



1. Home (<https://www.gov.uk/>)
2. Coronavirus (COVID-19) (<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-taxon>)

Guidance

Guidance for the Christmas Period

Guidance for the Christmas Period.

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Applies to:

England

Contents

- Meeting friends and family
- Visiting bars, pubs and restaurants
- Visiting churches and other places of worship
- Visiting shops and Christmas markets
- Attending events, including performances and Christmas lighting ceremonies
- Celebrating New Year's Eve
- Carol singing
- Going to work
- Going to school, college and university
- Attending events organised by schools and other education settings, including nativity plays
- Childcare
- Visiting relatives in care homes
- Travel within the UK
- Volunteering
- Weddings, civil partnerships and funerals

[Print this page](#)

From 2 December, you must follow the guidance for the tier in your area. Find out what restrictions are in place in your area (<https://www.gov.uk/find-coronavirus-local-restrictions>).

Meeting friends and family

There are different rules on meeting friends and family, depending on when you meet them.

From 2 December to 23 December

From 2 December to 23 December, you must follow the guidance for the tier in your area.

From 23 December to 27 December

From 23 December to 27 December, you may choose to form a Christmas bubble (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/making-a-christmas-bubble-with-friends-and-family/making-a-christmas-bubble-with-friends-and-family#if-you-are-clinically-extremely-vulnerable>).

A Christmas bubble will be able to spend time together in private homes, to attend places of worship, or meet in a public outdoor place.

In all other settings, people should follow local restrictions in the tier (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-restriction-tiers-what-you-need-to-know>) in which they are staying.

If you do not form a Christmas bubble, you should continue to follow the guidance for the tier in your area. You may still meet with your support bubble (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/making-a-support-bubble-with-another-household>) or childcare bubble.

From 28 December

From 28 December, you must follow the guidance for the tier in your area. Christmas bubbles will no longer apply.

Visiting bars, pubs and restaurants

From 2 December, the rules on who you can meet with in bars, pubs and restaurants will depend on your tier. The rules might be different for indoor and outdoor hospitality settings. Check the rules for your tier (<https://www.gov.uk/find-coronavirus-local-restrictions>).

Between 23 and 27 December, the rules on who you can meet in bars, pubs and restaurants will not change.

Visiting churches and other places of worship

From 2 December, you can attend places of worship in all tiers. The rules on who you can meet with whilst at places of worship will depend on your tier. Check the rules for your tier (<https://www.gov.uk/find-coronavirus-local-restrictions>).

Between 23 and 27 December, you may also attend a place of worship with members of your Christmas bubble. This applies in all tiers.

There is further information in the guidance for the safe use of places of worship during the pandemic (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-during-the-pandemic-from-4-july/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-during-the-pandemic-from-4-july>).

Visiting shops and Christmas markets

From 2 December, the rules on who you can meet with in shops will depend on your tier. The rules might be different for indoor shops and open air shops, such as Christmas markets or Christmas tree markets. Check the rules for your tier (<https://www.gov.uk/find-coronavirus-local-restrictions>).

Santa's grottos are able to open in all tiers where they are located in venues otherwise permitted to open. Venues should put in place appropriate covid-secure measures (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>), including social distancing.

Between 23 and 27 December, the rules on who you can meet in shops will not change. This includes Boxing Day sales.

There is further information in the guidance for people who work in or run shops, branches, stores or similar environments (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/shops-and-branches>).

Attending events, including performances and Christmas lighting ceremonies

From 2 December, the rules on attending events, including performances and Christmas lighting ceremonies will depend on your tier. The rules might be different for indoor and outdoor events. Check the rules for your tier (<https://www.gov.uk/find-coronavirus-local-restrictions>).

Between 23 and 27 December, the rules on indoor events will not change. You can attend outdoor events with your Christmas bubble.

There is further information in the guidance for people who work in performing arts, including arts organisations, venue operators and participants (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/performing-arts>).

Celebrating New Year's Eve

You must follow the rules on where you can go and who you can meet, including on New Year's Eve. Your Christmas bubble will no longer apply. Check the rules for your tier (<https://www.gov.uk/find-coronavirus-local-restrictions>).

Carol singing

COVID-19 spreads from person to person through small droplets, aerosols and through direct contact. Singing, shouting and physical activity increases the risk of transmission through small droplets and aerosols. If singing does take place, steps should be taken to reduce the risk of transmission, including limiting the number of people participating as far as possible. The cumulative effect of aerosol transmission means the more people involved, the higher the risk of transmission.

