

Updated COVID-19 Rules & Guidelines

In response to the surge of the new 'omicron' coronavirus variant, the devolved governments of the UK have updated their COVID-19 restrictions and guidelines.

As the number of active cases remains under both strict and constant monitoring, it is the legal responsibility of all employers to ensure their businesses continue to adhere to the relevant legislative requirements. Although most COVID rules appear similar across the four nations, it is important to recognise the subtle differences between them.

For guidance purposes only, we have compiled a summarised list of key COVID regulations across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales.

As of the *29th of December 2021*, the restrictions for businesses and workplaces within each of the four nations of the UK are as follows:

| | England | Wales | Scotland | Northern Ireland |
|---------------------------------|--|---|--|--|
| Face Coverings | Mandatory on most public transportation and public indoor settings —with the notable exception of hospitality venues where food and drink are consumed. | Mandatory on most public transportation and public indoor settings. Hospitality exemptions only apply when eating, drinking, exercising, or when seated at a table. | Mandatory on most public transportation and public indoor settings. Hospitality exemptions only apply when eating, drinking, exercising, or when seated at a table. | Mandatory on most public transportation and public indoor settings , except places of worship. Hospitality exemptions only apply when eating, drinking, exercising, or when seated at a table. |
| Social Distancing | No minimum social distancing requirements are in place. | By law, employers must take all reasonable measures to ensure 2 metres social distance. 2 metre social distancing required in all public places and offices. | Businesses are legally required to take reasonable measures to reduce the spread of COVID , this includes the re-introduction of social distancing. Public social distancing is advised. | By law, employers must take all reasonable measures to ensure 2 metres social distance. Public social distancing is advised. |
| Social Contact/Gathering | No restrictions. | Limited to six people within hospitality venues. | Limited to three households —use of lateral flow tests advised before meeting. | Limited to three households. |
| COVID Passports | Over-18s required to prove their vaccine status or show a negative test at most venues. | NHS COVID Passes required for entry into most venues and events. | Over-18s required to prove their vaccine status or show a negative test at most venues. | Venues and events must adhere to the Covid Certification Scheme. |

| | England | Wales | Scotland | Northern Ireland |
|--------------------------|--|---|--|--|
| Hospitality | No restrictions. | <p>Nightclubs closed.</p> <p>Events and other hospitality venues must take additional measures to protect customers and staff. This includes returning to contact detail collection and table service only.</p> | <p>Nightclubs closed.</p> <p>Other hospitality venues must return to table service only.</p> <p>Groups must observe at least 1 metre social distancing.</p> | <p>Nightclubs closed.</p> <p>Other hospitality venues must return to table service only. Rules limiting the maximum number of people at a table are in place.</p> <p>Dancing in all hospitality venues is forbidden.</p> |
| Events | No restrictions. | <p>Outdoor events limited to 50.</p> <p>Indoor events limited to 30.</p> | <p>Outdoor events limited to 500 seated or standing.</p> <p>Indoor events limited to 100 standing or 200 seated.</p> | <p>Large gatherings (30+ people) in a private dwelling are forbidden.</p> <p>Indoor standing events are forbidden.</p> <p>No further restrictions on events so long as organisers have carried out appropriate risk assessments and preventative measures.</p> |
| Working From Home | If possible, people are advised to work from home if they can. | <p>If reasonably possible, it is a legal requirement for workers to work from home.</p> <p>Employers will be subject to a £1,000 penalty each time their employees break this rule.</p> | It is the legal duty of employers to support working from home wherever possible. | If possible, people are advised to work from home if they can. |

| | England | Wales | Scotland | Northern Ireland |
|---|--|---|--|---|
| If you are confirmed positive for or have symptoms of COVID-19, you must... | <p>Self-isolate for 10 days.</p> <p>You may end isolation early if you receive 2 negative lateral flow tests on the 6th and 7th day.</p> | <p>Self-isolate for 10 days.</p> | <p>Self-isolate for 10 days.</p> <p>Regardless of vaccination status, if anyone belonging to your household is confirmed positive for COVID-19, you must self-isolate for 10 days.</p> | <p>Self-isolate for 10 days.</p> |
| If you are fully vaccinated and have come into contact with someone confirmed positive for COVID-19... | <p>You must take daily lateral flow tests for 7 days.</p> | <p>If your contact is confirmed positive for the omicron variant, you must self-isolate for 10 days.</p> <p>For any other variant, you must take a PCR test on the 2nd and 8th day following contact. You do not need to self-isolate unless instructed by Test, Trace and Protect.</p> | <p>You must self-isolate and take a PCR test as soon as possible. If your test is negative or you remain asymptomatic, you no longer need to isolate.</p> | <p>If your contact is confirmed positive for the omicron variant, you must self-isolate for 10 days.</p> <p>For any other variant, you must take a PCR test on the 2nd and 8th day following contact. Even if your PCR test returns negative, 10 days of isolation and daily lateral flow tests must be observed.</p> |
| If you are NOT fully vaccinated and have come into contact with someone confirmed positive for COVID-19... | <p>You must take daily lateral flow tests for 10 days.</p> | <p>You must self-isolate for 10 days.</p> | <p>You must self-isolate for 10 days.</p> | <p>You must self-isolate for 10 days.</p> |