Kent County Council Coronavirus Update

This guide provides information on the national and local support available to help residents, businesses and voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector organisations respond to the impact of the Coronavirus (Covid-19). The guide also includes a summary of the latest Government announcements, alongside information on KCC’s website (kent.gov.uk). The guide is update regularly and, is not intended to be an exhaustive list of all the resources, funding and advice being issued, therefore it links to other sources of information where available.

NEW MEASURES IN RESPONSE TO A RISE IN COVID-19 INFECTIONS

The Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, held a press conference on Wednesday, 9 September, alongside England’s Chief Medical Officer, Professor Chris Whitty and Sir Patrick Vallance, the Government’s Chief Scientific Adviser, to announce new measures in response to a rise in Covid-19 infections.

Context for the changes

On Tuesday, 8 September, there were a reported 2,420 new cases of Covid-19 infection – the third successive day of more than 2,000 new cases of infection. On Monday, 7 September, there were 2,948 reported cases, which was the second largest 24-hour rise since May. New case numbers were about 1,000 a day in August. Professor Chris Whitty, has said that Covid-19 rates are now rising again especially in those aged 17 to 21, and the Health Secretary has said that the concerns is that “young people may pass it on to their parents who in turn pass it on to their parents”.

The Prime Minister said that the Government now needs “to act now to stop the virus spreading”. Professor Whitty said that the UK could follow the same pattern as France and Spain which have increased rates of infection. He added that “if you act rapidly”, “there is a reasonable chance” of bringing the rates down and he cited the Belgium Government who put measures in place earlier than France or Spain and they have seen the rate of infection decrease.

The Prime Minister said that “over time, the rules have become quite complicated”, so the Government is “simplifying and strengthening” these, to make them “easier for you to understand and for the police to enforce”. The Health and Social Care Secretary, Matt Hancock, has added that the new measures are focussed “on reducing social activity, which is where we’re increasingly seeing the transmission”. The Prime Minister emphasised that “everyone, at all times, should limit social contact as much as possible and minimise interactions with other households. It is safer to meet outdoors and you should keep your distance from anyone you don’t live with, even if they are close friends or family.”

The ‘rule of six’
• From Monday, 14 September, whether indoors or outdoors, it will be illegal in England, for people from different households to meet in groups of larger than 6. The new restrictions cover people of all ages. For example, children will not be allowed to gather in groups of more than six, to play informal games.

• This will apply to private homes and spaces – for example gardens, public outdoor spaces – for example parks, and venues such as bars, pubs, cafes, and restaurants.

These measures replace “both the existing ban on gatherings of more than 30 and the current guidance on allowing 2 households to meet indoors.”

The rule of 6 will be kept “under constant review” and only kept in place “as long as it’s necessary”. The Prime Minister has stressed that “these measures are not a new national lockdown” and stressed that they are being put in place to avoid a further national lockdown. Professor Whitty has said that the Government cannot put “an exact timescale” on how long the new measures will be in place. To give some context, Sir Patrick Vallance said that it is “inevitable there will be more infections” as the winter approaches, and Professor Whitty has added that the “period between now and spring will be difficult as this is respiratory virus”, and all respiratory diseases have an advantage in autumn and winter, because people tend to be indoors more.

The Government has published new guidance on meeting with others safely (social distancing), which is available here. The Government has also published further information in Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs): what you can and can’t do

**Enforcement**

• These measures will be legally enforceable. “Anyone breaking the rules risks being dispersed, fined and possibly arrested”. A £100 fine will be payable for non-compliance. This will double for each offence up to a maximum of £3,200. The Health Secretary has told BBC Breakfast that the measures will “be rigorously enforced by the police”.

**Exceptions**

• The Government has published regulations which detail the “limited exceptions” where groups can be larger than 6 people. The regulations are available here and include:

1. **People are members of the same household** - where everyone lives together, members of two households which are ‘linked households’, or ‘support bubbles’, or arrangements where children do not live in the same household as both their parents. Updated guidance on making a support bubble with another household is available here.

