

This information is correct as at 2pm on Friday 30 October

FAQS – NEW RESTRICTIONS

1. What are the new COVID alert levels?

The Government has set out new COVID alert levels, which came into effect on October 14, they are:

- Medium – this is for areas where national restrictions continue to be in place.
- High – this is for areas with a higher level of infections where some additional restrictions are in place.
- Very high – this is for areas with a very high level of infections and where tighter restrictions are in place.

2. Which level is the North East region under?

The North East region is subject to 'high' restrictions.

3. What does this entail?

- Residents must not socialise with other people outside of their own households or support bubble in private homes
- Residents must not socialise with other people outside of their own households or support bubble indoors, such as pubs and restaurants (a full list of these venues is below)
- Hospitality for food and drink will be restricted to table service only
- Late night restriction of operating hours will be introduced, with leisure and entertainment venues required to close between 10pm to 5am.

Residents are also advised to adhere to the following guidance to further reduce rates of infection:

- Residents are advised to only use public transport for essential purposes, such as travelling to school or work
- Holidays should be taken within your own household or support bubble
- Residents are advised against attending outdoor amateur and semi-professional sporting events as spectators.

4. Is this different to the restrictions we had in place from September?

No, except under these measures you can now meet in someone's garden as long as it's not with more than six people.

5. What areas does it cover?

The whole of North Tyneside, Newcastle, Northumberland, Gateshead, County Durham, Sunderland and South Tyneside.

6. Why are the measures being introduced?

These measures will help to address the significant rise in coronavirus cases in the region in recent weeks.

There is an increased risk of transmission the more people who gather together. Our data shows an increased rate of transmission in homes, hospitality venues and through grassroots sports.

We are doing everything we can to protect our most vulnerable, keep businesses open and children in school, which these measures will help with.

7. Why are North Tyneside, Northumberland and Durham subject to these measures when they're not on the Government's 'watchlist'?

Infection rates have risen significantly in all areas, with increased numbers of outbreaks, leading to more community transmission across the region. While our rates of infections are different, all local authorities in this area are seeing significant rises in positive cases.

People also travel frequently between the different area for work and leisure, so it makes sense for us to come together to contain this latest increase in infections.

8. How long will it last?

Restrictions are monitored closely, and we are waiting for information from government on when they will be reviewed.

9. What are the household changes?

You must not meet people who do not live with you or are not part of your support bubble, either indoors, unless for the specific purposes mentioned below.

People should only come inside your home for specific purposes:

- where everyone in the gathering lives together or is in the same support bubble
- to attend a birth at the mother's request
- to visit a person who is dying (the visitor can be someone the dying person lives with, a close family member, friend or, if none of those is visiting, anyone else)
- to fulfil a legal obligation
- for work purposes (see guidance on working safely in other people's homes), or for the provision of voluntary or charitable services
- for the purposes of education or training
- for the purposes of childcare provided by a registered provider
- to provide emergency assistance
- to enable one or more persons in the gathering to avoid injury or illness or to escape a risk of harm
- to facilitate a house move
- to provide care or assistance to a vulnerable person
- to continue existing arrangements for access to, and contact between, parents and children where the children do not live in the same household as their parents, or one of their parents.

10. I don't live with my partner, but we're in an established relationship, can I meet up with them and can we stay at each other's houses?

You can meet up with your partner you do not live with outside and you do not have to socially distance.

You can meet up with your partner you do not live with indoors and stay over, if you have formed a support bubble with your partner. (A [support bubble](#) is where a household with one adult joins with another household. Households in that support bubble can still visit each other, stay overnight, and visit public places together. You do not have to socially distance in your support bubble).

You cannot meet up with your partner you do not live with indoors if you have not formed a support bubble with your partner. Under these circumstances this would be considered household mixing and is not permitted under Tier 2 restrictions - Local COVID alert level: high.

11. I am medically vulnerable to coronavirus – do I need to shield?

Under the 'high' alert level, the Government's advice for [clinically extremely vulnerable](#) people is that you keep the number of different people you meet with low. The fewer people you meet, the less likely you are to catch COVID-19.

