

Our Plan to Rebuild: The UK Government's Covid-19 recovery strategy (issued 11 May 2020)

Summary produced by Croydon Council

“This is not a short-term crisis. Covid-19 will circulate in the human population long term, possibly causing periodic epidemics. Large epidemic waves cannot be excluded without continuing some measures.

There is no easy or quick solution. Only a vaccine or effective drugs can reliably control this epidemic and reduce mortality without some form of social distancing/contact tracing”

Background and economic context

The number of deaths so far this year is 37,151 higher than the average for 2015-19. The government is particularly troubled by the impact of Covid-19 in care homes and by the higher proportion of those who have died of Covid-19 who have been from minority ethnic backgrounds.

800,000 employers had applied to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme as of midnight on 3 May, helping to pay the wages of 6.3m jobs. Despite this action, the impact on jobs and livelihoods has been severe and the government cannot protect every job and every business.

Unemployment is estimated to increase by more than 2 million in the second quarter of 2020. GDP could fall by 35%. Hospitality and retail are the most affected, with the workforce more likely to be low paid, young and female. Younger households are likely to be disproportionately hit in the longer term.

The longer the virus affects the economy, the greater the risks of long-term scarring and permanently lower economic activity. This would damage the sustainability of the public finances and the ability to fund public services including the NHS.

Government aims, principles and tests

The Government has set five tests for easing lockdown measures:

1. Protect the NHS's ability to cope
2. See a sustained fall in the daily death rates
3. Reliable data from SAGE showing the rate of infection is decreasing to manageable levels
4. Confident that testing capacity and PPE supplies can meet future demand
5. Confident that any adjustments will not risk a second peak of infections

The Government remains concerned that any major adjustment will lead to a second peak, and therefore the fifth test is not met at this stage.

Aims: savings lives; saving livelihoods

The Government's aim at the centre of this plan is to return life to as close to normal as possible, for as many people as possible, as fast and fairly as possible... in a way that avoids a new epidemic, minimises lives lost and maximises health, economic and social outcomes.

The Government will consider three main factors when redesigning social distancing measures and winding down economic support schemes:

- Health effect (direct and indirect, mortality, and long term effects of any increase in deprivation)
- Economic effect (protecting jobs, funding public services)
- Social effect (education days lost, fairness of actions)

However, much of what is desirable is not yet possible. The Government will have to invest in experimental technologies, some of which will not work as intended.

Overarching guiding principles

- Informed by the science
- Fairness
- Proportionality
- (personal) Privacy
- Transparency

Government approach: a (three) phased recovery

Phase 1 sought to contain, delay, research and mitigate.

Phase 2: smarter controls, replacing existing social restrictions with smarter measures to control the epidemic, developed and announced in periodic ‘steps’ over the coming weeks and months

- People will still need to minimise the spread through good hygiene, social distancing and regular disinfecting of surfaces
- Shielded groups will need to continue isolating (and for some time yet)
- Vulnerable residents will need to reduce exposure

Social contact will be made safer over time by redesigning public and work spaces, reducing infected people’s social contact through testing, tracing and monitoring and stopping hotspots developing. The Government will look to make risk assessments more nuanced, giving confidence to some previously advised to shield that they may be able to take more risk, as well as some who may want to be more cautious.

Social distancing measures will be adjusted in steps:

- Step 1: exercise more than once a day, outdoor public places open
- Step 2: phased return for primary schools, non-essential retail
- Step 3: places of worship, leisure facilities, hospitality

Initially the gap between steps will be several weeks, to allow monitoring. The precise timetable will depend on the infection risk at each point and effectiveness of mitigation measures. The government will provide guidance on how each type of physical space can be adapted to operate safely. Restrictions may also be relaxed differently in different parts of the country where risks are lower.

Further details are provided in the roadmap below.

Phase 3: reliable treatment (eradication is unlikely)

The Government must develop, trial, manufacture and distribute reliable treatments or vaccines as swiftly as possible.

