

First Minister's statement on easing lockdown restrictions

The First Minister, in a widely pre-publicised move, announced the first steps out of the Ccovid-19 lockdown on Thursday 28 May 2020. The full text of the statement is below.

"Lockdown is being modified slightly – it is not over".

Today FM [@NicolaSturgeon](#) outlined the changes to the current lockdown restrictions which will come into effect from tomorrow (Friday 29 May).

Read the updated guidance on how you can stay safe at <https://t.co/y3sU2MKoc3> pic.twitter.com/A8g78mn4SH

– Scottish Government (@scotgov) [May 28, 2020](#)

Statement given by the First Minister Nicola Sturgeon at a media briefing in St Andrew's House, Edinburgh

Good afternoon. Thank you very much for joining us.

Today, as you are probably anticipating, I will confirm some careful and cautious changes to the current lockdown regulations.

I will set out what those changes are in a moment – but I want to begin with a simple but really important point.

The only reason we can make any changes today is that we have made progress in suppressing this virus. And that is entirely

down to the sacrifices that all of you have made.

So more than ever today, I want to say thank you to each and every single one of you.

I'll come to the changes themselves in a moment – and because there's a lot to cover today, my update will be a bit longer than normal – but first of course I will provide the usual statistical update.

As at 9 o'clock this morning, there have been 15,288 positive cases confirmed – that is an increase of 48 since yesterday.

A total of 1,238 patients are in hospital with confirmed or suspected COVID-19. That represents a decrease of nine overall from yesterday, including a decrease of 13 in the number of confirmed cases.

A total of 37 people last night were in intensive care with confirmed or suspected COVID-19. That is a decrease of 1 since yesterday.

I am also able to confirm today that since 5 March, a total of 3,635 patients who had tested positive for the virus have now been able to leave hospital.

Unfortunately though, in the last 24 hours, 12 deaths have been registered of patients who had been confirmed through a test as having the virus, and that takes the total number of deaths in Scotland, under that measurement, to 2,316.

Now I feel very strongly, as I'm sure you do, particularly today as we start to take the first steps out of lockdown, that we must never become inured to these statistics – and we must never ever forget that behind every single one is a person who was loved and is now deeply missed.

In future, we will want – collectively as a nation – to remember and mourn that loss.

But for now let me send my condolences to every family who has lost a loved one to this virus.

Let me also express my deep gratitude to our health and care workers for the incredible work you have done and continue to do, in such extraordinarily difficult circumstances.

The figures I have just given remind us that the progress we have made so far is real. But these figures also remind us of the toll this virus has taken – and that our progress remains fragile.

The virus is still proving fatal for too many. Hundreds of people are still in hospital. And new infections are still being identified in most health board areas.

As I have said before, that means we must proceed with the utmost care and caution.

Nevertheless, a downward trend in COVID-19 cases is now sustained and unmistakable.

As you know, the law requires us to formally review the lockdown regulations at least every three weeks and to keep them in place only for as long as is necessary. And the latest review period ends today.

I can confirm that we have considered the latest evidence of the spread of the virus and I can report as follows.

The R number – the transmission rate of the virus – remains in a range of 0.7 to 1.

We can't be certain how far below 1 it is – and that confirms, and underlines, that we must continue to exercise caution.

However, we have now reasonable confidence that the R number has been below 1 for a period of more than three weeks.

Our modelling also shows that the prevalence of the virus is

reducing.

Last week you might recall that I reported an estimated 25,000 infectious cases across the country. Our latest estimate is that as of last Friday 22 May, there were 19,000 infectious cases in Scotland.

In addition, the number of patients in intensive care has fallen by 80% since the peak.

And the number of new hospital admissions has fallen by more than 80%.

Also, as we saw yesterday in the National Records of Scotland report, deaths associated with COVID-19 – both overall and in care homes – have now declined for four consecutive weeks.

This evidence has allowed the Scottish Government therefore to conclude that we can now move into Phase 1 of our four phase route map out of lockdown.

My confidence in that conclusion is bolstered by the launch today of Test and Protect – a system of test, trace, isolate.

We are now asking any person who has symptoms of COVID-19 – that is a cough, a temperature or loss of taste or smell – to take immediate steps to book a test.

If this applies to you, please go straight to nhsinform.scot to get a test or, if you can't go online, call NHS 24 on 0800 028 2816. Don't wait to see if you feel better before booking a test. And apart from going for the test, you – and all people in your household – should self-isolate.

If you are contacted by Test and Protect to say you have been in contact with someone who has tested positive, please follow the advice to self-isolate for 14 days.

But remember – and this is a really important point – that you can minimise the chances of that happening by taking care not

to be a close contact of someone outside your own household – and that means staying at least two metres distant from anyone who is not part of your household.