You are encouraged to continue to go outside with your household and/or support bubble because of the benefits of exercise. If you do choose to meet other households outside of your support bubble, this must be outside, must be in groups of less than six people and the Government advises you to keep the numbers low.

You do not need to maintain social distancing within your household.

You are advised to reduce the number of shopping trips you make. If you do go to the shops, consider doing so at quieter times of the day.

Click [here](#) for more information.

12. Do these measures affect childcare?

You can continue to use early years and childcare settings, including childminders and providers offering before or after school clubs or other out-of-school settings for children. You can also continue to employ nannies, including those living outside of the region.

Children of parents who are separated can continue to move between households.

'Informal' childcare, for example grandparents looking after children, is allowed for children under 14 or vulnerable adults where that is necessary for caring purposes (see questions 9-11 for further information)

It does not allow for play-dates or parties.

Friends or family who do not live with you and are not part of a support or childcare bubble must not visit your home to help with childcare. Childcare bubbles are to be used to provide childcare only, and not for the purposes of different households mixing where they are otherwise not allowed to do so.

This informal arrangement exemption was announced by government on September 21 after initially not being permitted.

The seven local authorities had asked for informal childcare to be exempt from the restrictions and lobbied for this to change.

We would advise that vulnerable people should not provide childcare.

13. Can grandparents from the same household (i.e. grandma and grandad) both provide childcare?

Yes. Grandparents who live in the same household, i.e. grandma and grandad, can link with one other household so that the parents of the children can work.

14. I have two sets of grandparents who live in separate households looking after my children. Is this allowed?

No. You can only link with one other household at any time, so the parents of the children can work.

15. I am a grandparent, how many of my grandchildren can I look after?

One set from one household, so the parents can work.

16. What is a support bubble?

A support bubble is a close support network between a household with only one adult in the home (known as a single-adult household) and one other household of any size.

Once you're in a support bubble, you can think of yourself as being in a single household with people from the other household. It means you can have close contact with that household as if they were members of your own household.

Once you make a support bubble, you should not change who is in your bubble.

You should not have multiple bubbles.

17. Do these measures affect access to education?

No. Schools, colleges and universities remain open and are operating in a COVID-secure way.

18. Does my child need to wear a face covering at school?

Unless exempt, in education settings where students in Year 7 and above are educated, including middle schools, face coverings should be worn by staff, visitors and students when moving around in corridors and communal areas.

19. Can I travel outside the area for work or school?

Yes, people living inside and outside of these areas can continue to travel for work or school. Workplaces and schools themselves should also be implementing covid-secure measures.

20. Can I go to someone's house in an area not subject to the restrictions?

You must not visit anyone's home inside or outside of the restricted area (except for your support bubble).

21. Can I go to a care home?

Care homes in the region have been advised to stop non-essential visiting, excluding health care professionals and those involved in end of life care (including family members).

If you are planning to visit relatives in care homes outside the affected areas, then check with the care home prior to travelling to ensure that they are still open to visits from family members.

22. What are the changes for the hospitality venues?

The following must close from 10pm to 5am:

- Pubs
- Bars and restaurants (including hotel dining rooms and members' clubs)
- Cafes including workplace canteens (but not including cafes or canteens at hospitals, care homes, prisons, establishments intended for the use of naval, military or air force purposes, and for providing food or drink to the homeless, or those where there is no practical alternative for staff at that workplace to obtain food)
- Social clubs
- Cinemas
- Theatres
- Casinos
- Bingo halls and concert halls
- Amusement arcades or other indoor leisure centres or facilities
- Static/fixed funfairs (indoors or outdoors), theme parks, and adventure parks and activities

During opening hours (5am to 10pm), venues serving alcohol must operate table service only for food and drinks – this includes ordering. Those venues who don't serve alcohol can operate counter service, but the consumption of food and drinks should take place at a table as much as possible.

