants, and other settings.

We only have to look at the very sad situation in other countries to see the lethal potential of this virus, and we must continue to fight the spread of variants here in the UK. While we have no evidence yet to believe these variants are completely vaccine resistant, we must remain vigilant.

Today I have announced the single biggest step on our Roadmap. It will allow us all to do many things we have yearned to do. Let us protect these gains by continuing to encourage everyone to exercise cautions and common sense.

Yours ever

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP
THE PRIME MINISTER