Test and Protect will be a crucial part of our efforts to control the virus in the weeks ahead. But it will not do it – cannot do it – on its own.

The decisions that all of us make – about staying two metres apart, washing our hands, wearing face coverings in enclosed spaces – these matter just as much.

In many ways, in fact, they will matter even more as we start to slowly relax these lockdown rules.

If we don't pay close attention, and follow physical distancing and hygiene rules, those 19,000 estimated cases I mentioned earlier will quickly rise again.

However, all of that said, we are now in a position to make careful changes. And I want to set out now what those changes will be.

Many of these changes will come into effect tomorrow.

We are publishing on the Scottish Government website specific guidance to help you understand the changes and also the rules that we are still asking you to follow. So please take the time to read that.

The focus of our Phase 1 changes is on outdoor activity.

And the reason for that is this – as long as people from different households remain two metres apart, do not touch the same surfaces and wash hands and surfaces regularly, the risk of the virus spreading is lower in an outdoor environment than it is indoors.

Even so, in making changes at this stage, we have limited room for manoeuvre. So we need to get the balance right.

Of course we want to restart the economy as quickly as possible, but we have also kept very firmly in mind the things that matter most to our quality of life – family, friendship, love.

I will therefore spend most of my time today talking about what these changes will mean for your ability to interact with friends and family.

But first let me cover what they mean for business and public services.

From tomorrow, most outdoor work that has been put on hold can resume, and the construction industry will be able to restart site preparation – that's the first phase of its restart plan. It will require to consult further with government before moving on to the second stage of that plan.

From tomorrow, garden centres and plant nurseries can reopen some of their services, and we will no longer be discouraging drive-through food outlets from re-opening as well.

However, non-essential shops, and pubs, restaurants and cafes – except for takeaway – must remain closed at this stage.

Household waste recycling centres can re-open from Monday – and guidance on this was issued yesterday.

We continue to ask other business premises to remain closed at this stage, unless providing essential goods and services, and we ask all businesses to let staff work from home wherever possible.

From Monday onwards, 1 June, teachers and other staff will be able to enter schools for the purpose of preparing for a re-opening of all schools on 11 August, for a blended in school / at home model of learning.

And from next Wednesday onwards – that's 3 June – childcare will be available to a larger number of children who most need

it, for example vulnerable children and children of essential workers.

Childminding services and fully outdoor nursery provision will start to reopen from next Wednesday too. However, there will continue to be limits on the number of children that can be cared for, and guidance for childminders will issue on Monday.

During Phase 1, some key public services – for example some respite care, children's hearings and some key health programmes – will also begin to restart their work, and further announcements on timing will be made in due course.

In terms of sport and recreation, some non-contact outdoor leisure activities will be allowed to restart – again from tomorrow.

This applies to activities where you can safely keep a two metre distance from others at all times and follow strict hygiene practices – for example golf, tennis, bowls and fishing.

You will also be able, from tomorrow, to sit or sunbathe in parks and open areas. I am sure that will be welcomed by many, particularly in this weather – but it will be especially welcomed by those who do not have gardens.

And you will be able to travel – preferably by walking or cycling – to a location near your local community for recreation. However we are asking you, for now, to please stay within, or close to, your own local area. And don't use public transport unless it is absolutely necessary.

Now we are not setting a fixed distance limit in law – but our strong advice is not to travel further than around five miles for leisure or recreation.

And it is still the case that you should not go to our island communities, except for essential reasons.

We simply don't want, in this phase, to see large numbers of people at tourist hot spots or local beauty spots. Crowds of people – even if they're trying to socially distance – bring more risk than we judge is acceptable and safe at this point.

So if you do go somewhere and find it is crowded, please use your judgment, change your plans and go somewhere else.

Now the final area I want to talk about is social interaction.

But before I do that I want to say something specifically and directly to people who are shielding – the people who are most vulnerable to the virus.

You are now well into your third month of being advised not to leave home at all. And I know that listening to today's changes – which don't yet bring a change to your own circumstances – will be particularly hard for you.

So I want to assure you that we will be providing you with more information and guidance in the next couple of weeks. And we will be trying, as far as possible, as far as safe, to move to less of a blanket approach – one which requires all of you to stay at home all of the time – to one that more reflects your individual circumstances.

We know the impact that our advice is having on you, and on your loved ones, is significant – and we are doing everything we can to get that advice right so that you can safely, albeit gradually, start to lead a less restricted life. I want you to know today that you have not been forgotten – and you are a central part of our thinking, as we consider how we move forward.

More generally, though, we can today confirm changes to the rules on meeting socially. And this, I know, is something everyone has been eagerly anticipating.

