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Guidance

Meeting people from outside your household from 4 July

How you can see people that you do not live with while protecting yourself and others from coronavirus (COVID-19) from 4 July 2020.

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The government recognises how difficult it has been for people to be cut off from their family and friends in recent months. This has been necessary to help us all stay alert (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing>), control the virus and save lives.

This guidance explains how you can protect yourself and others from coronavirus when meeting people that you do not live with. It applies from 4 July. The existing guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/meeting-people-from-outside-your-household>) will continue to apply until that date. At all times, it's important to maintain social distancing from people you do not live with to reduce the risk of spreading the virus. You should only have close contact with people outside of your household if you are in a support bubble with them.

In England, you can meet people you do not live with in 3 types of groups:

- you can continue to meet in any outdoor space in a group of up to 6 people from different households
- single adult households – in other words adults who live alone or with dependent children only – can continue to form an exclusive 'support bubble' with one other household
- from 4 July, you can also meet in a group of 2 households (including your support bubble), in any location – public or private, indoors or outdoors. This does not need to be the same household each time

It remains the case - even inside someone's home - that you should socially distance from anyone not in your household or bubble. Those who have been able to form a support bubble (i.e. those in single adult households) can continue to have close contact as if they live with the other people in their bubble. This should be exclusive and should not change. This change also does not affect the support you receive from your carers.

Staying alert when meeting people you do not live with

In order to keep you and your family and friends safe, it remains very important that you stay alert (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-safe-outside-your-home>) when meeting family and friends.

From 4 July, you should:

- only gather indoors in groups of no more than two households (including your support bubble) - this includes when dining out or going to the pub
- only gather outdoors in either a group of up to 6 people from different households or up to two households (including your support bubble)
- only gather in slightly larger groups of up to 30 for major life events, such as weddings
- not hold or attend celebrations of any size (such as parties) where it is difficult to maintain social distancing
- not stay overnight away from your home with members of more than 2 households (including your support bubble)
- limit social interaction with anyone outside the group you are attending a place with, even if you see other people you know, for example, in a restaurant, community centre or place of worship
- try to limit the number of people you see, especially over short periods of time, to keep you and them safe, and save lives. The more people with whom you interact, the more chances we give the virus to spread

Gatherings of more than 30 people will be banned, apart from some limited circumstances to be set out in law.

You can also minimise the risk of spreading infection by following some key principles. You should:

- never visit another household or allow people into your household or you're your garden if you have coronavirus symptoms however mild these are.
- always check if guests have coronavirus symptoms or if they have been asked to isolate. If they have symptoms or have been asked to isolate, insist that they delay their visit until they have either been tested or completed their period of isolation
- continue to follow strict social distancing guidelines when you are with anyone not in your household or your support bubble
- take hygiene precautions by washing your hands as soon as you are home for at least 20 seconds, use hand sanitiser when you are out, use a tissue when sneezing and dispose of it safely, and cough into the crook of your elbow
- only form a support bubble with one other household, and if you or they are in a single adult household. You should not change or add to your support bubble once formed
- access private gardens externally wherever possible – if you need to go through someone else's home to do so, avoid touching surfaces and loitering
- avoid using toilets in other people's home (outside of your support bubble) wherever possible and wipe down surfaces as frequently as possible
- using disinfectant, wipe down any surfaces or door handles people from outside of your household or support bubble come into contact with if walking through your home
- avoid sharing plates and utensils with people outside of your household or your support bubble
- avoid using paddling pools or other garden equipment with people outside of your household or bubble

The following sections provide more detail on how to safely meet people you do not live with.

Where to meet indoors

From 4 July, members of two different households (including your support bubble) can meet in any indoor space, including a private home. You should, wherever possible, socially distance from people you do not live with or who are not in your support bubble and take particular care to maintain excellent hygiene - washing hands and surfaces - when using shared facilities like bathrooms.

Where to meet outdoors

You can meet people in both public or private outdoor spaces, such as gardens, yards or roof terraces – as long as you maintain social distancing at all times with people who are not in your household or support bubble. Garages, sheds or cabins are all indoor areas where the risk of transmission is as high as if you were in a small room in a house.

