

Boris Johnson announced his long-awaited four-step road map on February 23rd to slowly ease Covid-19 restrictions and open the country over four months.

Starting on March 8 and ending on June 21 the road map for England sets out incremental steps, each five weeks apart, for returning life to normal.

The prime minister said that the dates would be the very earliest on which restrictions would be lifted and might yet be delayed if new variants emerged or a rise in cases put pressure on the NHS.

STEP ONE: March 8-29

Step 1A: March 8

Schools and universities

All schools will reopen in two weeks' time on March 8. At the same time after-school activities and sport will be allowed to commence. Secondary school pupils will be required to wear facemasks in classes for the first time.

Students on practical courses, such as medicine, will be allowed to return to campuses. The rest will have to wait until a review that is due to conclude before the end of the Easter holidays.

Meeting up

People will be allowed to meet one other person outdoors for a picnic or coffee on a park bench rather than just for exercise.

Care home residents will be allowed one regular visitor, as long as they follow coronavirus restrictions. However, the stay at home order will remain in place, only allowing people to leave for a very limited number of reasons.

Step 1B: March 29

Outdoor socialising

From March 29 an unlimited number of people from two households or groups of up to six people from three or more households will be able to meet outdoors in parks, gardens and other outside spaces.

Sport

On the same day organised adult and children's sport can return as outdoor facilities such as tennis courts and local football pitches reopen. Outdoor swimming pools will also open at this point as will golf courses.

Stay local

At this point the stay at home order will end and people will instead be told to stay local. The guidance will state that people should not travel to stay in second homes.

People will continue to be asked to work from home wherever possible, and overseas travel will be banned except for the current limited set of exemptions.

STEP TWO: April 12

Shops, museums and hairdressers

Non-essential shops, public buildings such as libraries and museums, and personal care services such as hairdressers and nail salons will all be allowed to reopen.

People from separate households will still not be allowed to meet indoors, however, so people will be asked not to visit a library or museum with people they do not live with. Driving lessons will begin again at the same time.

Pubs and restaurants

Pubs and restaurants will be allowed to offer table service to people outdoors. There will be no curfew and no requirement for pubs and bars to serve food alongside drinks, putting an end to the debate over whether a scotch egg constitutes a substantial enough meal.

Gyms and leisure centres

Indoor leisure facilities, including gyms, swimming pools and indoor tennis courts, will reopen but again people will not be allowed to visit them with people they don't live with.

Outdoor attractions including zoos and theme parks will also be able to reopen their doors.

Holidays

There will be a limited return to domestic holidays for families, with campsites and holiday lets where indoor facilities are not shared with other households given the green light to reopen.

Weddings and funerals

Funerals will be allowed with up to 30 people, and the number of people permitted to attend weddings will go up from six to 15.

Larger events

At this point, the government plans to start piloting events with larger crowd sizes and reduced social distancing, using mass testing.

STEP THREE: May 17

Social contact

Outdoor social contact rules will be lifted so gatherings of up to 30 people will be allowed.

Inside, people will be able to meet subject to the rule of six or a larger group from two individual households.

Pubs, restaurants and hotels

Pubs and restaurants will also be able to reopen for indoor service. Cinemas, children's play areas hotels and B&Bs will also open.

Theatres and larger venues

Theatres, concert halls and other large venues will also be allowed to reopen with social distancing measures in place.

Larger indoor venues will be allowed to reopen with a maximum capacity of 1,000 or until they are half full, whichever figure is lower.

Outdoor venues will be allowed to open with a capacity of up to 4,000 people or half full, whichever is lower.

The largest outdoor seated venues, such as football stadiums, will be able to reopen with up to 10,000 people or until they are a quarter full, whichever is lower.

Weddings and funerals

Up to 30 people will be allowed to attend weddings, funerals, baptisms and bar mitzvahs.

Foreign travel

The government is to set up a review to see how foreign travel could be allowed to resume safely again; this is due to report in April. In the road map May 17 is the earliest date that foreign travel without self-isolation restrictions might be allowed but this could be pushed back further.

STEP FOUR: June 21

Social contact

All legal limits on social contact will be removed.

Nightclubs and large events

Nightclubs will be one of the final sectors of the economy to open and will come alongside an end to restrictions on the number of people who can attend large events such as festivals and concerts.

However, ministers warn that this will be dependent on the success of the vaccine programme in eliminating the vast majority of Covid-19 cases by this point.

Weddings

All limits will be removed.

Working from home

People will be advised to work from home until at least this date.

Vaccine passports

The government will be reviewing whether “Covid status certification” — essentially, proof of a vaccine or a negative coronavirus test — could be used to permit people to do things more easily. It is aiming to get the results of this work before the last stage on its unlocking plan on June 21.

Social distancing review

The government is also conducting a review on other aspects of social distancing such as the one metre rule, wearing face masks in public spaces, and the advice to work from home where possible. This review is due to have concluded by this point at which point the current rules and guidance may change.