

DSC summary of the UK Government's policy document on ending COVID19 lockdown

Our Plans to Rebuild

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1. Summary

This document summarises the key points from the Government’s policy paper *Our Plan to Rebuild*, which governs the move out of the COVID19 social lockdown in England (and which has implications for the other UK nations too, although their plans vary). It provides some pointers about how these plans may affect charities and their beneficiaries, as well as things for you to consider in your charity’s own planning. We also lay out the basic timetable and phases for moving out of the lockdown as currently in place at the time of writing (bearing in mind dates and the timing of progress through the various phases are subject to change).

2. Introduction

We’ve all got our hands full at the moment and it can be hard to keep on top of the latest policy developments – that’s why we’ve brought you this short summary of the government’s plans for emerging from the Coronavirus lockdown, including issues for charity staff, volunteers and trustees to consider in the coming months.

The Government’s policy document, announced by the Prime Minister on 11 May 2020, is called [Our Plan to Rebuild: The UK Government’s COVID-19 recovery strategy](#). It describes how the Government envisages the emergence from lockdown to unfurl over the coming months, with particular reference to England.

It’s important to note that variations to this policy exist in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, because health policy is devolved. There has been some confusion about the extent to which this document conflicts with policies in the other home nations.

While we’ll all welcome progress towards life after COVID-19, there’s still plenty of uncertainty about what the future holds. We don’t know whether the first, limited relaxations of the lockdown will trigger another spike in cases, or whether there might be another peak later in the year, for example, resulting in a return to lockdown conditions.

Hence many questions are left unanswered by the government’s proposals, and to some extent, individual organisations will have to find innovative ways of adapting to the constantly-changing environment, weighing the risks and benefits of different courses of action, and adapting internal and external structures, procedures and methods of service delivery to the situation as it develops.

3. Content of the policy paper – key phases and steps to recovery

Overarching Aim

The government’s aim as laid out in *Our Plan to Rebuild* is to:

“return life to as close to normal as possible, for as many people as possible, as fast and as fairly as possible... in a way that avoids a new pandemic, minimises lives lost and maximises health, economic and social outcomes”

In this context, the document addresses three phases of the Coronavirus pandemic:

Phase One - Lockdown

We're now emerging from *Phase One*, the purpose of which was to gain control over the spread of the virus, avoid an overwhelming of the NHS, and to save lives.

Phase Two - Smarter Controls

We're currently at the beginning of [Phase Two](#) which is in many ways more complicated, requiring 'smarter controls', but equally, more initiative on the part of charities to navigate the new terrain without putting staff, volunteers and beneficiaries at risk.

Timings of the three steps out of lockdown are tentative, dependent on the ongoing control or spread of coronavirus; adherence to the ['COVID-19 Secure' guidelines](#) is necessary throughout. These guidelines are for different types of employers – for example 'offices' or 'shops' – so charities should consider them in the context of their own working environments.

The COVID-19 Secure Guidelines

Applicable to everybody, these involve the following measures:

- **Keep your distance from people you do not live with:** this currently involves measures such as staying two metres away from others, avoiding face-to-face contact, reducing the number of people in a workspace, avoiding build-up of crowds and so on.
- **Keep hands and faces as clean as possible:** wash frequently, using hand sanitiser when outside the home and when entering buildings; clean surfaces and wash clothes frequently.
- **Work from home where possible, and where homeworking is not possible, limit the number of people you come into contact with:** staff could work in rotas and on staggered timetables to keep the numbers in offices low and to limit exposure to others.
- **Wear a face covering in enclosed spaces where recommended:** such as in smaller shops and on public transport.

Step One of Phase Two – from 13 May 2020

- **Work from home where possible; travel to work if homeworking is not possible and your workplace is open:** Workplaces must follow the new 'Covid-19 Secure' guidelines to facilitate this.
- **Children who would benefit from physically attending school should be encouraged to do so**
- **Avoid public transport where possible:** where necessary, wear face coverings and avoid face-to-face contact with others.

- **Unlimited time outdoors:** the risk of coronavirus spread seems far less outdoors, so exercise is unlimited and travel for leisure is allowed, provided social distancing is maintained and doesn't contravene regional guidelines, for example in the devolved nations (for example, you can't travel from Shropshire into Snowdonia in Wales, where regulations are different at the time of writing).

Step Two of Phase Two – from 1 June (TBC)

- **A phased return to school:** demonstrating the complexity of the situation, it remains uncertain whether this will be achieved on 1 June in England, though the Government is pressing the case. Scotland has already delayed the move until August, and Wales has not yet proposed a date.
- **The opening of non-essential retail:** provided appropriate measures are in place – many charity shops are already planning to reopen, and the Charity Retail Association is regularly issuing updated guidance.
- **Cultural and sporting events can take place behind closed doors:** with appropriate measures in place to protect participants and staff.
- **Reopening of public transport for local travel in urban areas**

Step Three of Phase Two – from 4 July (TBC)

- **Remaining businesses to open, for example potentially bars and restaurants, subject to social distancing:** Pilot trials of reopening compliant with social distancing measures will have to take place before wider reopening can happen.