Hospitality venues must take reasonable steps to ensure that bookings are not accepted, or customers admitted onto the premises if they

- are groups of more than one household and support bubble if they will be located indoors.
- or more than 6 people if the group does include multiple households if they will be seated outside.

As elsewhere in the country, venues must also take details of customers for NHS Test and Trace from September 18.

23. What about takeaways?

Hot food takeaways should close to walk-ins between 10pm and 5am each day, but they can continue to operate a delivery service during these hours, via a website, telephone, text message, post, or by 'drive-throughs'.

24. Can I still go to a hospitality venue, like a pub or restaurant, with family and friends who don't live with me?

No. From September 30, you can only visit the venues listed below with members of your own household (or support bubble).

- Restaurants, including restaurants and dining rooms in hotels or members' clubs
- Bars, including bars in hotels or members' clubs
- Public houses

- Social clubs
- Casinos
- Cafes
- Workplace canteens (except those at hospital, care home, school, prison, those providing food or drink to the homeless, those intended for naval military or air force purposes, or those where there is no practical alternative for staff at that workplace to obtain food)

It is also advised that you don't visit a beer garden/pavement cafe with other households or congregate outside a public venue.

25. Why can I visit the pub but not my relative's house?

This is because the hospitality industry has enhanced measures, such as risk assessments and test and trace, which private homes don't have.

26. Can I meet up outdoors, i.e. on the beach or in the park, with other households?

If you decide to meet with friends and family you do not live with outdoors, including in private gardens, you must not meet in a group of more than six and you must practice social distancing.

27. Are there restrictions on weddings, civil partnerships and funerals?

For England, including in the North East of England, the following attendance limits apply for weddings and funerals:

- Weddings and civil partnership ceremonies are limited to 15 people
- Wedding receptions and celebrations can continue for up to 15 people in the form of a sit-down meal and in a Covid Secure setting, not in a private dwelling.
- Funerals (including ceremonies at crematoria) are limited to 30 people
- All other religious or belief-based standalone life cycle ceremonies or celebrations are limited to 6 people

Anyone working at these ceremonies or events are not included as part of the person limit.

The additional restriction on mixing with other households within indoor settings does not change the attendance limits.

28. What are the changes to playing team sports?

In line with [guidelines from national sporting bodies](#), you can take part in sport and physical activity outdoors.

Organised indoor exercise classes are only permitted if it is possible for people to avoid mixing in with people you do not live with or share a support bubble with. There are exceptions to enable disability and youth sport and physical activity indoors, in any number.

The organiser must conduct a risk assessment and ensure compliance with Covid-19 Secure guidance.

You should follow the guidance on:

- the return of [recreational team sport](#)
- the return of [outdoor sport and recreation in England](#)
- for [providers of grassroots sport and gym/leisure facilities](#)

We advise that you should not attend amateur or professional sporting events as a spectator in the affected local areas. If you do attend, you must remain socially distanced and in groups of no more than six when outdoors (and if indoors only with your household or support bubble).

29. Can I travel to play sport outside of the areas with restrictions?

Yes, providing it is organised by a national governing body, club, registered instructor, business or charity or someone with an official licence. Please wear a face covering if using public transport unless exempt.

30. Can I go to the gym, gym class, leisure centre or a swimming pool?

Yes, as long as these venues have the required Covid-secure risk assessments and guidelines in place.

31. How are community activities like support groups and clubs affected?

Activities organised by community and voluntary organisations, including physical activity, education, providing support to vulnerable people, youth groups, charitable and voluntary work, are permitted and can exceed the limit of six people based on their individual Covid risk assessment. This could include, for example, providing meals to vulnerable people indoors in a covid-secure environment. However, particular care must be taken to stringently follow guidance on social distancing, handwashing and the taking of attendees' details for purposes of contact tracing.

32. Can I have someone in my house (or go into someone's house) to do repairs or other work?

Only official/registered tradespeople can go to other people's homes for work purposes as long as you follow national guidance on how to work safely there. This includes mobile hairdressers and beauticians.