2. **Where the gathering is reasonably necessary for work purposes**, this includes:
   a) for the provision of voluntary or charitable services
   b) for registered education or training

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c) to provide registered childcare or supervised activities provided for children, including wraparound care, youth groups and activities, and children’s playgroups

d) to provide emergency assistance

e) to enable the avoidance of injury or escape from the risk of harm

f) to provide care to or assistance to a vulnerable person, including relevant personal care

g) to facilitate access to and contact between parents and children where they do not live in the same household

Where a group includes someone covered by such an exception (for example, someone who is working), they are not counted as part of the gatherings limit. This means - for example - a tradesperson can go into a household of six without breaching the limit, if they are there for work.

3. Where the gathering is a support group. ‘Support group’ means a group which is organised by a business, a charitable, benevolent or philanthropic institution or a public body to provide support to its members, such as (but not limited to):

a) victims of crime (including domestic abuse)

b) those with, or recovering from, addictions (including alcohol, narcotics or other substance addictions) or addictive patterns of behaviour

c) new parents

d) those with, or caring for persons with, any long-term illness or terminal condition or who are vulnerable

e) those facing issues related to their sexuality or identity including those living as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender

f) those who have suffered bereavement

4. For gatherings of up to 30 people for marriage or civil partnership.

5. For gatherings of no more than 30 people for a ‘significant event’. A ‘significant event gathering’ means a gathering for the purposes of a ceremony, rite or ritual. This includes:

(a) to mark a significant milestone in a person’s life, according to their religion or belief, such as events to celebrate a rite of passage or entry into a particular faith (other than a birthday) or coming of age.

(b) to mark a person’s death or celebrate their life following their death, such as a funeral, according to the deceased person’s religion or belief.

6. A wedding reception; reception following the formation of a civil partnership; or reception following the conversion of civil partnership to a marriage consisting of no more than 30 people in a public space.

7. A gathering for the purposes of protest, which has been organised by a business, a charitable, benevolent or philanthropic institution, a public body, or a political body, and

8. Organised sport or exercises classes, or licensed outdoor physical activity. A ‘sports gathering’ is a gathering which is organised for the purposes for allowing persons who are not elite sportspersons to take part in any sport or other fitness related activity which is organised by a business, charity, or public body. This does not include informal sport or fitness activity with family or friends, which must be limited to a group of 6

9. Elite sporting competition and training. For an elite sportsperson, their coach (or where the elite sportsperson is a child, their parent) and the gathering is necessary for a competition or training.

10. To fulfil a legal obligation, such as attending court or jury service.

11. The person concerned is attending a person giving birth (“M”), at M's request.
For organised events, a gathering organiser or manager is required to:
1) carry out a risk assessment, and
2) events need to be organised in compliance with Covid-19 secure guidance

There will be different regulations for those areas of the country subject additional local restrictions. Further information is available here

- **Venues following Covid-19 secure guidelines** (i.e. hygiene and safety measures set out by the Government) **will be able to continue to host more people in total, but no one should visit in a group of greater than 6.**

**Covid-secure venues include:**

- **Hospitality venues** – pubs, restaurants, bars and cafes
- **Shops and retail venues**
- **Workplaces**
- **Leisure venues**
- **Education and training settings.** Guidance for schools during the coronavirus outbreak is available here.
- **Registered childcare settings, and before or after-school clubs for children.** Guidance on protective measures for holiday and after-school clubs, and other out-of-school settings during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak is available here.
- **Places of worship**
- **Wedding and civil partnership ceremonies and receptions, or for other religious life-cycle ceremonies** - where up to 30 people will be able to attend. Guidance for wedding and civil partnership receptions and celebrations is available here.
- **Funerals** - where up to 30 people will be able to attend. Guidance for managing a funeral during the coronavirus pandemic is available here.
- **Organised indoor and outdoor sports, physical activity, and exercise classes.** Guidance for the public on the phased return of outdoor sport and recreation in England is available here. Guidance for people who work in grassroots sport and gym/leisure facilities is available here.
- **Youth groups or activities.** Guidance on managing youth sector activities and spaces during Covid-19 is available here.

