

2020 will see record fall in UK output

In his [Spending Review announcement](#) this week, Chancellor Rishi Sunak delivered some sobering figures stating that the [Office for Budget Responsibility forecasts](#) that the UK economy will contract this year by 11.3%, the largest fall in output for more than 300 years.

As the restrictions are eased, they expect the economy to start recovering growing by 5.5% next year, 6.6% in 2022, then 2.3%, 1.7% and 1.8% in the following years. Even with growth returning, our economic output is not expected to return to pre-crisis levels until the fourth quarter of 2022.

[Figures from the Office for National Statistics](#) show that output fell around 25% between February and April, reversing 18 years of economic growth in just two months, before starting to pick back up from May as the economy reopened. While GDP grew by 15.5% in Q3 2020 as restrictions on movement eased, GDP in September remained 8.2% below the levels seen in February 2020.

The UK's Covid-19 Winter Plan

The Prime Minister has published a 64-page [Covid-19 Winter Plan](#) setting out the Government's programme for suppressing the virus, protecting the NHS and the vulnerable, keeping education and the economy going and providing a route back to normality.

New regional tiered system introduced in England

The Government has published [guidance explaining what you need to know](#) about the new tiered Covid restrictions taking effect from 2 December across England and has produced a [suite of posters](#) for display in business premises.

A regionally targeted approach with three different tiers of restrictions applying in different parts of the country will replace the current national restrictions with: [Tier 1: Medium alert](#), [Tier 2: High alert](#) and [Tier 3: Very High alert](#).

You can check what applies to your area on this [postcode checker](#) or by reading the [full list of local areas](#) within each tier.

The Prime Minister confirmed in his [announcement](#) yesterday that in all tiers:

- shops, gyms and the leisure sector, hairdressers, other forms of personal care, places of worship will reopen.
- You should continue to work from home if you can.
- The rule of 6 will once again apply in public outdoor spaces and organised outdoor sport can resume.

Covid restrictions across each devolved nation

The Scottish Government has published [a list of Covid protection levels by area](#) along with information on what you can and cannot do in each area. Information for those in [Wales](#) and [Northern Ireland](#) is also on the respective devolved nations' websites.

New scheme to reduce self-isolation period

A [Test to Release for International Travel scheme](#) starts on 15 December, enabling people who need to self-isolate on arrival in England to have the option of paying for a private Covid-19 test.

The earliest you can take the test is at least five days after you left a destination not on the [travel corridor list](#) and if the result is negative, you can stop self-isolating. The scheme is voluntary and applies to those self-isolating in England only.

Support for the self-employed

HMRC is hosting a series of free one-hour webinars to provide an overview of the Self-Employment Income Support Grant Extension being launched on the 30 November 2020 along with details of what support is available for the self-employed.

Members can [register now to attend](#) one of the webinars, which are taking place between 1 and 8 December.

Test and Trace Support Payment

Those who have been contacted by NHS Test and Trace and told to self-isolate on or after 28 September 2020 are under a legal obligation to do so and could be eligible for a £500 Test and Trace Support Payment. [Guidance](#) which sets out who can claim support and explains how to apply has been updated.

Latest indicators on the UK economy and society

The Office for National Statistics' [latest Business Impact of Coronavirus Survey](#) for the period 2 to 15 November shows that the percentage of UK businesses that temporarily closed or paused trading has risen to levels last seen in Wave 8 (15 June to 28 June 2020).

Of all UK businesses that have not permanently ceased trading:

- 15% of their workforce were on partial or full furlough leave, up from 9% in Wave 17.
- 30% were working remotely, up from 28%.
- 51% were working at their normal place of work, down from 60%.

UK restrictions during the festive period

The UK Government and the Devolved Administrations have agreed on joint arrangements for an easing of social [restrictions over the Christmas period](#), allowing up to three households to form a 'Christmas bubble' from 23 to 27 December. The rules are:

- you can only be in one Christmas bubble
- you cannot change your Christmas bubble
- your Christmas bubble should not include people from more than three households

Individuals will be able to travel between tiers and across the whole of the UK without restriction within the five-day period to meet with their Christmas bubble and can meet in private homes or in your garden, places of worship, or public outdoor spaces.

You can also continue to meet people who are not in your Christmas bubble outside of your home in accordance with the [rules in the tier](#) where you are staying.

Vaccine update

The [government has formally requested](#) that the UK's independent medicines regulator assesses the suitability of Oxford/AstraZeneca's Covid-19 vaccine for temporary supply, as soon as the company submits the necessary safety, quality and efficacy data.

The UK will be one of the first countries in the world to receive the vaccine, IF authorised, with AstraZeneca expecting to have up to 4 million doses ready for the UK by the end of the year and 40 million by the end of March 2021. The UK has signed an agreement securing access to 100 million doses of the vaccine.