

Kent County Council COVID-19 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 NATIONAL LOCKDOWN RESTRICTIONS

- The Prime Minister [made a televised address on Monday, 4 January](#) to announce new COVID-19 National Lockdown restrictions as a result of rising COVID-19 infections.
- The instruction from the Government is the same as in March last year – “Stay at home, Protect the NHS and Save Lives”.
- The Prime Minister emphasised that the new COVID-19 variant 50-70% more transmissible, and that hospitals under more pressure from COVID-19, than at any time since the start of the start of the pandemic. England's hospitalisations have increased by 30% in the last week. On the 29 December, more than 80,000 people tested positive for COVID-19 across the UK, and the number of people dying from COVID-19 has increased by 20% in the last week. The Health Secretary has also reiterated that the new COVID-19 variant “is so much more easily transmitted, it's so much more contagious. You only need to come into contact with a tiny amount of it to catch the disease”.
- The Prime Minister has [said](#) “Let's face it, we face a very difficult few weeks and months until the vaccine comes on-stream”.
- Consequently, the COVID-19 threat level, which is set by the Joint Biosecurity Centre, has moved from level 4 - a high or rising level of transmission, to level 5 – meaning a "material risk of healthcare services being overwhelmed". The UK's four Chief Medical Officers (CMOs) and NHS England Medical Director [have said](#) - “We are not confident that the NHS can handle a further sustained rise in cases and without further action there is a material risk of the NHS in several areas being overwhelmed over the next 21 days”.
- Scotland's First Minister [has announced](#) that Scotland will be placed in a full lockdown from midnight tonight. While, the Welsh Health Minister, Vaughan Gething, has said that the Welsh lockdown restrictions will likely last for the whole of January.

This update comprises: the [new national lockdown measures](#), [vaccine rollout](#), and the [infection rate](#)

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NEW NATIONAL LOCKDOWN MEASURES

England is now under a new national lockdown

[The full National lockdown: Stay at Home guidance](#)
[Further information](#)

Summary: what you can and cannot do during the national lockdown

- **You must not leave, or be outside of your home except where necessary**, until at least 15 February. You may leave the home to:
 - **Shop** for basic necessities, for you or a vulnerable person.
 - **Go to work, or provide voluntary or charitable services**, if you cannot reasonably do so from home.
 - **Exercise with your household (or support bubble) or one other person**, this should be limited to once per day, and you should not travel outside your local area.
 - **Meet your [support bubble](#) or [childcare bubble](#)** where necessary, but only if you are legally permitted to form one.
 - **Seek medical assistance or avoid injury, illness or risk of harm (including domestic abuse)**
 - **Attend education or childcare** - for those eligible
- **Colleges, primary and secondary schools will remain open only for vulnerable children and the children of [critical workers](#)**. All other children will learn remotely until February half term. GCSE and A-level exams are unlikely to go ahead as planned. The Prime Minister has said that the reasoning for closing schools is that schools “may act as vectors for transmission, causing the virus to spread between households”.
- The Prime Minister has said that free school meals will continue.
- Devices to support remote education will also be distributed.
- Early Years settings remain open.
- **Higher Education provision will remain online until mid-February** for all except future critical worker courses.
- **If you do leave home for a permitted reason**, you should always stay local in the village, town, or part of the city where you live. You may leave your local area for a legally permitted reason, such as for work.
- **The Clinically Extremely Vulnerable have been advised to shield again**. If you are Clinically Extremely Vulnerable you should only go out for medical appointments, exercise or if it is essential. You should not attend work. [Guidance on shielding and protecting people who are Clinically Extremely Vulnerable from COVID-19](#).
- **You cannot meet other people you do not live with, or have formed a [support bubble](#) with, unless for a permitted reason**. Equally, you may exercise on your own, with one other person, or with your household or support bubble. Support bubbles will still be permitted.
- The instruction to [stay 2 metres apart](#) from anyone not in your household has been reiterated.