**When you visit a Covid-secure venue you should:**

- Follow the limits on the number of other people you should meet with as a group - no more than six people unless you all live together (or are in the same support bubble)
- Avoid social interaction with anyone outside the group you are with, even if you see other people you know
- Provide your contact details to the organiser so that you can be contacted if needed by the NHS Test and Trace programme. Further Information on the NHS Test and Trace service is available here.

**Covid-secure requirements**
• Core Covid-secure requirements are mandatory for all hospitality businesses. Venues could be fined if they fail to ensure their premises remain COVID-secure. Further details will be set out shortly.

Businesses should demonstrate to their workers and attendees that they have properly assessed their risk and taken appropriate measures to mitigate it, for example by publishing their risk assessment online or making it available at the premises/event.

Those operating venues or running events should take steps to prevent large gatherings or mass events from taking place. The Government recommends that individual businesses or venues should consider the cumulative impact of many venues reopening in a small area. Businesses are encouraged to work with councils, neighbouring businesses, and travel operators to assess this risk and applying additional mitigations.

These could include:

• Further lowering capacity
• Staggering entry times with other venues and taking steps to avoid queues building up in surrounding areas.
• Arranging one-way travel routes between transport hubs and venues.
• Advising patrons to avoid particular forms of transport or routes and to avoid crowded areas when in transit to the venue.

The Government is also recommending that councils should avoid issuing licenses for events that could lead to larger gatherings forming and provide advice to businesses on how to manage events of this type. If appropriate, both local authorities and the Government have powers to close venues, to restrict access to public outdoor spaces, or to cancel events.

The Government has published simplified COVID-19 Secure guidance, which is available here. The Government has also updated its guidance on closing certain businesses and venues in England, which is available here.

**NHS Test and Trace service**

• From Friday, 18 September, businesses and other public settings, across England, where people meet socially, like hospitality venues (for example, pubs, bars, restaurants and cafes), close contact services (for example, hairdressers), tourism and leisure venues (for example, cinemas) must legally have a system in place to record the contact details of their customers, visitors and staff on their premises. Venues must also keep a record of all staff working on the premises on a given day and their contact details. Until now this system has not been mandatory. Further guidance and regulations will be set out specifying the settings which will be included.

Details will be stored for 21 days and shared with NHS Test and Trace, if requested. This will assist NHS Test and Trace to effectively contact everyone who may have been exposed to the virus during an outbreak in these settings and to provide the appropriate public health advice.

The contact details required include:
• name
• contact number
• date of visit
• arrival time
• departure time, if possible
• All collected data must comply with GDPR and will not be kept for longer than necessary.

Further information is available here. Further detail will be set out and clarified in regulations.

‘Covid-secure Marshals’ & a register of Environmental Health Officers

• Government is encouraging councils to introduce ‘Covid-secure Marshals’ to help support social distancing in towns and city centres. Government has said that ‘Covid-secure marshals’ will not be given new legal enforcement powers. Several councils, for example - Leeds City Council and Cornwall Council, have already employed volunteers and existing council employees in a similar role.
• Government will launch a register of newly qualified and recently retired Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) so that Local Authorities can recruit more quickly and fill any gaps.
• It is currently uncertain if these two measures will be funded by central Government.

Border Force

• Government will simplify the Passenger Locator Form needed for travelling to the UK and take measures to ensure passengers have filled out their form before departure.
• Government will be asking Border Force to “step up enforcement efforts at the border to ensure arrivals are complying with the quarantine rules”.

Local curfews

• The Government will restrict the opening hours of premises, initially in local lockdown areas, with the option of national action in the future. This has been introduced in Bolton, following a steep rise in cases, and will seek to restrict activities that may lead to a spread in the virus.

