

Coronavirus – travel is reason behind East Lothian spike

by Local Democracy Reporter Marie Sharp

National Clinical Director, Jason Leitch, gave his view on why there has been a surge in East Lothian Covid-19 cases, leading to a return to Level 3 restrictions in the council area.

Speaking at The Scottish Government daily briefing today, Professor Leitch acknowledged that the rise in cases in the county was taking place “on the border with Edinburgh”.

Coronavirus cases in the east and centre of East Lothian have been very low compared to cases in the Musselburgh, Prestonpans and Tranent areas in the west.

But any attempt to somehow split East Lothian into two, in terms of the Covid-19 protection levels, would simply be “more trouble than we would know how to manage”.

Mr Leitch’s comments come as East Lothian moves back into Level 3 restrictions on Friday at 6.00pm. This limits hospitality and other businesses.

The most up to date figures for East Lothian showed a rate of

144.7 cases per 100,000 people in the week up to 14 December, with the vast majority of cases in the west of the county.

Mr Leitch was asked why he thought the cases in the county were concentrated in one general area.

He replied: "Much of the positive cases are on the border with Edinburgh city and as you move further east the cases reduce.

"That is, of course, to do with mixing around local authorities, it is to do with travel, to do with commuting, it is to do with where people shop, where people go for childcare, where people go for hospitality."

Mr Leitch suggested it would not be practical to have different Covid protection levels in different parts of the same local authority.

He added: "People see us making nuanced decisions with some of the islands. I think to go further down that route would give us more trouble than we would be able to manage."

[su_spoiler class="my-custom-spoiler" title="Government guidance for Christmas 2020"]

The safest way to celebrate Christmas this year is to celebrate with your own household in your own home – and as far as possible to keep any interaction with other households to a minimum. This is by far the safest way to spend this Christmas and keep your loved ones safe.

Christmas bubbles can be formed between 23 and 27 December, to help reduce loneliness and isolation. You do not have to form a bubble if you do not want to – the safest way to spend Christmas is to stay in your own household, in your own home and your own local area

If you do decide to form a bubble this updated guidance asks you to:

minimise the number of people in a Christmas bubble. While 3 households is the legal maximum, our recommendation is that 2 would be better, and you should keep to a maximum of 8 people, age 12 and over – the smaller the bubble, the better and safer it will be

minimise the time spent with your bubble, especially indoors. The 5 day period is a window of opportunity, not a recommended time. We recommend you do not meet up with people in your bubble on any more than one day over the period and do not stay overnight unless it is unavoidable. And you should minimise the distance you intend to travel

avoid all travel between high prevalence and low prevalence areas – in particular, that means avoiding travel to or from Scotland and Tier 3 areas in England, and to or from any Level 4 areas in Scotland (of which there are currently none)

you should not go to a pub or restaurant or entertainment venue, for example a cinema or theatre, with your bubble

if you don't form a bubble you must follow the rules in the local authority area you live in

Hogmanay and New Year: Christmas bubbles will not apply at Hogmanay and New Year. Instead, you should follow the rules on meeting up and travelling for your level.

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[su_spoiler class="my-custom-spoiler" title="Christmas bubbles"]

Between 23 and 27 December if you wish to you can:

form a Christmas bubble with two households, (1 can be an extended household), up to a maximum of 8 people – children under 12 do not count towards this number, if from the 2 households. While 3 households is the legal maximum, our recommendation is that 2 is better

travel to meet people in your bubble. 1 of the bubble members must live in the local authority area you are gathering in and you should follow local travel rules once you arrive

meet people in your bubble in each other's homes and gardens,

in self-catering accommodation within a council area that a member of the bubble lives in, in outdoor public spaces and places of worship – you do not always have to meet as a group at the same time

You are recommended not to:

meet up with people in your bubble on any more than one day over the period and do not stay overnight, if possible
travel to or from a Tier 3 area in England or a level 4 area in Scotland

Households who have formed a Christmas bubble must not:

be in more than one bubble
change the members of the bubble once formed

Members of bubbles should:

try to limit contact with others before and after forming a bubble

stay 2 metres apart from people not in your own household – children under 12 do not need to do this (and can continue to meet other children under 12 outdoors who are not in their bubble)

try not to meet too often

not meet other people who are not in the bubble socially indoors or outside

follow the FACTS guidance, by regularly washing hands and keeping surfaces clean

not share crockery or cutlery

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