Carol singing or carol services can take place if all attendees follow advice in the suggested principles of safer singing (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-suggested-principles-of-safer-singing/covid-19-suggested-principles-of-safer-singing>) and guidance for the Performing Arts (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/performing-arts>) developed by an expert group coordinated by Public Health England. This applies to both professional and amateur choirs.

Those performing or rehearsing:

- In a professional capacity; or
- As part of a supervised activity for under 18s

are not limited in number and do not have to adhere to gathering limits but should still follow the performing arts guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/performing-arts>).

For adult amateur performances and rehearsals, you should consider the case for proceeding (or not), given the wider health context in your area and the context of your participants, particularly if vulnerable individuals are involved.

If you do proceed, you should follow performing arts guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/performing-arts>) and will be subject to local gathering limits. This means that if more than one group of six (in tier 1) or household (in tier 2 or 3) is performing or rehearsing indoors, they must not interact, 'mingle' or otherwise socialise together. You should maintain social distancing between groups or households at all times, including when entering or leaving the building or in any breaks. Direction can continue to take place during the activity i.e. between a conductor and a group, but other physical and social interaction is prohibited.

Indoor performances

Professional and amateur choirs may perform in any indoor venue permitted to open, as per the restrictions in each tier and should follow the rules outlined above.

Based on public health advice for indoor performances, the audience or congregation should not participate in any activity that can create aerosols, including singing, shouting and chanting. The maximum number of people present should take into account the area of the space and the requirement to maintain 2m social distancing at all times. This follows the advice generally for the Performing Arts (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/performing-arts>). Particular attention should be paid to how participants can arrive and leave the site safely while maintaining social distancing.

Attendees should walk or cycle to the event and avoid public transport or sharing a car with anyone outside their household in line with safer travel advice (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-travel-guidance-for-passengers>).

Outdoor performances

Professional and amateur choirs may perform outdoors in any venue permitted to open, as per the restrictions in each tier and should follow the rules outlined above.

Where a performance is held outdoors, an audience or congregation may join in with singing and should follow performing arts guidance. This means that audience or congregation members should follow social distancing of 2m and event organisers should ensure this is maintained. Attendees should remain seated where possible. The maximum number of people present should take into account the area of the outdoor space and the requirement to maintain 2m social distancing at all times. Particular attention should be paid to how participants can arrive and leave the site safely while maintaining social distancing.

Door-to-door carol singing can take place in a group(s) of no more than six participants. If there are more than six people in total, each 'group' must not interact, 'mingle' or otherwise socialise. Participants should adhere to public health advice, including to ensure that you maintain at least 2m distance from anyone you do not live with and the threshold of any dwellings.

Attendees should walk or cycle to the event and avoid public transport or sharing a car with anyone outside their household in line with safer travel advice (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-travel-guidance-for-passengers>).

For further information, please refer to the Performing Arts guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/performing-arts>) and guidance for the safe use of places of worship during the pandemic (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-during-the-pandemic-from-4-july/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-during-the-pandemic-from-4-july>).

Going to work

If you are working during this period, you should continue to do so from home where you can effectively do so.

Going to school, college and university

You should continue to attend your school or college until the last day of normal term time. Schools and colleges should not change their Christmas holidays or close early this term. Parents should continue to send their children to school during term time and students should continue to attend college right up until the end of term – our senior clinicians continue to advise that the best place for children and young people is in education. The time-limited change to social restrictions over Christmas does not require any children to be taken out of school prematurely.

Returning home from university

If you are a university student living at university away from home, you will be able to return back during the student travel window, from 3 - 9 December. You should travel home when your face-to-face teaching has finished. You should take any test offered to you by your university, whether or not you have symptoms. This will reduce the risk to your friends and family. All Universities have been asked to move all teaching online by the 9 December. There are some exemptions for certain courses.

Students that have been living away from home should read the guidance on student movement and plans for the end of term (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-reopening-buildings-and-campuses/student-movement-and-plans-for-the-end-of-autumn-2020-term#moving-online>).

Attending events organised by schools and other education settings, including nativity plays

Performances by pupils, such as nativity plays and other seasonal events, should take place within existing school bubbles and avoid mixing across groups.

Whether audience members, including parents, are permitted to attend festive performances will depend on the tier in their area.

In tiers 1 and 2, audiences are permitted to attend, subject to the appropriate safeguards being in place.

In tier 3, audiences are not permitted. In these areas, schools can use alternative methods such as live-streaming and recording performance.

Schools planning a performance should consult the guidance on music, dance and drama (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools#music-dance-and-drama-in-school>) and the performing arts guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/performing-arts>).