The planned pilots for audiences in stadiums & for conferences will be paused

• From Thursday, 10 September, pilot events planned for this weekend to test sports venues for the return of spectators have been changed, with the capacity reduced from 10,000 to 1,000. This is to enable “smaller, safer numbers, with strict conditions to ensure social distancing”.
• The Government will keep under review whether fans will be able to return to sports stadia from 1 October and if people can attend socially distanced business conferences and events.
• Sports pilots will not be able to take place in areas that have high coronavirus incidence rates. Further information is available here. The Government has also updated the guidance on the phased return of sport and recreation, which is available here.
Schools and colleges

- The Prime Minister said that his priority is to keep schools and colleges open, and he reiterated that they should only be closed as a “last resort”. He has added that “the long-term risks to children’s life chances of not going to school are significant and far greater than the health risks of going back to school”.

- However, Professor Whitty has said that “current policies would have to be looked at again” if the rate of infection in schools goes up.

Businesses

- The Prime Minister has said that “by bearing down on social contact and improving enforcement, we can keep schools and businesses open, in the knowledge they are COVID Secure”.

Universities

- University students will be expected to adhere to the same new rules as everyone else. The Prime Minister said – “for the sake of your education and your parents’ and your grandparents’ health: wash your hands, cover your face, make space, and don’t socially gather in groups of more than 6, now and when term starts”.

- The Department for Education (DfE) has published updated guidance for universities “on how they can operate in a COVID Secure way, including a clear request not to send students home in the event of an outbreak, so as to avoid spreading the virus across the country”. The revised guidance is available here. Additional information is available here.

Testing – increase in capacity

- The Prime Minister said that the Government is working to increase testing capacity to 500,000 tests a day by the end of October.

Mass population testing & “pre-event passports”

- The Prime Minister said that the Government is working on an “ambitious” plan, what he called a “moon-shot”, so that “in the near future” mass population testing could be used to identify people who are Covid-19 negative, to “allow people to lead more normal lives, without the need for social distancing”, “in the knowledge they cannot infect anyone else with the virus”. If a test were returned negative, the Prime Minister said that people might be able to attend sports venues or theatres, and workplaces could be “opened-up”. He added that “those isolating because they are a contact, or quarantining after travelling abroad, could after a period be tested and released”.

This would involve “saliva tests and rapid turnaround tests that can deliver results in just 20 minutes”, rather than swab testing. Saliva tests have been piloted in Southampton and the pilot has been extended in Hampshire. It has been reported that
there will also be a pilot in Manchester. The Prime Minister has also announced plans for a trial of mass testing for audience members for outdoor and indoor venues in Salford in October. The Prime Minister said that the hope is this could be rolled out more widely.

However, the Prime Minister added that “this progress is contingent on continued scientific advances and though we’re hopeful, I cannot 100% guarantee that those advances will be made”. Professor Whitty has added that it is “likely” that mass-testing will be available in the “not too distant future”, adding that “not too distant future covers quite a wide time range. And I think it’s important that what we don’t do is pin ourselves to a date and say, ‘By this time, this will be achieved’, because we do have to be absolutely sure that these tests work, and they work at scale”.

Vaccines and therapeutics

- Sir Patrick Vallance has said that with both vaccines and therapeutics (drugs), there has been “positive news, but there is a long way to go”.

The four “basics” of Covid-19 infection control

- The Prime Minister has reiterated the “basics” of Covid-19 infection control. This includes:
  1. HANDS: “Wash your hands, regularly and for 20 seconds.”
  2. FACE: Wear a face covering over your mouth and nose if you are in an enclosed space and in close contact with people you don’t normally meet”. Guidance on face coverings: when to wear one, exemptions, and how to make your own is available here.
  3. SPACE: Make space. Always stay 2 metres away from people you don’t live with – or 1 metre with extra precautions, like extra ventilation, screens, or face coverings.
  4. If you have Covid-19 symptoms, get a test and self-isolate”. The Prime Minister said that people should only book “a test if you have a fever, a new continuous cough, or you’ve lost your sense of taste or smell – if you don’t have those symptoms and haven’t been asked to book a test”.

Public information campaign

- The “Hands. Face. Space” national public information campaign is being re-launched. Further information is available here. This will run across TV, radio, print, social and digital display advertising, as well as on community media channels. A new film on the dangers of Covid-19 is available here.