Not all treatments that have an effect will be game-changing; the best scientific advice is that it is likely any drugs that substantially reduce mortality or are protective enough to change the course of the epidemic will have to be designed and developed specifically for Covid-19, and that this will take time, with success not guaranteed

Roadmap to lift restrictions

Step One: *will apply from Wednesday 13 May – see separate summary of government guidance produced by Croydon Council*

- **Work:** people should continue to work from home where possible. If not possible, people should travel to work if their workplace is open. Businesses that are allowed to be open, should be open. Government guidelines will be published to support workplaces to operate safely.
- **Schools / childcare:** vulnerable children and children of critical workers are able to attend school or childcare settings. Local authorities should urge more children who would benefit from attending in person to do so.
- **Travel:** people should avoid public transport wherever possible and follow social distancing rigorously. Government is working to increase public transport levels as quickly as possible. Additional funding will be provided to widen pavements, create pop-up cycle lanes and close some roads to traffic.
- **Face coverings:** people should wear face coverings (not PPE masks, which should be reserved for care workers) in enclosed spaces where social distancing is not always possible and they come into contact with others they do not normally meet. This protects against transmission to others. Important to wash hands when putting on / taking off face coverings.
- **Public spaces:** the risk of infection outside is significantly lower than inside. As well as exercise as many times each day as they wish, people can now spend time outdoors. People Playgrounds, outdoor gyms and ticketed outdoor leisure venues remain closed. People may drive to outdoor open spaces, irrespective of distance. This is all subject to not meeting any more than one person from outside your household and maintaining social distancing.
- **Protecting the clinically vulnerable**
 - **Clinically extremely vulnerable:** strongly advised to stay at home at all times and avoid any face to face contact (shielding). The government continues to provide essential food boxes and arrange priority access to supermarket deliveries. The government will review support needs as volunteers return to work and continue to support individuals as long as they need direct help.
 - **Over 70s, specific pre-existing chronic conditions, pregnant women:** should continue to take particular care to minimise contact with others outside their households, but do not need to be shielded.
 - **Non-clinical vulnerable (e.g. rough sleepers, DASV victims, children at risk)** will be supported by public services (central and local government) and voluntary sector.
- **Enforcement:** fines will be increased
- **Parliament:** must set a national example and get back to business, including a move to further physical proceedings, in step with public health guidance
- **International travel:** international arrivals will be required to self-isolate for 14 days (except for a short list of exemptions). Date of implementation TBC.

Step Two: *content and timing will depend on up to date risk assessment against the 5 tests and current covid alert level*

The current aim is for this step to be made to earlier than 1 June. Step two will be enabled by fourteen supporting programmes (see below). Changes will be announced at least 48 hours before they come into effect.

The second step may include the following measures and organisations should prepare accordingly:

- Phased return for early years settings and schools
 - Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 children to be back in school in smaller sizes, so that youngest children and those preparing for transition to secondary school have maximum time with their teachers
 - Secondary schools and FE colleges should prepare to begin some face to face contact with Year 10 and Year 12 pupils who have key exams next year, in support of their continued remote, home learning.
 - Ambition is for all primary children to return to school before the summer, if feasible.
- Opening non-essential retail, in phases, when and where safe to do so. Government guidance will be issued shortly, including which businesses will be covered in each phase and timeframes involved.
- Permitting cultural and sporting events to take place behind closed doors for broadcast
- Reopening more local public transport

The Government is also considering a range of options to reduce the most harmful social effects from isolation. This includes whether, when and how to allow people to expand their household group to include one other household to allow more social contact and increase the return to work by sharing childcare.

The Government is also examining how to enable people to gather in slightly larger groups to better facilitate small weddings.

Step Three: *content and timing will depend on up to date risk assessment against the 5 tests and current covid alert level*

The current aim is for this step to be made to earlier than 4 July.

The ambition at this step is to open at least some of the remaining businesses and premises that have been required to close, including personal care (such as hairdressers and beauty salons) hospitality (such as food service providers, pubs and accommodation), public places (such as places of worship) and leisure facilities (like cinemas). Government guidelines will need to be met and where social distancing may prove difficult, some venues will remain closed. The Government will phase and pilot re-openings to test their ability to adopt guidelines.

The fourteen supporting programmes

1. NHS and care capacity and operating model

To maximise confidence in managing new cases, the Government needs to continue to secure NHS and care capacity, and put it on a sustainable footing. This includes ensuring sufficient PPE in NHS and care settings. The Government will

- Expand supply from overseas
- Improve domestic manufacturing capability
- Expand and improve the logistics network for delivering to the front line

Innovative operating models will continue, including tele-medicine and remote monitoring. Capacity in community care and step-down services will also be bolstered to ensure patients can be discharged from hospital.

The Government will invest in preventative and personalised solutions to ill health, empowering individuals to live healthier and more active lives (e.g. active travel, health screening) and remains committed to manifesto pledges.

