

Letter to the Editor – the conundrum of coronavirus rules

Following the imposition of Level Four restrictions on eleven local authority areas in the west of Scotland, there are even more rules to abide by.

Today the number of deaths from Covid-19 has exceeded 5,000.

In Edinburgh we remain in Level Three at least for another week when the government will review these measures.

But the announcement of the new measures yesterday spurred one of our readers to get in touch with a query.

The query is this:

Can people from outside Edinburgh City boundary travel to and from the airport? Will they need to quarantine before and after? JS

What do you think? How do you interpret the rules?

Our interpretation is that nobody should be thinking about going anywhere except for essential reasons such as work or caring for a vulnerable person. (see the full list below)

If you are going to the airport then if you live within the City of Edinburgh area that journey would not appear to break any rules per se, as you are not going outside the local authority area. But international travel and travel to other parts of the UK is not encouraged. It is for the Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office (FCDO) to make the rules on travelling abroad and not The Scottish Government.

The FCDO says: **“The FCDO currently advises against all but essential travel to many countries and territories on the basis of COVID risks.** You should check the travel advice for your destination.

“Travel disruption is possible worldwide. Other countries may bring in new measures with little notice such as border closures, movement restrictions or quarantine rules. Travellers should be prepared to stay overseas longer than planned.”

The Scottish Government says this: *“To suppress the spread of COVID-19 it is essential that, with limited exceptions, there is no travel to or from areas where higher numbers of people may be carrying the virus.”*

So if you are travelling from outside the City of Edinburgh Council area then you are in breach of government advice. In particular, if you live in a Level 4 local authority area this is the advice:

- avoid any unnecessary travel out of the area
- also keep journeys within the area to an absolute

minimum

The government also says: "The current Scottish Government guidance, given the state of the epidemic across the UK is that people avoid any unnecessary travel between Scotland and England, Wales, or Northern Ireland."

There is no need to quarantine except when travelling to and from the countries which are listed on the government website – they include the Maldives, Mauritius and Japan as well as many others. Travel from Denmark however is not permitted.

But if you travel anywhere by plane then our view is that you could be in danger of breaking the rules unless you have good reason as above.

The Scottish Government advice on essential travel includes lots of reasons. This is what it says:

"This is a list of limited exceptions from the guidance not to travel into or out of Level 3 and 4 local authority areas, or to or from other parts of the UK. Please do not see these as loopholes. It is important for everyone's safety that we all minimise such travel as much as possible.

- "travel for work, or provide voluntary or charitable services, but only where that cannot be done from your home
- travel to school, college, or university where teaching is not provided remotely
- (To and from Level 3 areas but not Level 4) travel for under 18s sport
- travel for essential shopping only where it is not possible in your local authority area – you should use on-line shopping or shops, banks and other services in your local area wherever you can
- travel for healthcare, social care, childcare and other essential services, including recycling, but only if they are not available in your local area

- travel to provide care or assistance to a vulnerable person
- travel to visit a person receiving treatment in a hospital, staying in a hospice or care home, or to accompany a pregnant woman, vulnerable person or child to a medical appointment
- travel for shared parenting or travel between the two parts of an extended household
- travel to meet a legal obligation, including attending court or satisfying bail conditions, or to participate in legal proceedings
- travel for essential animal welfare reasons, such as feeding a horse or going to a vet
- local outdoor informal exercise such as walking, cycling, golf, or running (in groups of up to 6 people from no more than 2 households) that starts and finishes at the same place
- travel locally (within around 5 miles of your local authority area) to reach a place to take exercise outdoors
- travel for weddings, civil partnership registrations, funerals and other “life events” (such as bar mitzvahs and christenings)
- if you are a minister of religion or worship leader travel to your place of worship
- (to or from Level 3 areas, but not Level 4) travel to your normal place of worship
- travel to give blood at a Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service collection session
- travel to transit through Level 3 and 4 areas by road or public transport if your journey begins and ends outside such an area
- travel to move house
- travel to avoid injury, illness or to escape a risk of harm”

Do let us know what you think – and if you have any experience

of international travel in recent months then we would love to hear about that.