

# Coronavirus – the next steps out of lockdown

**The First Minister set out the path out of lockdown today at Holyrood in an address to MSPs following a Cabinet meeting this morning.**

The relaxations are naturally all dependent on rolling out vaccines and also suppressing the virus.

Ms Sturgeon began her statement with a look at where the country is now in relation to the virus.

Today the number of cases is 597, which means that as at today the number of new cases each day *on average* is 570.

The number of new cases is up slightly from 490 in the previous week, and Ms Sturgeon warned that this is not “the direction of travel we want to see”, and so care and caution in the face of this virus continues to be essential.

As for the numbers of those vaccinated – 59% of 60 to 64-year-olds have now received their first dose of the vaccine. More than 40% of the population have now been vaccinated with the first dose, and the government hopes to vaccinate 400,000 people each week from this week on. Today the number of people vaccinated as at 8.30 am this morning is almost double the number vaccinated up to the same time yesterday. It is now evident that vaccination is having a significant effect on the number of deaths. And the First Minister confirmed that this provides us now with “greater confidence about mapping a path out of lockdown with a firmer indicative timeline”.

Some rules were relaxed last week, with all primary school children back at school on Monday, and the phased return of secondary school children is also under way. The First Minister said: "We continue to monitor the impact of these changes."

There are four dates which are key – 2 April, 5 April, 26 April and 17 May, with dates in June also mentioned. The following is a summary of what Ms Sturgeon announced today, but the government graphic is inserted below.

## **STAY AT HOME TO BE LIFTED ON 2 APRIL**

The government hopes to lift the Stay at Home rule on 2 April, but everyone is advised to remain local and not travel outside their local authority area at that date.

On Monday 5 April it is expected that contact sports for 12 to 17-year-olds will resume and more students can return to on campus learning.

It is possible that there will be phased reopening of non-essential retail from 5 April including garden centres and car showrooms.

And (hurray!) the advice is that hairdressers will also re-open on 5 April.

But the First Minister said that what she had just set out is the maximum that can be done at this point.

She explained: "By mid April first doses will have been offered to all nine priority groups – all over 50 and all those under 50 who have underlying health conditions. This is a significant proportion of the adult population in Scotland. This will give us confidence to relax more restrictions from 26 April."

At that point everywhere in Scotland which is currently in Level 4 will move to an amended Level 3. It is likely that from 26 April restrictions on journeys within Scotland will be relaxed.

While the government hopes that restrictions between Scotland and the remainder of the UK can be relaxed then – that position will be updated during April.

There is no real movement on changing rules on international travel as the government will discuss travel to some overseas destinations with the air travel industry later this week. But there is a caution that even when overseas travel does resume testing pre-departure will probably remain in place.

On 26 April all remaining retail and holiday accommodation, libraries, museums and galleries along with indoor gyms will likely reopen for individual exercise

The number of those attending weddings and funerals will be raised to 50 people may attend, and at that point the number of people who meet for outdoor socialising will rise to six people from three households.

The hospitality sector will reopen – to serve food outdoors up to 10pm and up to 6 people and there could be limited indoor opening – serving food and non-alcoholic drinks. Venues will continue to have to store contact details.

People who are on the shielding list can return to work and school or college at that point and will be contacted by the Chief Medical Officer.

The First Minister continued: “We do not expect any further changes before 17 May – but then level 3 areas will move to level 2.

Cinemas and bingo halls, outdoor and indoor events may be able to restart all subject to capacity restrictions. The

restrictions on numbers meeting for outdoor social gatherings should be relaxed and it will probably be allowed to meet indoors at someone else's home.

The Scottish Government have provided £3 billion directly to businesses in the past year and has already confirmed 100% rates relief for some businesses in the next year. They have also put fairly detailed plans in place for business support which the First Minister hopes will be "more generous and flexible support than previously envisaged".

The final hope is that on 1 June all of Scotland can move to Level 1 and by the end of the month restrictions will move to Level 0.




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