The Government has committed to invest £1bn in social care every year of this Parliament to support the growing demand on the sector. The Government is also committed to longer term reform of the social care sector so no one is forced to have to sell their home to pay for care.

2. Protecting care homes

The Government's number one priority for adult social care is infection control during the Covid-19 pandemic. In April, the Government published an action plan to support providers, supported by £3.2bn of additional funding.

Further steps are being taken to protect care homes:

- Widespread testing. Every staff member and resident in every care home will be offered a test by 6 June, whether symptomatic or not
- Infection prevention and control: supporting supply and distribution of PPE and essential supplies to care sector, and providing extensive infection control guidance
- Workforce: expanding social care workforce through recruitment campaign
- Clinical support: accelerating introduction of enhanced health support service from GPs and community health services.
- Guidance: providing a variety of guidance for managing Covid-19 in a variety of settings.
- Local authority role: every LA will ensure each care home in their area has access to extra support needed to minimise the risk of infection and spread of infection (e.g. face to face training on infection control by NHS, named clinical lead).

3. Smarter shielding of the most vulnerable

The Government and local authorities have offered additional support to people who are shielding. The guidance on shielding and vulnerability will be kept under review as the UK moves through the phases of the Government's strategy.

4. More effective, risk based targeting of protection measures

One way to limit the effect of the shielding measures and better target the social restrictions is to understand the risk levels in different parts of the population - both risk to self and risk to others. As understanding of the virus increases, the Government will continue to listen to advice from medical advisers on the level of clinical risk to different groups of people.

5. Accurate disease monitoring and reactive measures

Monitoring the pandemic accurately is key. This will be especially challenging during the winter months given that COVID-19 shares many symptoms with common colds and the flu. The new Joint Biosecurity Centre will have an independent analytical function and provide real time analysis and assessment of infection outbreaks at a community level. The JBC will be responsible for setting the new Covid-19 alert level:

- Level 1: Covid-19 is not known to be present in the UK
- Level 2: Covid-19 is present in the UK, but the number of cases and transmission is low
- Level 3: A Covid-19 epidemic is in general circulation
- Level 4: A Covid-19 epidemic is in general circulation; transmission is high or rising exponentially

- Level 5: As level 4 and there is a material risk of healthcare services being overwhelmed

6. Testing and tracing

Mass testing and contact tracing are not, in themselves, solutions, but may allow us to relax some social restrictions faster by targeting more precisely the suppression of transmission. Several systems need to be built and successfully integrated, including widespread swab testing, rapid turnaround, local authority public health bringing local dimension to testing, automated app-based contact tracing, online and phone based tracing.

7. Increased scientific understanding

Better scientific understanding of COVID-19 will help us act more precisely and confidently to limit its spread, improve treatments and help us develop vaccines.

8. 'Covid-19 secure' guidelines

Government guidelines will be based on sound evidence - from what has worked elsewhere in the world, and the best available scientific theory. In addition to COVID-19 Secure guidelines for workplaces, the Government will consult on and release similar guidelines for schools, prisons, and other public spaces.

9. Better distancing measures

As set out in the roadmap, the Government will steadily replace the current social restrictions with better targeted ones.

10. Economic and social support to maintain livelihoods and restore the economy

Support has been announced to help millions of workers and businesses, for the most vulnerable in society and those on the lowest income, for homeowners and renters, and for public services and vital sectors. The Government's package has also been complemented by the actions of the independent Bank of England.

However, these measures are extraordinarily costly and cannot be sustained for a prolonged period of time. So as the UK adjusts the current restrictions, the Government will also need to wind down the economic support measures while people are eased back to work.

11. Treatments and vaccines

To move to phase three as quickly as possible, the Government must compress the time taken to develop, test, manufacture and distribute a reliable vaccine or treatments as far as possible. The Government has launched the Vaccines and Treatments Taskforce to accelerate development, and is investing in manufacturing and distribution capability.

12. International action and awareness

It is in the UK's best interests to be at the forefront of a coordinated global response, including funding and more resilient supply chains.

13. Public communication, understanding and enforcement

Enhancing population-wide public health education to ensure everyone has the information and education to operate in a way that is safe for themselves and others.

14. Sustainable government structures

Rapid re-engineering of government structures and institutions to deal with the historic emergency and build long term future. The innovations seen in response to the crisis will be spread across government and prepare for future diseases.