Which businesses, venues and activities must close

Summary:

- **All non-essential retail and hospitality must remain closed or close. Government guidance gives the following as examples of non-essential retail:** clothing and homeware stores, vehicle showrooms (other than for rental), betting shops, tailors, tobacco and vape shops, electronic goods and mobile phone shops, auction houses (except for auctions of livestock or agricultural equipment) and market stalls selling non-essential goods. **Non-essential retail venues can continue to be able to operate click-and-collect (where goods are pre-ordered and collected off the premises) and delivery services.**
- **Restaurants and other premises can continue delivery or takeaway.** All food and drink (including alcohol) can continue to be provided by delivery. Pubs and restaurants will not be permitted to sell take-away alcohol.
- **Personal care facilities** such as hair, beauty, tanning and nail salons. Tattoo parlours, spas, massage parlours, body and skin piercing services must also close. These services should not be provided in other people's homes.
- **Community centres and halls must close** except for a limited number of exempt activities.
- **Leisure and sports facilities such as leisure centres and gyms, swimming pools, and sports courts.**
- **Outdoor sports venues must close. Outdoor team sports will not be permitted.** Professional sports, including the Premier League, may continue.
- **Entertainment venues such as theatres, concert halls, cinemas, museums and galleries,** casinos, amusement arcades, bingo halls, bowling alleys, skating rinks, indoor play, and soft play centres.
- **Accommodation such as hotels, hostels, guest houses and campsites,** except for specific circumstances.

The guidance on [closing certain businesses and venues in England](#) will be updated.

What businesses, venues and activities can remain open

Summary:

- Essential retail such as **food shops, supermarkets, pharmacies, garden centres, building merchants and suppliers of building products and off-licences.**
- **Market stalls selling essential retail**
- **Businesses providing repair services**
- **Petrol stations, automatic (but not manual) car washes, vehicle repair and MOT services, bicycle shops, and taxi and vehicle hire businesses.**
- **Banks, building societies, post offices, short-term loan providers and money transfer businesses**
- **Laundrettes and dry cleaners**
- **Medical and dental services**
- **Vets, retailers of products and food for the upkeep and welfare of animals, animal rescue centres, boarding facilities, animal groomers and agricultural supplies shops**
- **Car parks, public toilets, and motorway service areas**
- **Storage and distribution facilities**

- **Libraries can remain open to provide access to IT and digital services** – for example for people who do not have it at home – and for click-and-collect services
- **Nurseries and other early years childcare**
- **Playgrounds can remain open.**
- **Places of worship can remain open** – this includes communal worship.
- **Weddings and civil partnership ceremonies** must only take place with up to 6 people and must only take place in COVID-19 secure venues or in public outdoor spaces unless in exceptional circumstances.
- **Funerals** can be attended by a maximum of 30 people.
- **Funeral directors, and crematoriums and burial grounds**
- **Outdoor parts of botanical gardens and heritage sites** for exercise.
- **Mobility and disability support shops**
- **The majority of public services**

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New legislation

- **The legislation to enforce these measures will be [published on Tuesday](#).**
- **The Prime Minister is recalling Parliament on Wednesday, 6 January.**

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Vaccines

- The Prime Minister has said that the “one huge difference” with the March national lockdown and today’s is that there are now vaccines being rolled-out, particularly with approval and roll-out of the AstraZeneca vaccine from today.
- **The Prime Minister has said [set-out a timetable for vaccine roll-out](#).** The NHS’s “realistic expectations for the vaccination programme in the coming weeks”. “by the middle of February. If things go well...we expect to have offered the first vaccine dose to everyone in the four top[priority groups identified by the the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI). That means vaccinating all residents of a care home for older adults and their carers, everyone over the age of 70, all front-line health and social care workers, and everyone who is extremely clinically vulnerable”. “If we succeed in vaccinating all these groups” this “will eventually enable us to lift many of the restrictions we have endured for so long”.
- The Prime Minister added that “I must emphasise that even if we achieve this goal, there remains a time-lag of two to three weeks from getting a jab to receiving immunity, and there will be a further time-lag before the pressure on the NHS is lifted. We should remain cautious about the timetable ahead, but if our understanding of the virus doesn’t change dramatically once again, if the roll-out of the vaccine programme continues to be successful, if deaths start to fall as the vaccine starts to take effect, then critically if everyone plays their part by following the rules, then I hope we can steadily move out of lockdown, reopening schools after the February half-terms and starting cautiously to move regions down the tiers”.
- **The Prime Minister [said](#) on Sunday, 3 January, that there would be 530,000 doses of the Oxford/Astrazeneca vaccine deployed at around 540 GP vaccination**

locations, and about 101 hospital sites on Monday, 4 January. He added that “There are a few millions more Pfizer (vaccines) still to be used”, and that Government hopes they “will be able to do tens of millions in the course of the next three months”. The Health Secretary has said that “If there were two million doses a week being delivered, then the NHS would deliver at that speed”, but “that supply isn’t there yet”.

