

Our Plan to Rebuild: The UK Government's COVID-19 Recovery Strategy

Overview

The Government has outlined its plan for the next stages of its response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The majority of these measures are only applicable to England with devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland soon to publish their own plans. The advice of the devolved administrations remains to stay at home. The Government has outlined a rough timeline for the easing out of lockdown measures, beginning on Wednesday 13th May 2020.

Moving to the Next Phase

The UK Government has outlined five tests that inform any easing of the current lockdown measures:

- 1) Protect the NHS's ability to cope; we must be confident that we are able to provide sufficient critical care and specialist treatment.
- 2) See a sustained and consistent fall in the daily death rates
- 3) Have reliable data that the rate of infection (R) is decreasing to manageable levels across the board
- 4) Be confident that the range operational challenges (such as testing capacity and PPE) are under control and able to meet demand.
- 5) Be confident that any adjustments will not lead to a second peak of infections.

The Government's aim has been to save lives which "continues to be the overriding priority at the heart of this plan". The plan elaborates that the Government wishes to:

"return life to as close to normal as possible, for as many people as possible, as fast and fairly as possible... in a way that avoids a new epidemic, minimises lives lost and maximises health, economic and social outcomes."

First Consideration: Health Outcomes

- The government stresses that overall health outcomes, such as those not related to COVID-19 must also be taken into consideration. For example, postponement of important medical care and public health interventions.

Second Consideration: Economic Outcomes

- The plan highlights that "a strong economy is the best way to protect people's jobs and ensure that the Government can fund the country's vital public services."
- A number of factors are considered such as
 - ➔ Sustainability of public finances
 - ➔ Overall financial stability
 - ➔ Distributional effects of measures

Third Consideration: Social Outcomes

- This includes the number of days of education lost and the fairness of any actions undertaken.

The Plan for a Phased Recovery

There are plans for two further phases of the UK recovery beyond the current lockdown measures (phase one). Phase two is "smarter controls" and phase three is "reliable treatment".

Importantly, however, each of these phases contains **different steps within which specific lockdown measures will be lifted and/or eased and sectors of the economy will reopen.**

The Government has provided an indicative timeline and roadmap for these steps which is outlined below. The plan states that any “changes will be announced at least 48 hours before coming into effect.”

Step One

These changes will come into place from **Wednesday 13th May** in England. The advice for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland remains to stay at home.

- Sectors of the economy that are permitted to be open and should be open include: food production, construction, manufacturing, logistics, distribution and scientific research in laboratories. Hospitality and non-food retail are to remain closed throughout the first step.
- These sectors will be aided by the Government’s COVID-19 Secure Workplaces guidelines.
- Schools will remain closed but the plan urges vulnerable children or the children of critical workers to attend school. Paid childcare can now take place subject to meeting public health guidelines.
- Public transport is still to be avoided wherever possible (even for key workers).
- Homemade cloth face coverings can help to reduce the transmission of the virus and should be worn in enclosed spaces where social distancing is not always possible.
- People can exercise outside as much as they desire. They can also meet up with one person from outside of their household as long as social distancing is adhered to. People may also drive to outdoor open spaces within England.
- The clinically vulnerable need to avoid as much contact as possible but do not need to be shielded. The clinically extremely vulnerable are to remain home.
- “The Government will require all international arrivals to self-isolate in their accommodation for fourteen days on arrival”, this excludes however the common travel area. These measures will not be in place on May 13th but are to begin as soon as possible.

Step Two

The second step will be made no earlier than **1st June** and will include:

- A phased return for early years settings and schools. Priorities will be given to Year 6, 10, 12 and the youngest children. The Government is aiming for all primary children to return before summer if possible.
- Opening non-essential retail and permitting cultural and sporting events to take place behind closed doors.

Step Three

The third step will be made no earlier than **4th July** and will include:

- Open remaining businesses such as personal care, hospitality, public places and leisure facilities.

Accompanying Government Work

The Government has outlined 14 programmes of work which will assist with the UK response. These include: secure NHS and care capacity; protecting care homes; smarter shielding for the most vulnerable; more effective, risk-based targeting of protection measures; accurate disease monitoring; testing and tracing; increased scientific understanding; COVID secure workplaces; better distancing measures; economic and social support to maintain livelihoods; treatments and vaccines; international awareness and action; public communication, understanding and enforcement; and sustainable government structures.