Supervised activity for children is exempt from limits on gatherings in every tier. This means children's choirs and other out-of-school settings can continue. Providers who run community and other out-of-school activities for children should follow the protective measures guidance for holiday or after-school clubs and other out-of-school settings (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protective-measures-for-holiday-or-after-school-clubs-and-other-out-of-school-settings-for-children-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/protective-measures-for-out-of-school-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>).

Childcare

Over the Christmas period, local restrictions and exemptions remain in place. Therefore, registered childcare, other supervised activities for children, and childcare bubbles are permitted. However, as Christmas bubbles can be formed (between 23 and 27 December) we advise against the use of normal childcare bubbles during this period, except where absolutely necessary. This reduces the risk of spreading coronavirus between Christmas bubbles.

Visiting relatives in care homes

You will be able to continue visiting relatives in care homes in all tiers. Visits should be held with social distance and PPE in place, outside or in other Covid-secure visiting areas.

Where testing is available, residents will be able to have visits from up to two visitors each week in all tiers by Christmas. If a visitor has a negative test, is wearing appropriate PPE, and following other infection control measures, then it may be possible for visitors to have physical contact with their loved one, such as providing personal care and holding hands. Detailed guidance will be published in the coming days.

Travel within the UK

From 2 December to 27 December the advice on travelling outside of your tier, including for overnight stays, will depend on your tier. Check the rules for your tier (<https://www.gov.uk/find-coronavirus-local-restrictions>).

Between 23 and 27 December, you may travel between tiers and other nations of the UK if necessary to meet with other households in your Christmas bubble or return home. Once at your destination, you should follow the rules in that tier (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-restriction-tiers-what-you-need-to-know>).

You should not travel to see your bubble before 23 December, or travel back after the 27 December except in exceptional circumstances (for example, if a member of your Christmas bubble develops symptoms of COVID-19 and you are required to self-isolate). Anyone travelling to or from Northern Ireland may travel on the 22 and 28 December.

Transport routes may be busier than normal. You should:

- plan ahead, check for disruption before you leave, and avoid the busiest routes, as well as busy times
- avoid making unnecessary stops during your journey
- avoid sharing a car with people not in your household or Christmas bubble
- keep your distance from other people when you travel, where possible
- wash or sanitise your hands regularly
- wear a face covering on public transport in England unless you're exempt

If you plan to travel to Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland, you should read guidance from Wales (<https://gov.wales/coronavirus>), Scotland (<https://www.gov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19/>), or Northern Ireland (<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/coronavirus-covid-19>) before you travel.

You can stay in a hotel, including in tier 3, during the Christmas period as long as you're staying by yourself or with other members of your household.

You can stay in private rented accommodation with members of your household, or your Christmas bubble.

If you need to travel with your Christmas bubble, wherever you are, you should follow Safer Travel guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-travel-guidance-for-passengers>).

Travel abroad

From 2 December you may travel abroad, including to visit friends and family, subject to any restrictions in place at your destination. However, those in Tier 3 should avoid leaving their tier, including for international travel, other than for work, education or caring responsibilities. Before travelling you should check relevant travel advice (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-advice-novel-coronavirus>).

Travel to the UK from abroad will continue to be governed by the travel corridor (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-travel-corridors>) approach. Individuals will need to self-isolate for 14 days if arriving from or have travelled through a non-travel corridor country or territory. From 15 December 2020, passengers arriving into England from countries not featured on the government's travel corridor list (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-travel-corridors>) will have the option to take a test after 5 days of self-isolation, with a negative result releasing them from the need to isolate. You must not form a Christmas bubble (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/making-a-christmas-bubble-with-friends-and-family/making-a-christmas-bubble-with-friends-and-family>) if you have coronavirus symptoms or are self-isolating.

Between 23 and 27 December, the rules on international travel will not change.

Volunteering

Volunteers play a crucial role in supporting people over the Christmas period and you can continue to do so in all tiers.

Where possible, you should volunteer from home. If you cannot do so, you can volunteer outside your home. You should also follow advice on how to help safely (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-how-to-help-safely--2/coronavirus-how-to-help-safely>). If you are volunteering, you must follow social distancing guidance

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-meeting-with-others-safely-social-distancing/coronavirus-covid-19-meeting-with-others-safely-social-distancing>). If you do not follow this advice, you could put yourself at risk of infection, or risk spreading it to others.

Find out more about ways to volunteer (<https://www.gov.uk/volunteering/coronavirus-volunteering>).

Weddings, civil partnerships and funerals

From 2 December, the rules on weddings, civil partnerships and funerals will depend on your tier. Check the rules for your tier (<https://www.gov.uk/find-coronavirus-local-restrictions>).

Between 23 and 27 December, the rules on weddings, civil partnerships and funerals will not change.

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32 days to go

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