- On Wednesday, 30 December the [Government accepted](#) the recommendation from the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) to authorise Oxford University/AstraZeneca’s COVID-19 vaccine for use, and the UK rollout of the Oxford University/AstraZeneca vaccine [started on Monday, 4 January 2021](#).
- The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) also [published their latest advice](#) for the priority groups to receive the Oxford University/AstraZeneca’s COVID-19 vaccine. They recommend that “as many people on the JCVI priority list as possible should sequentially be offered a first vaccine dose as the initial priority”. The [four UK Chief Medical Officers have said](#) that this “will protect the greatest number of at risk people overall in the shortest possible time and will have the greatest impact on reducing mortality, severe disease and hospitalisations and in protecting the NHS and equivalent health services. Operationally this will mean that second doses of both vaccines will be administered towards the end of the recommended vaccine dosing schedule of 12 weeks. This will maximise the number of people getting vaccine and therefore receiving protection in the next 12 weeks”.

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Infections

- The Prime Minister emphasised that the new COVID-19 variant 50-70% more transmissible, and that hospitals under more pressure from COVID-19, than at any time since the start of the start of the pandemic. England’s hospitalisations have increased by 30% in the last week. On the 29 December, more than 80,000 people tested positive for COVID-19 across the UK, and the number of people dying from COVID-19 has increased by 20% in the last week.
- The most recent Office for National Statistics (ONS) [COVID-19 Infection Survey, UK: 24 December 2020](#) has reported, for 12 to 18 December 2020, the percentage of people testing positive for COVID-19 in England has continued to increase; they estimate 645,800 people within the community population in England had COVID-19. This equates to around 1 in 85 people. For the period [6 to 12 December 2020](#) this figure was 567,300 people within the community population, equating to around 1 in 95 people. **The percentage of people testing positive has continued to increase sharply in London, the East of England, and the South East; London now has the highest percentage of people testing positive.** The percentage of people testing positive has increased for all age groups except those aged 50 to 69 years where there are early signs of an increase, and those aged 70 years and above in whom there are early signs of a decrease. **In the most recent possible time period (14 to 18 December), London, the South East, and the East of England have the highest percentages of positive cases that are compatible with the new variant of the virus.**

- The latest [coronavirus dashboard](#) has reported **58,784 further cases in the UK**. This is the highest daily figure for recorded cases and the seventh day in a row that the daily number of cases has been over 50,000. The UK has recorded 407 further deaths.
- On **23 December 2020** the **Government Office for Science, Department of Health and Social Care, and Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies** reported that [the latest R number in the UK](#) was **1.1-1.3**, with the latest growth rate range for the UK being **+1% to +6% per day**. In the South East this was **1.2-1.4 and +4 to +7**. The previous version of this data reported the R number and growth rate for the UK and England between 1.1-1.2 and 1.1-1.3 respectively (from 0.9-1.0 and 0.8-1.0), with the rate in the South East between 1.1-1.3 (from 0.9-1.1), and a growth rate per day of +3 to +5 (from -1 to +1).
- [The latest figures for Kent](#)
- The latest [COVID-19 hospital admissions figures for England](#) reported 3,145 admissions on Saturday, 28 December. on 1 April 2020, during the peak of the 'first wave' of COVID-19, this figure was 3,099. As of 8am on 4 January, the total number of COVID-19 patients in hospital in England was 26,626. Chris Hopson, head of NHS Providers, said on 3 January that there had been very large increases" "for NHS hospital beds occupied by confirmed COVID-19 patients", for London, [the South East] and [East of England]" at "+8%, +6% and 5%" respectively in one day.