Test and Trace – ongoing between Phases 2 and 3

As part of the government's plan to progress through the steps and phases as quickly as possible, they are [implementing 14 supporting programmes](#). One of these will be a 'Test and Trace' programme using a Covid-tracker app, supported by trained disease tracers, where people will be strongly encouraged to log their symptoms and any Covid tests they have had.

The other 13 supporting programmes involve expanding or strengthening current government programmes, such as supporting the NHS and ensuring shielding measures are as smart and effective as possible. We still don't know how exactly the developing test and trace system will work (or if it will), or whether it will succeed in controlling future outbreaks.

As the controls hopefully get 'smarter' and the country is able to respond to local outbreaks with more localised lockdowns and restrictions, it is possible that charities may find themselves in the situation where part of their workforce is in lockdown and another part is not, or where their beneficiaries are in lockdown but staff are not – or vice versa.

Also, there may be certain considerations or difficulties to navigate for particular beneficiaries – for example those who may distrust state authorities, or are wary of having

their health data potentially accessed by the state without knowing or trusting how else it might be used.

Phase Three of the government's plans (see below) relies on a treatment being found, but until this happens, we need to be prepared to react to the virus as it affects different parts of the UK.

Phase Three – Reliable Treatment or a Vaccine (timing unknown)

[Phase Three](#) is entirely dependent on discovery of a successful treatment and/or a viable vaccine. The Government says it is investing heavily in research, and we know lots of research charities are contributing to overall effort. Nonetheless, a solution is potentially a long way in the future, with no guarantees that a vaccine or effective treatment will ever be found.

It's therefore important to acknowledge that this situation could arise again, and to be prepared for future outbreaks. The Government will be reactive to the state of the virus and further lockdowns may be necessary if there is a second outbreak or the rate of transmission rises, either across the country as a whole or in localised areas. That possibility must be factored into our thinking and planning.

4. Issues for charities to consider

We're still in the middle of the pandemic, and charities have been affected differently depending on who they serve, where they are located, and what type of services they provide. As we hopefully move into a better situation with the country's public health, there will have been many other social issues that have gone unaddressed or may have even got worse during the crisis which haven't gone away.

Still, some things charity staff and trustees can think about in this context include:

4.1 Service delivery and staffing considerations

- **Adaptation of working practices:** increased working from home where possible, adaptation of working spaces where not: what are the costs and the practicalities?
- **Adaptation of service delivery:** the implications of safe working practices; increased investment in technology for online service delivery, for example: how large group meetings can be avoided; how all eligible beneficiaries can safely access services.
- **Adaptation of working locations/sites:** if you need to reopen physical locations, what adaptations are needed to make this safe? For example screens, markings for social distancing, etc.
- **Reuniting teams:** being aware that teams may have fractured during lockdown, for example where some have been furloughed and others not; the emotional toll that

lockdown may have had; how to reintegrate all staff and volunteers so everyone feels united.

- **Inclusion issues:** think carefully and ensure no part of your beneficial class is excluded, taking into account the clinically vulnerable or clinically extremely vulnerable; the socially excluded; and those with disabilities. Different groups may have been affected differently by the pandemic and lockdown, and may need different approaches as you reopen.
- **Effective communication:** the new environment may be different and not necessarily easy to navigate. It's likely that mistakes will have been made, for example when the organisation was under pressure, or that new approaches may not work, or at least may not work first time. Be open and transparent with trustees, staff, beneficiaries, funders and all other stakeholders.

4.2 Strategic planning

- **Governance:** Making sure trustee boards are still convening, possibly more frequently than usual, and addressing ongoing issues such as risk assessment, audit and reporting, safeguarding, etc. Normal processes may have been disrupted and there may also be additional demands on trustees as a result. Think about any regulatory requirements that have been missed or disrupted and how to rectify them.
- **Contingency planning for future disruptions:** for example, a second wave or further lockdowns, either localised or nationally; considering the financial risks where reserves are diminished or exhausted and/ or sources of funding have dried up; capacity issues; fast response to emerging issues.
- **Adaptation of fundraising methods:** in the short term, making up the shortfall where income has been affected, possibly by changing fundraising techniques; replacing reserves; and over the longer term, diversifying or changing fundraising strategy and methods to aim for a more sustainable future.
- **Financial planning:** many charities have taken big hits to income and government support on offer may not be enough to fill the gap – and certainly won't be longer-term. Reviewing financial forecasts against your budget and anticipated costs.

5. Summary timetable for 'Phase 2' (moving out of lockdown)

Date	Step	Action (England)	Types of charities impacted
13 May	Step 1	Go to work if workplace is open; avoid public transport; children to attend school if they would benefit from attending in person; unlimited time outdoors.	Any charity with employees and/or outward facing services which cannot be delivered via homeworking
1 June	Step 2	Schools to return, non-essential retail to reopen, sporting events to take place behind closed doors	Charities active in schools, youth charities, PTAs, charity shops
4 July	Step 3	Remaining businesses and premises to reopen	Bookshops, community groups, charities delivering leisure services or cultural events, potentially public fundraising activity

6. Links to further information and resources

[Charity Retail Association 'reopening pack' guidance on reopening charity shops](#)

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): safer public places – urban centres and green spaces](#)

[Staying safe outside your home](#)

[Working safely during coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

[COVID-19: cleaning of non-healthcare settings](#)

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): implementing protective measures in education and childcare settings](#)