

## Covid19 : Out of lockdown.

5<sup>th</sup> April 2021.

The Prime Minister has today announced that the planned partial lifting of restrictions on 12<sup>th</sup> April will go ahead.

Previously Step 1 was of two parts: the 8<sup>th</sup> March saw children return to school and from the 29<sup>th</sup> March, when most schools broke up for the Easter holidays, outdoor gatherings (including in private gardens) of either 6 people or 2 households allowed. The stay at home rule ended on 29<sup>th</sup> March but many restrictions still remain in place. Outdoor sports facilities such as tennis, open-air swimming pools and netball courts were allowed to re-open and people may take part in formally organised outdoor sports.

Step 2, from the 12<sup>th</sup> April, will see the opening of non-essential retail; personal care premises such as hairdressers; and public buildings, including libraries and community centres. Indoor leisure facilities such as gyms will also reopen (but only for use by people on their own or in household groups); as will most outdoor attractions and settings including outdoor hospitality venues, zoos, theme parks, and drive-in cinemas. Self-contained accommodation such as campsites and holiday lets, where indoor facilities are not shared with other households, can also reopen.

Hospitality venues will be allowed to serve people outdoors at Step 2 and there will be no need for customers to order a substantial meal with alcoholic drinks and no curfew, although customers must order, eat and drink while seated ('table service'). Wider social contact rules will apply in all these settings to prevent indoor mixing between different households. Funerals of up to 30 people will continue & weddings, receptions or wakes up to 15 will be allowed. Care home residents will be able to have 2 visitors.

Step 3 will not be before 17<sup>th</sup> May. Full details can be read <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-spring-2021/covid-19-response-spring-2021-summary>

It is planned that most legal restrictions on meeting others outdoors will be lifted - although gatherings of over 30 people will remain illegal. Indoors, the Rule of 6 or 2 households will apply though whether it is safe to increase this will be kept under review.

Up to 30 people will be able to attend weddings, receptions and wakes, as well as funerals and other significant life events such as christenings.

Other indoor locations to open up in Step 3 include indoor entertainment venues such as cinemas and children's play areas; the rest of the accommodation sector, including hotels, hostels and B&Bs; and indoor adult group sports and exercise classes. Much larger gatherings are due to be allowed & more was said today about the use of pre-event testing & possible Covid19 passports to allow these to go ahead.

Finally, before Step 4 begins (earliest date 21<sup>st</sup> June) the government will complete a review of social distancing and other long-term measures that have been put in place to cut transmission. This will inform decisions on the timing and circumstances under which the

rules on 1 metre plus, the wearing of face coverings and other measures may be lifted. This will also inform guidance on working from home – which, it is said, should continue wherever possible until this review is complete.

This indicates that up to Step 4 the previous so called “Covid secure” measures will be followed.

It is encouraging that Step 2 is going ahead as planned. There is of course still circumspection and a degree of uncertainty, particularly about when all the measures in place to cut transmission will be lifted. While a return to some normality will be welcome, and reduced social distancing, for example, would make meeting up easier, especially for groups hoping to resume meeting in people’s homes, lifting many of these measures will also create anxieties, particularly for those who have been shielding previously. Each of our groups will, I know, be cognisant of the issues & make decisions about a return to activities as the rules & guidance allows and when practicable. Obviously, outdoor activities will return earlier than indoor activities and more information & guidance will become available as time goes on. The Third Age Trust has at present produced a general activities risk assessment, as well as one for walking, together with a personal checklist for members, all available on their website. Our monthly meetings and the June 17<sup>th</sup> AGM will continue virtually on Zoom, until at least September, which is the earliest the Player’s Theatre is likely to open.

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NB much of the wording about the various steps has been taken from Third Age Trust or Government websites.