33. Can I visit a friend or relative in hospital or accompany them to an appointment?

Please check with the hospital before visiting.

34. Can I still go on holiday?

You can still go on holiday within the UK or abroad, but you should only do this with people you live with (or have formed a support bubble with). You need to follow any rules in the area you visit and be aware of the self-isolation rules when travelling to and from certain countries.

People can visit the region on holiday but must comply with the local restrictions.

35. What about public transport and car sharing?

Residents are advised to walk or cycle when possible and when travelling by car to only travel with those in your household and/or support bubble.

Car sharing should be avoided if it is with people outside your household or support bubble as it risks spreading the virus and increasing the likelihood of further community transmission. People travelling in private vehicles together will be classed as 'close contacts' if one or more person in the vehicle develops symptoms or tests positive for Covid-19, requiring everybody to self-isolate.

It is advised to only use public transport for essential purposes, such as travelling to school or work.

Face coverings must be worn unless exempt.

36. Are the airport, train stations and ports still open?

Newcastle Airport, train stations and ports remain open and members of the public are permitted to travel to and from these locations.

37. Can I move home?

Yes

38. What support is available for medically vulnerable residents?

Those who are classed as more medically vulnerable to coronavirus, or who have previously been shielding, are advised to take extra care. The advice about shielding announced by the prime minister on September 22 doesn't apply in the region at this time.

We continue to support our most vulnerable residents, who can't call on others for support. Residents can call us on 0800 234 6084 or [complete a short online form](#).

39. How do I book a test and what happens next?

You need to get tested as soon as possible (within the first five days of having symptoms).

You can book online [here](#) or by calling NHS 119. You will then be invited to a test site - or you can order a home test kit if you can't get to a test site.

The testing service continues to be very busy throughout the country, so please only [book](#) one if you have [symptoms](#) or have been asked to get tested by the NHS Test and Trace Programme.

If you cannot get a test at first, or the location or time are not convenient, try again in a few hours as slots become available. If no tests are available online, do not call the helpline to get a test as no extra tests are available through it.

NHS Test and Trace has seen unprecedented demand for testing recently, but new booking slots and home testing kits are made available daily and it is targeting testing capacity at the areas that need it most. It has also doubled its capacity to process tests – most people get their results the next day.

40. I have symptoms, does the rest of my household need to book a test?

If someone in your household starts to have symptoms, then that person must get tested and the rest of the household should self-isolate with them whilst they wait for the results. If you or other members of the household don't have symptoms, then you should not get a test – only people with symptoms should get tested.

It is very important that people with symptoms and their household members stay at home before the test and until they receive their results.

41. Do I need to self-isolate even though my test result was negative?

A negative result means the test did not find coronavirus.

You do not need to self-isolate if your test is negative, as long as:

- Everyone you live with (or your support bubble) who has symptoms tests negative
- You were not told to self-isolate for 14 days by NHS Test and Trace
- If you feel well – if you feel unwell, stay at home until you're feeling better.

Full guidance on self-isolating can be found on the Government's website [here](#).

42. What do I do if I see someone breaking the rules?

Where people are breaking the rules, we will seek to engage, explain and encourage them to adhere to the restrictions. However, enforcement action will be taken where appropriate.

If an individual is breaching restrictions, you can report it to Northumbria Police. To do so, where possible, people are asked to use the reporting tool on the force's website www.northumbria.police.uk. Alternatively, you can call 101. The police will assess the circumstances to determine the appropriate action.

Once the legislation is in place, the police or the local authority will be able to take action against those who break these rules, including asking people to disperse and issuing fixed penalty notice.

People aged 18 or over can be fined:

- £200 for the first offence, lowered to £100 if paid within 14 days
- £400 for the second offence, then doubling for each further offence up to a maximum of £6,400

The government has also introduced fines for those who hold [illegal gatherings](#) of over 30 people. Holding or being involved in the holding of an illegal gathering of more than 30 people is an offence, and police may issue fines of £10,000 to those who break the law.

43. Where do I find information on infection rates?

You can find information on the Government's website [here](#).