

Covid Response Roadmap - March 2021

On Monday 22 February the Government announced a four step road map outlining how Covid restrictions will be lifted. Below we will summarise these steps and how they may impact your community business.

The full Government document can be found at - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-spring-2021>

Overview

All decisions taken on lifting restrictions will be based on the following 4 criteria -

- 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 new Variants of Concern.

The Government will allow a minimum of five weeks between each new step, which includes 4 weeks to assess the impact of the last restriction lifting and a week's notice for businesses and other organisations to prepare for the next step. They have stressed that decisions will be led by "data not dates" and therefore all timescales below are potentially subject to change.

There are no current plans to return to the previous Tier system, unless there is any "significant regional disparity" that emerges. This means that all changes will apply across England as a whole at the same time.

Some Things To Consider

- The 4 criteria outlined above show that the focus is on managing the impact of Covid on the NHS and on the success of the vaccine rollout. We are not aiming for a zero Covid approach. How will that impact on the confidence of your community, especially move vulnerable individuals, to come back to busy activities and buildings?

- It's important to remember that all dates are subject to change so if you are planning reopening, restarting of activities or taking bookings based on the earliest dates then they may need to change nearer the time.
- Social distancing and restrictions on households mixing are still going to be in place in some form until at least June. There is more detail below about the different stages but you should refresh yourself on what you did last year and plan to keep those measures in place until June.
- Remember that just because you can reopen doesn't mean you have to if you don't feel it can be done within the ongoing restrictions, or if it's not viable for you to do so. As restrictions lift the public will "be encouraged to make informed personal decisions" so you can also make informed organisational decisions.

Step 1 – March 2021

Step 1 includes changes on two different dates in March.

8 March

- Schools and colleges are open for all students. Practical Higher Education Courses.
- Recreation or exercise outdoors with household or one other person. No household mixing indoors.
- Wraparound childcare.

29 March

- Rule of 6 or two households outdoors. No household mixing indoors.
- Outdoor sport and leisure facilities reopening - can be used by people in line with the wider social contact limits above.
- Organised outdoor sport allowed (children and adults) - This will not be subject to the gatherings limits, but should be compliant with guidance issued by national governing bodies.
- Outdoor parent & child groups (up to 15 parents) - All children will be able to access any outdoor childcare and supervised activities. Parent and child groups can also take place outdoors with a limit of 15 attendees (children under five years of age do not count towards the attendee limit.)
- Minimise travel. No holidays.

Possible Implications for Community Businesses

At this step most community businesses will still not be able to open however if you do provide outdoor sports provision/facilities, or parent and child groups that can take place outdoors these services could restart from 29th March.

Step 2 – No earlier than 12 April

- Indoor leisure (including gyms) open for use individually or within household groups.
- Rule of 6 or two households outdoors. No household mixing indoors.
- Outdoor attractions such as zoos, theme parks and drive-in cinemas reopen.
- Libraries and community centres reopen
- Personal care premises and all retail can reopen
- Outdoor hospitality will be permitted
- All children's activities will be permitted as will indoor parent & child groups (up to 15 parents).
- Domestic overnight stays (household only).
- Self-contained accommodation (household only).
- Funerals (30), wakes, weddings and receptions (15).
- Minimise travel. No international holidays.
- People should still work from home where possible.

Possible Implications for Community Businesses

Community buildings are able to reopen at this step however currently there is no detailed guidance regarding what activities and services can take place other than the list above. It is worth noting that indoor household mixing is still not permitted at Step 2 so this is likely to have an impact on many of the activities that would normally take place in community buildings. If you do offer children and parent activities or leisure activities that can be done individually or within household groups these could potentially restart.

Step 3 – No earlier than 17 May

In Step 3, all but the most high-risk sectors will be able to reopen. In all settings, COVID-Secure guidance will remain in place and premises must not cater for groups larger than the legal limits.

- Indoor entertainment and attractions including children's play areas.
- 30 person limit for outdoors activities. Rule of 6 or two households mixing permitted indoors.
- Organised indoor adult sport allowed to restart.

- Most significant life events including christening, bar mitzvah etc up to 30 people
- Remaining outdoor entertainment, including performances.
- Remaining accommodation.
- Some large events permitted, the following capacity limits apply.
 - Indoor events: 1,000 or 50%.
 - Outdoor other events: 4,000 or 50%.
 - Outdoor seated events: 10,000 or 25%
- International travel - subject to review.

Step 3 also contains further information about possible relaxation of social contact restrictions stating that “the Government will further ease limits on social contact, enabling the public to make informed personal decisions. It will remain important for people to consider the risks for themselves, taking into account whether they and those they meet have been vaccinated or are at greater risk.”

The current expectation is that Step 3 will allow gatherings of up to 30 people outdoors and rule of 6 or with 1 other household indoors as mentioned above, however the guidance also states that “it may be possible to go further than this at Step 3 depending on the data”.

Possible Implications for Community Businesses

Step 3 feels like the stage when most activities can feasibly reopen, although there are still social distancing restrictions, particularly for indoor activities.

For those with larger spaces, performances and other indoor events can restart, but with restrictions on capacity. There is also a distinction between “outdoor seated” and “outdoor other” activities, so if you are planning to host a structured outdoor event where numbers can be monitored and controlled these could happen.

Nearer the launch of Step 3 it is worth checking for any updates on the changes regarding indoor mixing as it may be possible for this to be relaxed further than suggested in the current guidance.

Step 4 – No earlier than 21 June

At Step 4 the Government will remove all legal limits on social contact. Accompanying guidance on how best to reduce the risk of transmission will be published.

All remaining closed settings will reopen including large events, subject to the outcome of the scientific Events Research Programme.

- No legal limits on social contact
- Nightclubs.



- Larger events.
- No legal limit on life events.

Possible Implications for Community Businesses

Step 4 will enable community businesses to return to all normal activities.

While social distance measures are expected to end at this step, as suggested above there is likely to be ongoing recommendations regarding good hygiene and taking steps to reduce transmission.

“Hands, Face, Space” messaging, and precautions such as hand washing/sanitizing, good ventilation testing and isolating are likely to continue so measures put in place by community businesses last year will still be needed after Step 4.