If you do need to use the toilet in someone's home or are passing through to access someone's garden, try to avoid touching surfaces and if you use the toilet wash your hands thoroughly, wipe down surfaces, use separate or paper towels and wash or dispose of them safely after use.

Going to a pub or restaurant with members of another household

From 4 July, when eating or drinking out with people you do not live with, you should only meet one other household if you are seated indoors. People from more than two households at once cannot meet indoors. If you are eating or drinking outdoors, you can do so with one other household or in a group of up to 6 people from different households.

In all cases, people from different households should ensure they socially distance as much as possible. Premises should also take reasonable steps to help you do so in line with COVID-19 secure principles. It remains the case that you should only have close social contact with people you do not live with if you are in a support bubble with them.

Staying overnight with members of another household

From 4 July, you - and members of your household or support bubble - can stay overnight in groups of up to 2 households (including support bubbles). This can be in each other's homes or other accommodation, such as hotels or apartments. You should, wherever possible, socially distance from people you do not normally live with, take particular care to maintain excellent hygiene - washing hands and surfaces - and avoid using shared facilities like bathrooms wherever possible.

Sharing food and drink

You should try, wherever possible, not to pass each other food or drink unless you live together or are in a support bubble together. You should ensure that plates or utensils are thoroughly cleaned before use. Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly for at least 20 seconds and use disposable towels if possible.

Using garden equipment

You should not share garden equipment with people outside of your household or your support bubble because of the risk of transmission from shared surfaces. You could bring your own equipment or if you have to use chairs, for example, you should wipe them down carefully with household cleaner before and after use.

You should try to avoid shared equipment. For example you should use your own tennis racquet, golf club or basketball. Any equipment that is used should be cleaned frequently. Cleaning should be particularly thorough if it is to be used by someone else.

You should avoid using paddling pools and private swimming pools with people outside of your household or support bubble.

Playing sport

From 4 July, you can exercise or play sport outdoors in groups of up to two households, or in groups of up to 6 people from different households as is the current rule. You should only do so where it is possible to socially distance from those you do not live with.

People who play team sports can train together and do things like conditioning or fitness sessions but not in groups of more than 6 and you should socially distance from people you do not live with. While groups could practise ball skills like passing and kicking, equipment sharing should be kept to a minimum and strong hand hygiene practices should be in place before and after.

You can also play tennis with people from outside of your household (or support bubble) as long as you socially distance wherever possible. Any equipment that is used should be cleaned frequently. Cleaning should be particularly thorough if equipment is to be used by someone else.

Gatherings in COVID-19 secure venues

From 4 July, when meeting friends and family - even in venues like restaurants, pubs, places of worship or community centres - you should follow the limits on gatherings and only:

- meet indoors in groups up to two households (including your support bubble) - this includes when dining out or going to the pub
- meet outdoors in a group of no more than two households (including your support bubble) or in a group of up to 6 people from different households

Clubs or groups can begin to meet again in COVID-19 secure venues but you should comply with the limits described above. You should socially distance from anyone you do not live with or who is not in your support bubble. You should also limit social interaction with anyone outside your group even if you see other people you know, for example, in a restaurant, community centre or place of worship. Venues should ensure they comply with COVID-19 secure guidelines.

Gatherings of people doing the same activity with each other must be no more than 30 people, other than for exceptions to be set out in law.

Group prayer

From 4 July, places of worship can open for services and group prayer, in compliance with COVID-19 secure guidelines. You should socially distance from anyone you do not live with or who is not in your support bubble. You should also limit social interaction with anyone outside the group you are with (which can include two households) even if you see other people you know, for example, in a community centre or place of worship.

Travelling to meet people

You can travel to meet people irrespective of distance. You should continue to avoid using public transport and should cycle, walk or drive wherever possible.

This guidance only applies to England. You must adhere to the individual country laws and guidance of the devolved administrations (Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland).

You should not travel with someone from outside your household or your support bubble unless you can practise social distancing, for example by cycling.

Making a support bubble with another household

In England, if you live by yourself or are a single parent with dependant children – in other words, if there is only one adult in your home – you can expand your support network so that it includes one other household of any size. This is called making a ‘support bubble’ and means you are able to have close contact with them as you could if they were members of your own household.

