

England's roadmap: what will step 4 look like?

The Prime Minister has set out what life at step 4 of England's roadmap will look like. We explore what employers should know below:

- The Prime Minister has announced that the final step will likely go ahead as planned on 19 July 2021, although this will not be confirmed until 12 July 2021 after a review of the latest data.
- Assuming that there is no change of plan, limits on social contact and social distancing rules will end, meaning homeworking guidance can change.
- If coronavirus data proves favourable, and pending confirmation from the Government, people will no longer be instructed to work from home from 19 July 2021.
- Employers will be able to bring staff back to the office safely if they wish to.
- Scrapping social distancing rules will also mean that businesses such as nightclubs will be able to re-open.
- Eligible employers can still make use of the furlough scheme until the end of September 2021, including flexible furlough, if they are still experiencing a downturn in demand.
- The Prime Minister also signalled that, under a new regime, fully vaccinated people would no longer need to self-isolate if identified as a contact. This has now been confirmed by the Health Secretary and will come into effect from 16 August 2021.

Private Member's Bill on flexible working

It has been announced that another Private Member's Bill (PMB) has been introduced in the House of Lords which would make flexible working a right from day one of employment – except in exceptional cases. Currently, employees with at least 26 weeks of consecutive service have a right to request flexible working and employers, after considering the request, can accept or reject it.

Did you know?

If this Bill is passed, employers will have to offer flexible working to all and advertise roles as flexible. However, PMBs are not government-backed and such Bills do not tend to be implemented unless the Government gives its support.

Gender pay gaps shrink for third consecutive year

Analysis by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) shows a three-year decline among companies that disclosed their pay gaps, from an average gap of 14.3% in 2017/18 to 12.5% in 2020/21. With more than three-quarters of employers yet to show their data, 58% of those who have reported saw a drop in their mean pay gap, with the same proportion seeing a reduction in their bonus gap.

Did you know?

Due to coronavirus, there was a six-month delay in enforcing the publication of gender pay gap reports for both public and private employers. Eligible employers have until 5 October 2021 to produce their report for the 2020/2021 financial year.

ET rules on furloughed workers and holiday pay

The Employment Tribunal (ET) has decided that, for the period an agency worker on a contract for services was on furlough, he was not a worker under the Working Time Regulations 1998 and did not accrue annual leave during that time. Analysis of the claimant's contract found that the agreement only existed when he was on assignment. Specifically, he would not "receive payment from his employer or their clients for any time not spent on assignment".

Did you know?

ET decisions aren't binding, meaning if this decision were to be appealed, or a case with similar facts were to be heard, the same decision may not be reached.

Whilst the new "Freedom Day" of 19 July 2021 is still yet to be confirmed, employers have some direction as to when they are likely to return to some form of normality and end homeworking measures. Contact our 24-hour Advisory Service for up-to-date guidance on this and more.

Please contact the 24 Hour Advice Service for advice on your specific situation before acting on the information in this publication.