



Coronavirus guidance FAQs: what you can and can't do

The government has set out its plan to return life to as near normal as we can. Here's a summary of the advice which relates to employers.

Workplaces

Who is allowed to go to work?

In the first instance, employers should make every effort to support working from home, including by providing suitable IT and equipment as they have been already. This will apply to many different types of businesses, particularly those who typically would have worked in offices or online.

Where work can only be done in the workplace, the government has set out tailored guidelines for employers to help protect their workforce and customers from coronavirus while still continuing to trade or getting their business back up and running. More detailed COVID-19 secure guidelines are expected, which have been developed in consultation with businesses and trades unions.

These 'back to work' guidelines apply to those in essential retail like:

- supermarkets
- those in construction and manufacturing
- those working in labs and research facilities
- those administering takeaways and deliveries at restaurants and cafes
- tradesmen, cleaners and others who work in people's homes
- those who are facilitating trade or transport goods.

Non-essential retail, restaurants, pubs, bars, gyms and leisure centres will remain closed. They will reopen in a phased manner provided it is safe to do so. There are specific guidelines for those who are vulnerable, shielding, or showing symptoms.

What is a critical worker?

Critical workers are those working in health and care and other essential services, who can still take their children to school or childcare and can use hotels and other accommodation services for work related purposes - for example if they can't get home after a shift or need to isolate from their families. This critical worker definition does not affect whether or not you can travel to work – if you are not a critical worker, you may still travel to work provided if you cannot reasonably work from home.

What is meant by the phased approach?

Not all forms of work will return to normal at once. People will have to prepare for a new type of normal. The government needs to make sure that any changes are carefully monitored and are not doing anything to increase the risk of infection and push the Reproductive value (R0) above 1. R0 describes how many people on average will be infected for every one person who has COVID-19. It will ensure that businesses have time to prepare their premises to operate as safely as possible. More detail about phasing is expected in due course.

Will pubs / cinemas / hairdressers open in July?

The roadmap sets out that some businesses (like pubs, cinemas or hairdressers) will not open until Step 3 is reached. The government's current planning assumption is that this step will be no earlier than 4 July and subject to further detailed scientific advice, provided closer to the time, on how far we can go. When they do reopen, they should also meet the COVID-19 secure guidelines.

What are the 'Covid-Secure' safety guidelines workplaces have to be put in place?

Clear, practical steps that businesses should take to ensure their workplaces are safe and give their staff the confidence to return back to work have been set out. More detailed COVID-19 secure guidelines are expected. These include how to keep as many people as possible safely apart from those they do not live with in various workplace settings.

Do people need to wear face coverings at work?

Face coverings are not compulsory. However, if you can, people are advised to wear face coverings in enclosed public spaces where social distancing is not possible or where you are more likely to come into contact with people you do not normally meet. For example, on public transport or in some shops. Face coverings can help us protect each other and reduce the spread of the disease if you are suffering from coronavirus, but not showing symptoms. A face covering is not the same as the surgical masks or respirators used as part of personal protective equipment by healthcare and other workers; these should continue to be reserved for those who need them to protect against risks in their workplace such as health and care workers and those in industrial settings like those exposed to dust hazards.



Workers' rights

Employers and staff should discuss and agree working arrangements. Employers should make all efforts to help people to work from home where they can. But where work cannot be done at home, employers should take clear, practical steps to help protect workers and create safe places to work, such as shift working or staggering processes. To identify the precautions needed to manage risk, your employer should discuss the workplace risk assessment to identify the practical ways of managing those risks.

Any employees concerned that their employer is not taking all practical steps to promote social distancing can report this to the local authority or the Health and Safety Executive who can take a range of action, including where appropriate requiring the employer to take additional steps.

Employers are urged to take socially responsible decisions and listen to the concerns of their staff. Employers and employees should come to a pragmatic agreement about their working arrangements. If individuals need advice, they should approach ACAS where they can get impartial advice about work disputes.

Schools and childcare

Can children go back to early years settings, schools or university?

Those who are currently eligible to use school provision (children of critical workers and vulnerable children) are initially urged to attend. As soon as it is safe to do so it will bring more year groups back to school in a phased way when it is safe to have larger numbers of children within schools, but not before.

Schools should prepare to begin opening for more children from 1 June. The government expects children to be able to return to early years settings, and for Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 to be back in school in smaller class sizes from this point.

Secondary schools and further education colleges should also prepare to begin some face to face contact with Year 10 and 12 pupils who have key exams next year, in support of their continued remote, home learning. The government's ambition is for all primary school children to return to school before the summer for a month if feasible.