

Covid-19 Bulletin

21 December 2020



Government announces new Tier 4 'Stay at Home'

As a response to a rapid rise in infections attributed to the spread of a new variant of Covid-19, tougher restrictions have been introduced for London, large parts of the South East and East of England, with a new Tier 4: 'Stay at Home' alert level. Tier 4 restrictions will remain in place until the next formal Government review on 30 December.

As a result, the following areas have moved from Tier 3 to Tier 4:

- Kent, Buckinghamshire, Berkshire, Surrey (excluding Waverley), Gosport, Havant, Portsmouth, Rother and Hastings;
- London (all 32 boroughs and the City of London); and
- the East of England (Bedford, Central Bedford, Milton Keynes, Luton, Peterborough, Hertfordshire, Essex excluding Colchester, Uttlesford and Tendring).

Restrictions for all the English tiers have been updated in light of this new tier. Vehicle rental locations, repair services and MOT centres can remain open.

[Tier 4-Stay at Home](#): what you can and cannot do in a Tier 4 area.

[Tier 3: Very High alert](#): what you can and cannot do in an area in Tier 3 of local restrictions.

[Tier 2: High alert](#): what you can and cannot do in an area in Tier 2 of local restrictions.

[Tier 1: Medium alert](#): what you can and cannot do in an area in Tier 1 of local restrictions.

See specific guidance for [Scotland](#), [Wales](#) and [Northern Ireland](#).

Updated Covid-19 travel restrictions

Governments across the UK have updated their travel advice.

In England, people should stay at home and not leave their Tier 4 area. If you need to travel you should stay local - meaning avoiding travelling outside of your village, town or the part of a city where you live - and look to reduce the number of journeys you make overall. The list of reasons you can leave your home and area include, but are not limited to:

- travel to work where you cannot work from home
- travel to education and for caring responsibilities
- matters related to a house sale or residential rental
- returning home
- visit those in your support bubble - or your childcare bubble for childcare
- attend hospital, GP and other medical appointments or visits where you have had an accident or are concerned about your health
- buying goods or services from premises that are open in Tier 4 areas, including vehicle rental, but these should be within your local area wherever possible
- outdoor recreation or exercise. This should be done locally wherever possible, but you can travel a short distance within your Tier 4 area to do so if necessary (for example, to access an open space)

People should use the same exceptions when considering whether they can travel into a Tier 4 area from another part of the UK.

Those in Tier 4 areas will not be permitted to travel abroad, apart from limited exceptions, including work. People in Tiers 1, 2 and 3 should 'stay local'.

There are similar restrictions in [Scotland](#), [Wales](#) and [Northern Ireland](#).

Vehicle testing in English Tier 4 areas

The Prime Minister has announced new Tier 4 restrictions in England to control the spread of coronavirus.

Heavy vehicle testing can continue under all Tiers with Covid-19 secure measures in place. The DVSA will continue to provide the vehicle standards assessors needed to test heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) and public service vehicles (PSVs) safely. Vehicles and trailers which legally need a test should continue to be the priority for bookings.

Operators should continue to manage the regular maintenance and inspection schedule for their vehicles and trailers. This is a legal requirement under their operator's licence.

[A test centre service](#) is available to help vehicle operators get test slots at ATFs.

If you have any queries about exemptions, contact: test.exemptions@dvs.gov.uk.

UK's furlough scheme to be extended

The Chancellor has announced that the UK's [furlough scheme](#) will be extended for an extra month until the end of April 2021. Under the furlough scheme, employees placed on leave receive 80% of their pay, up to a maximum of £2,500 a month.

Businesses will also be given until the end of March 2021 to access the Bounce Back Loan Scheme, Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, and the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme. These had been due to close at the end of January. This announcement comes ahead of the Budget, which the Chancellor has confirmed will take place on 3 March 2021.

[Further business support advice on GOV.UK website](#).

Some aspects of business support are devolved. Specific information for businesses and employers in [Northern Ireland](#), [Scotland](#) and [Wales](#) is available.