

Kent County Council COVID-19 Update

This guide includes a summary of the latest Government announcements, alongside information on KCC's website (kent.gov.uk). The guide is updated regularly and, is not intended to be an exhaustive list of all the resources, funding and advice being issued, therefore it links to other sources of information where available.

- **On Monday, 5 July, the Prime Minister set out the Government's intentions "if and when we move to Step 4" of the easing lockdown 'roadmap'. The final decision will be made on Monday, 12 July.**
- **Public Health England (PHE) has reported that numbers of the Delta variant in the UK have risen by 54,268 since last week to a total of 216,249.** Whilst, the Office for National Statistics has reported that in England, the percentage of people testing positive for COVID-19 is at the highest level since February 2021.
- **The Chief Executive of the UK Health Security Agency has indicated that Government is looking at making changes to the NHS COVID19 app**
- **From the school autumn term there will be more support for maths and English.**
- **A new 'Children's Social Care COVID-19 Regional Recovery and Building Back Better Fund' has been announced.** This will support projects tackling the issues facing the most vulnerable children in society in 2021-22.
- **UK GDP expanded by 0.8% during May but remains 3.1% below its pre-pandemic peak.**
- **The temporary £20 Universal Credit uplift will start to be "phased out" from late September 2021.**
- **Government has announced £226.5 million for bus recovery funding.**

This update comprises:

- [Step 4 of easing COVID restrictions](#)

The update also includes the following separate sections:

- [Variants](#)
- [Vaccines](#)
- [Testing](#)
- [Long-COVID](#)
- [Education](#)
- [Children's Social Care](#)
- [Support Funding](#)
- [Economy](#)
- [Business](#)
- [Employment](#)
- [Transport](#)
- [Local Government](#)
- [Infection rate](#)

STEP 4 OF EASING COVID RESTRICTIONS

- On Monday, 5 July, the Prime Minister [set out](#) the Government's intentions "if and when we move to Step 4" of the easing lockdown 'roadmap'. The final decision will be made on Monday, 12 July.
- The Government will remove outstanding legal restrictions on social contact, life events, and open the remaining closed settings. [Information on what is proposed for Step 4](#).
- Government will also enable people to make informed decisions about how to manage the risk to themselves and others.
- Government has also [published guidance](#) on how the public and businesses can help reduce the spread of COVID-19 and mitigate the risk of a resurgence.
- Prime Minister has said that the intended changes announced today are "thanks to the successful rollout" of the vaccination programme". The [Coronavirus Dashboard](#) has reported, that as of Wednesday, 7 July, 86.6% of the adult population had had a first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, and 64.9% had had a second dose.
- The message is that people 'must carefully begin to learn to live with this virus'. However, the Prime Minister has added that he does not "want people to feel this is...the moment to get demob happy, this is the end of Covid". The Prime Minister has also emphasised that "cases will continue to rise over the coming weeks". "there could be 50,000 cases detected per day by the 19 [of July] and...we're seeing rising hospital admissions and we must reconcile ourselves sadly to more deaths from Covid". As of Thursday, 8 July, there had been a further 33,551 new COVID-19 infections. The Prime minister has added that "if we can't reopen our society in the next few weeks, when we will be helped by the arrival of summer and by the school holidays, then we must ask ourselves when will we be able to return to normal?"
- Government has said that it "may need to take measures to help manage" COVID-19 "during periods of higher risk, such as winter", but in doing this they will "as far as possible", "prioritise strengthened guidance and seek to avoid imposing restrictions that have significant economic, social and health costs". The Government "also reserves the ability to "maintain contingency plans for reimposing economic and social restrictions at a local, regional or national level if evidence suggests they are necessary to suppress or manage a dangerous variant". England's Chief Medical Officer, Professor Chris Whitty, has said that he "would be surprised if we got back to what most of us see as a kind of status quo before the next spring".
- The Government will review the Coronavirus Act and remaining regulations in the early autumn, to consider which requirements need to continue through the winter.
- The current COVID-19 [regulations](#) which enable local authorities to respond to serious and imminent public health threats, will be in place until 28 September 2021.
- The Government will also publish an updated COVID-19 'Contain Outbreak Management Framework' for local areas in due course.

- This announcement was made early to give ‘businesses and the public more time to prepare’. The approach has been informed by the roadmap reviews into social distancing, certification and the Events Research Programme.

THE ‘NEXT STEPS’ FOR STEP 4

This includes sections on:

- [Social contact indoors & outdoors](#)
- [Work](#)
- [Vaccination, Self-Isolation & Testing](#)
- [Venues and settings that can reopen](#)
- [Life events](#)
- [COVID-secure requirements on businesses](#)
- [Care homes](#)
- [Education](#)
- [Universities](#)
- [International travel](#)
- [Further guidance](#)
- [Results of reviews](#) into Social Distancing, COVID-19 certification, and information on the Events Research Programme.