From tomorrow the regulations on meeting other people will

change.

You and your household will be able to meet with another household out of doors – for example in a park or in a private garden.

We said last week this should be in small groups – and to give you greater guidance on that, we are asking that the total number of people between the two households meeting up should be a maximum of eight. Please keep it to less than that if you can.

Now, we are not saying that you must pick one household and only meet the same one during Phase 1. But we are saying that you should not meet with more than one other household at a time.

And while this will not be the law, we also strongly recommend that you don't meet with more than one other household per day.

This change will obviously allow you to meet with more people than we can right now – but please remember that we should still be meeting far fewer people outside our own household than we would in normal times.

Now, I know how much all of you will be looking forward – all of us will be looking forward to seeing family and friends for the first time in a while. But how we do this is going to be really vital.

Before you meet up with people from another household you should stop, think, read the guidance and make sure you are protecting yourself and others.

In particular, you must stay outdoors and stay at least two metres away from people from the other household. That is crucial.

You should also avoid touching the same hard surfaces as they

do.

Let me give an example of that. I suspect many of you will be planning a picnic or a barbecue this weekend. If you are, not only should you stay two metres apart from those in the other household, but each household should also bring its own food, cutlery, plates or cups. Don't share these things.

And please – don't go indoors. Being in someone else's house should still be avoided, unless of course you are providing support to someone who is vulnerable.

And that means thinking in very practical terms. We are not putting a legal limit on how far you can travel to meet another household, but please use your good judgment. If the distance is so far that you would have to use someone else's bathroom, then perhaps you shouldn't be doing it.

And the reason for all of this is simple, but it is worth repeating, because I am not putting all of these restrictions – or asking you to put these restriction on your activity for no reason.

And the reason is this – if you go inside a house or if you share items, if you touch the same surfaces as another household, or come within two metres of each other, that is when you are creating an opportunity – a bridge, if you like – for the virus to spread from one household to another.

And that is what all of us must still do everything we can to avoid.

Now, I know the information I give at these briefings sometimes must be hard to absorb.

But today's information is really vital. So please watch this back later to make sure you caught all of it. And please read the guidance that you will find at www.gov.scot

What I have announced today are important first steps back to

some kind of normality I hope. But they are by necessity cautious.

I've said before that no changes are risk free – and there are no certainties in any of this – but I have also said that I wanted to ensure that with every step we do take, the ground beneath our feet is as solid as possible. And that is what we are taking care to ensure.

But I don't mind admitting to you that as we take these first steps, I do feel a bit nervous.

I worry that the limited changes we are making to these rules, the very careful changes, might lead to much greater change in reality. And so I really need your help to make sure that is not the case.

I am sure there are going to be lots of emotional reunions this weekend. You will be planning to see family and friends that you haven't seen for weeks. And based on the current forecasts, the sun will be shining too. We've all waited a long time for this, so I hope you all really enjoy it.

But please, please – respect the parameters we are setting out.

Be respectful of each other's space, and make sure things still feel different to normal, because they should still feel different to normal.

Above all, remember that each individual decision we will take, will affect the safety and the wellbeing of everyone. Make sure that love, kindness and solidarity continue to be our guiding principles.

So to recap.

Still stay at home as much as possible – the virus has not gone away. Lockdown is being modified slightly – it is not over.

Make sure you are still seeing far fewer people than you might normally do.

Don't meet up with more than one other household at a time, don't meet more than one a day and keep to a maximum of eight people in a group.

Stay two metres apart when you do meet. And that, I know will be really difficult – perhaps the most difficult part of all. The instinct to hug somebody you love is a really strong one – especially when you haven't seen that person for quite some time. And I know that for some – couples who live apart for example – for them, this is even more difficult. And I want to assure you that we are considering that point very carefully.

But for now – whether it's parents, grandparents, aunties, uncles, siblings, partners from other households – don't put your loved ones or yourself at risk.

Also wash your hands regularly and thoroughly.

Avoid hard surfaces – and clean any that you are touching.

And if you have symptoms, get tested and follow the advice on self-isolation.

To end where I started, we are only able to take these careful steps towards a less restricted lifestyle for all of us now because all of you have, overwhelmingly, stuck to the rules so far.

And the truth is that we will be able to take more steps more quickly in the future, if we all continue to do the right thing, stick to the rules, and most importantly of all now, exercise good judgment at all times.

I want to thank you again for all you've done so far, but thank you in advance for continuing – as I know you will – to do the right thing and remember that this is all about protecting not just ourselves – it is about protecting each

other.

And though these changes are small at this stage, I really hope they do make a positive difference and leave all of us with a real sense of hope that we are on the right track, the track towards greater normality while we continue to beat this virus along the way.

Thank you very much indeed for listening.