We recognise how difficult this time has been, particularly on lonely and isolated people, and this change is designed to provide extra support to some of those most impacted by the current social restrictions. Once you are in a support bubble, you can think of yourself as in a single household.

Keeping support bubbles exclusive

You should not change who is in your bubble or have close contact with anyone else you do not live with. This is critical to keeping you, and your family and friends, as safe as possible.

Members of support bubbles developing coronavirus symptoms

If you or someone in your household or your support bubble (if applicable) are showing coronavirus symptoms, everyone in your support bubble should stay home. If you or a member of your support bubble is contacted as part of the test and trace programme, the individual contacted should stay at home. If the individual becomes symptomatic, everyone in the support bubble should then isolate. This is critical to staying as safe as possible and saving lives.

Physical contact with members of your support bubble

You can have close physical contact with members of your support bubble if you and they want to. Support bubbles are a cautious step to help people who may be lonely and therefore at greatest risk of isolation. You do not need to socially distance from people in your bubble, but good hand hygiene and other measures can help to keep you and the people you meet as safe as possible.

Some people already take extra precautions with those they live with – for example, if one of them is clinically vulnerable, or one of them has a lot of contact outside the house - and you might want to do the same if you expand your bubble.

Meeting other households along with your bubble

In relation to the wider limits on gatherings, members of your support bubble should effectively be treated like members of your household.

Support bubbles and isolation

If any member of your support bubble – either someone in your own household or one that you have formed a bubble with – develops symptoms or tests positive for coronavirus you should follow advice on household isolation.

If you share custody of your child, and you and your child’s other parent are both in separate bubbles, all households would need to isolate if someone becomes symptomatic in the group.

If you are clinically extremely vulnerable (shielding)

From 6 July, those in single adult households (either an adult living alone or with dependent children under 18) may, if they wish, also form a 'support bubble' with one other household. All those in a support bubble will be able to spend time together inside each other's homes, including overnight, without needing to socially distance.

If you are clinically vulnerable or have a higher risk of catching coronavirus (such as a frontline healthcare worker)

If you are clinically vulnerable (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing#clinically-vulnerable-people>), you should continue to take particular care to minimise contact with others. You should bear this in mind when deciding to form a support bubble. If you are at a higher risk of exposure to those with coronavirus (for example, if someone in your house is a healthcare or care worker that interacts with patients that have coronavirus), you should take particular care when deciding whether to form a support bubble .

If you share custody of your child with someone you do not live with

Children with separated parents are already permitted to move between both households and there is no change to that. It is also permitted for those households – if there is only a single adult in them – to form a support bubble with another household.

However, it is very important that if someone in any of these linked households shows coronavirus symptoms, or is otherwise self-isolating, you should all stay at home. This is critical to controlling the virus, by avoiding a chain of transmission.

Using a support bubble for informal childcare

If you are a lone parent you can form a support bubble with another household to provide informal (i.e. unpaid) childcare for them or for them to provide informal childcare for you. You should not form a support bubble with more than one household.

Lone adults with children over 18

If you live with children over the age of 18, you will not be able to form a support bubble.

The exception to this is if the child was under the age of 18 on 12 June 2020 and is in a single-parent household. That household can continue to participate in their current support bubble or form a support bubble if they have not already done so, once that child turns 18. This is a targeted intervention to provide extra support to some of those most impacted by the current social restrictions.

Lone adults with carers

If you are the only adult in your household, then you will be able to form a support bubble with any other household that is willing to exclusively bubble with you. This is irrespective of whether carers visit you to provide support.

If you live with other adults including your carers, then you will still be able to form a support bubble, however this would need to be with a single adult household.

Travelling to form a support bubble

There is no limit on how far you can travel in England to meet members of your support bubble but we recommend that you form a support bubble with someone who lives locally wherever possible. This will help to prevent the virus spreading from an area where there might be a higher rate of infection. If you live in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland you must follow the specific rules in those parts of the UK.

Returning from abroad

You should self-isolate in one place for the full 14 days, where you can have food and other necessities delivered, and stay away from others, including people you bubble with. See guidance on how to self-isolate when you travel to the UK (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-how-to-self-isolate-when-you-travel-to-the-uk>).

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