



Scotland and Wales move down a Covid alert level

Taking a more cautious approach than England's move to step 4 on 19 July 2021, Scotland has moved to Covid alert level 0 and Wales is now in level 1. We explore what employers should know below:

- Scotland joined England in easing coronavirus restrictions from 19 July 2021, although unlike Scotland England has eased most restrictions – such as its guidance on homeworking, social distancing, and facemasks.
- Scotland's move to level 0 has meant that soft play venues can open, but hospitality venues in all parts of the country will need to close at midnight and homeworking advice remains in place.
- Social distancing outdoors will also remain for the next three weeks minimum but more people can now meet outdoors.
- It is hoped that 9 August 2021 will mark the day that more restrictions are eased – life beyond level 0.
- In Wales, the move to level 1 occurred on 17 July 2021 which saw ice rinks reopen and the limit on the number of people that can meet in public places or at events removed.
- Wales looks to 7 August 2021 as the date the country could potentially move to level 0.
- Level 0 in Wales could see nightclubs reopen and social distancing restrictions indoors replaced with a requirement for risk assessments to be implemented. People are advised to continue to work from home where possible.
- Fully vaccinated people and under 18s in Great Britain no longer need to self-isolate upon return from an amber list country.

Mandatory vaccines in care sector approved by MPs

MPs have approved the law that will require eligible care home staff in England to be fully vaccinated. This means that anyone working inside a care home in England which is regulated by the CQC and provides nursing and personal care needs to be fully vaccinated or face dismissal. This, however, will not apply to anyone who is medically exempt. From a date in October yet to be set, affected workers will have 16 weeks to get full vaccination.

Did you know?

It should be noted that this change will only apply in England. Scotland and Wales have confirmed that they will not be making vaccines compulsory in this way.

"Pingdemic" causes staff shortages

Dubbed a "pingdemic", as restrictions ease in England thousands have been notified by the NHS test and trace app that they must self-isolate for 10 days. This is due to them being a close contact of someone who recently tested positive for Covid-19. The adverse effects has been most felt by employers, some of whom are now experiencing staff shortages and have had to close their business.

Did you know?

Fully vaccinated NHS and social care staff in England do not need to self-isolate if they are identified as a close contact. Employers of critical workers can also apply for their worker to be excused from quarantine – granted on case-by-case basis.

ECJ: religious symbols can be banned in workplaces

The European Court of Justice has passed down a judgment that may carry with it implications on inclusion and diversity. The Court has decided that EU employers can ban staff from wearing religious symbols such as headscarves and articles revealing political beliefs. Employers, it went on, must first consider whether banning such symbols from their workplace amounts to a "genuine need" of the business, e.g. perhaps to "present a neutral image".

Did you know?

As the UK is no longer an EU Member State, this judgment will not be legally binding. However, it could potentially influence national court decisions.

Employers in Scotland and Wales must wait a while longer before homeworking guidance is changed. Need help with managing homeworking? 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.