

EMPLOYER'S ROADMAP OUT OF LOCKDOWN 3

An essential guide for employers in England to prepare for each stage of the easing of restrictions.

MAR
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Step 1 (Part 1)

Schools reopen (on phased basis for secondary school children) and wraparound childcare for working parents resumes

- Consider whether any temporary working arrangements for parents/ carers (e.g. reduced hours, furlough, unpaid leave) need to end. Confirm all changes in writing after consultation with employee. Update payroll to reflect changes. Holiday entitlement may need to be adjusted.
- Update payroll to ensure staff receive correct pay if working arrangements change part-way through a pay period.
- Reintegrate staff who have been absent for extended periods: provide necessary support, training, etc.
- Prepare for working parents to be absent on short notice, due to children needing to self-isolate. Review relevant policies, including dependents' leave and parental leave policies.

Greater availability of Covid testing

- Free rapid lateral flow tests are now available to all businesses. Register interest by 31 March 2021.
- If workplace open, consider establishing workplace testing. Draft workplace testing policy and communicate with staff. Update risk assessment.

MAR
29

Step 1 (Part 2)

Outdoor gatherings of either six people or two households permitted

- Consider new guidance on staff meeting outside. Update policies as appropriate, addressing health and safety, bullying and discrimination risks.

New guidance expected setting out that people should continue to work from home where they can

- Consider whether to allow more people to attend the workplace (e.g. for mental health reasons). If workplaces are re-opening or attendance expected to increase, update risk assessment. Consider whether those who are unable or unwilling to return to the workplace, at this stage, may be disadvantaged and address any discrimination risks. Communicate clearly and consult with staff on any changes to workplace opening.

Legal requirement to stay at home will end

- It will no longer be unlawful for staff to attend their workplace, even if they can work from home. However, consider risks of permitting staff to attend work in breach of guidance (for example, health and safety, discrimination, and reputational risks).

Everyone in top four priority cohorts expected to have been offered first dose of vaccine and vaccination rollout continues to lower age groups

- Consider implementing a vaccination policy, with clear guidelines for processing data about staff members' vaccination status (and conduct data protection impact assessment).
- Consider offering paid leave to attend vaccination appointments and also additional sick leave for those suffering side effects.

Formal shielding expected to end by 31 March 2021. New advice and guidance expected for those who are Clinically Extremely Vulnerable to COVID-19 ('CEV')

- Review new guidance and consider extent to which those who are CEV are able to return to work, should continue to work from home, or if other arrangements are needed. Consult with employees.
- Consider how to integrate CEV staff members, who have been shielding and unable to work from home, back into the workforce. Consider how to protect and support CEV staff members who continue to be vulnerable longer term, including those who have not been vaccinated or for whom the vaccination does not offer sufficient protection.
- Consider if employees may be disabled and if reasonable adjustments are necessary.
- Update risk assessment as required.

Key:

■ Key changes

■ Action points for employers

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APR
12 Step 2 (no earlier than the 12 April 2021)

Non-essential retail, personal care premises, and public buildings reopen

- Consider if more employees will wish to return to the workplace once retail and hospitality venues reopen. Update risk assessment.

Hospitality venues can serve people outdoors

- Review client and staff entertainment policies.

Stay local guidance lifted and self-contained accommodation reopens

- Review annual leave policies and approach to competing holiday requests in anticipation of higher volume of annual leave requests once restrictions on travel/ overnight accommodation/ weddings are lifted.

Work from home guidance expected to be lifted in 10 weeks

- Prepare for when guidance to work from home is lifted.
- Consult with staff about new working arrangements and use of office space.
- Review flexible working and remote working policies.
- Update risk assessment.

MAY
17 Step 3 (no earlier than the 17 May 2021)

Businesses in all but the highest risk sectors may be able to reopen

- Review guidance as to whether office staff should attend work.
- Build on staff consultations about returning to the workplace after restrictions have been lifted: consider, for example, technology or other facilities required to support a new way of working; physical changes required to work spaces and layouts; and whether any existing roles will no longer be required and if new roles will need to be created.
- Update risk assessment.

Outdoors, most social contact rules will be lifted (gatherings over 30 people still illegal)

- Update communications with staff regarding socialising, addressing health and safety, bullying and discrimination risks.

Indoor hospitality resumes (table service only) and rule of six or two households permitted to mix indoors

- Review client and staff entertainment policies.

Outcome of review of international travel expected

- Review latest guidelines and consider impact on international travel and on overseas hires or transfers to the UK. Update policies as necessary: for example, if new testing or quarantine requirements introduced.

JUN
21 Step 4 (no earlier than the 21 June 2021)

All legal limits on social contact removed

All remaining premises, including nightclubs, reopen

Expected that work from home guidance will be lifted following government review

- Consider changes to working arrangements and changes to office space.
- Implement any new working arrangements.
- Consult with any staff members who are unable or unwilling to return to the workplace.

New guidance on how best to reduce the risk of transmission (e.g. whether social distancing, the wearing of face coverings, and other measures may be lifted)

- Conduct risk assessment, incorporating new guidance on how to reduce transmission.

Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme continues until 30 September 2021

- From 1 July 2021, employers must contribute towards the cost of furloughed employees' wages: 10% of wages (up to a maximum of £312.50 per employee), rising to 20% (up to a maximum of £625) from 1 August 2021.
- Consider whether redundancies will be necessary in view of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme closing on 30 September 2021. Start collective consultation at least 45 days before first dismissal where 100 or more employees to be dismissed within 90 days (and allow at least 30 days where 20 or more employees to be dismissed).

Key:

- Key changes
- Action points for employers