

Let the countdown begin: restrictions easing in England

As was widely expected, Prime Minister Boris Johnson has confirmed that Step 4 of England's roadmap out of lockdown restrictions will proceed as planned on 19 July 2021. We explore what employers should know below:

- The majority of legal restrictions will be removed, Mr Johnson said, and people will be expected to protect themselves and others through informed choice.
- The one metre-plus rule will be removed (except in places such as hospitals, or before passport control when entering the country).
- While the Government is no longer instructing people to work from home, a return to the workplace should be gradual and businesses should follow the published guidance.
- Positive cases and contacts of positive cases identified by NHS Test and Trace will still be legally required to self-isolate for 10 days, to help break chains of transmission.
- Nightclubs and other large event organisers are being advised to ask for proof that people have had both their vaccinations.
- There will be an isolation exemption for contacts of positive cases from 16 August 2021 if the person is under-18 or they are an adult and have received both doses of their vaccinations.
- The Government will review the current guidance in September 2021.

Spotlight put on flexible working notspots

Analysis by the CIPD has found the use of flexible working arrangements is unequal across the UK, leading to a warning of the risks of potentially creating a two-tier workforce. It has shown some areas to be "flexible working notspots", e.g. workers in South East England have the best flexible working options, while workers in Yorkshire and Humber are least likely to have flexibility in their role.

Did you know?

When reviewing flexible working options, it might be helpful to consider a wider regional impact as this may help employers to decide which flexible working options to adopt in order to remain competitive in their region.

Calls for mandatory ethnicity pay gap reporting

The CBI and the TUC have been joined by the Equality and Human Rights Commission in a call for the Government to introduce mandatory ethnicity pay gap reporting. It is argued that the recommendations, in particular those related to pay disparities, could go further in order to effectively increase the participation and progression of ethnic minorities in the workplace.

Did you know?

In the past, the Government has consulted on possibly mandating ethnicity pay gap reporting. However, it is yet to officially take this further. This call may well bring the topic back to the forefront of the Government's agenda.

Claimant with public phobia wins unfair dismissal claim

The Employment Tribunal (ET) has decided that an NHS receptionist, who was dismissed after telling her employer that she was scared to work in a public facing role, was unfairly dismissed. The receptionist told her manager she found her post to be stressful due to her stress and anxiety induced disability. She was offered a back office role but this was revoked and the ET held that employers must make try to make reasonable adjustments and follow a fair procedure.

Did you know?

To avoid a claim for unfair dismissal an employer must have a potentially fair reason to dismiss, act reasonably, and follow a fair procedure.

"Freedom Day" has been confirmed for 19 July 2021. Employers will be able to bring staff back into the office gradually and take staff off furlough. 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.