<p>SOCIAL CONTACT INDOORS & OUTDOORS</p>	<p>Limits on social contact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All remaining limits on social contact (currently 6 people or 2 households indoors, or 30 people outdoors) will be removed and there will be no more restrictions on how many people can meet in any setting, indoors or outdoors. <p>Face coverings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The legal requirements to wear a face covering will be lifted in all settings. To help reduce the spread of COVID-19, published guidance will advise that wearing a face covering will reduce your risk and the risk to others, where you come into contact with people you don’t normally meet in enclosed and crowded spaces. • England’s Chief Medical Officer has said that he “would wear a mask under three situations”: (1) in any situation which was indoors and crowded, or indoors with close proximity to other people”. (2) “if I was required to by any competent authority” (3) “if someone else was uncomfortable if I did not wear a mask”. • The Government will be publishing guidance on wearing masks in closed spaces. <p>Social Distancing rules</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social distancing rules (2 metres or 1 metre with additional mitigations) will be lifted. • People should continue to consider the risks of close contact with others, particularly if you are clinically extremely vulnerable or not yet fully vaccinated.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social distancing will only be required in limited circumstances: ports of entry for passengers between disembarkation and border control in order to manage the risk of Variants of Concern being transmitted between individuals; and people who are self-isolating should also continue to socially distance from others, particularly where they have had a positive test. • Health and care settings will continue to maintain appropriate infection prevention and control processes as necessary, and this will be continually reviewed. Guidance will be updated based on the latest clinical evidence this summer. • For individual settings where the risks of rapid spread are particularly acute, Directors of Public Health, in consultation with setting operators and relevant departments, will be able to advise that social distancing is put in place if necessary to control outbreaks. This should be targeted, time limited, and apply to settings characterised by enclosed and vulnerable communities such as prisons, immigration removal centres and homeless shelters. <p>How people can manage the risks to themselves & others</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building on the updated guidance on meeting friends and family, announced as part of Step 3, the Government will provide advisory guidance on how people can manage the risks to themselves and to others. • The Government have set out that the following behaviours are beneficial: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Meeting in well-ventilated areas where possible, such as outdoors or indoors with windows open. b. Wearing a face covering where you come into contact with people you don't normally meet in enclosed and crowded spaces. c. Washing your hands with soap and water or using hand sanitiser regularly throughout the day. d. Covering your nose and mouth when you cough and sneeze. e. Staying at home if unwell, to reduce the risk of passing on other illnesses onto friends, family, colleagues, and others in your community. f. Considering individual risks, such as clinical vulnerabilities and vaccination status. <p>Back to top</p>
WORK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is no longer necessary for Government to instruct people to work from home. Employers can start to plan a return to workplaces. <p>Back to top</p>

VACCINATION, SELF-ISOLATION, & TESTING

Vaccination & self-isolation

- The Government continues to urge people to get vaccinated, and to self-isolate and get tested if they have symptoms of COVID-19.
- **It will remain a legal requirement for people to self-isolate if they test positive or are told to do so by NHS Test and Trace.**
- People continue to be encouraged to download and use the latest version of the NHS COVID19 app to help reduce the spread of the virus.
- People may choose to limit the close contact they have with those they do not usually live with in order to reduce the risk of catching or spreading COVID-19, particularly if they are clinically extremely vulnerable. It is important to respect and be considerate of those who may wish to take a more cautious approach as restrictions are lifted.

Symptomatic testing

- **Symptomatic testing will continue to be available.** Tracing and isolation will remain key to monitoring and containing the spread of the virus, and the use of the NHS COVID-19 app (though checking in or providing contact details to venues will now be voluntary).

Asymptomatic testing

- **Regular asymptomatic testing will continue to help find cases and break the chains of transmission.** It will help the transition as people manage their personal risk, whilst also protecting others.
- It will be particularly focused on those who are not fully vaccinated, those in education, and those in higher-risk settings such as the NHS, social care and prisons.

Rapid testing

- **People may also wish to use regular rapid testing to help manage periods of risk** such as returning to the workplace, after close contact in a higher risk environment or when spending prolonged time with a more vulnerable individual.

Community testing

- **Community testing will support councils to focus on disproportionately impacted and other high-risk groups.**

Self-isolation exemption for people who have been fully vaccinated if they are a contact of a positive case

- The Health Secretary has [said](#) that:
- **“From the Monday, 16 August...anyone who’s a close contact of a positive case [of COVID-19] will no longer have to self-isolate, if they’ve been fully vaccinated.**

	<p>The Prime Minister has said that by Monday, 16 August he expects “more progress will be reached on vaccination”, and the reason that this date is later than the rest of Step 4 measures (Monday, 19 July) is that Government “want to retain the tool of asking people to protect others”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If someone gets their second dose just before, or after, the 16 August, they’ll need to wait until two weeks after they get the second” vaccine...”so the vaccine has time to build the maximum possible protection”. • “Close contacts who are fully vaccinated” are advised “take a PCR test as soon as possible, so they can get certainty about their condition. “Anyone who tests positive will have to self-isolate, whether they’ve had” a vaccine “or not”. • “Anyone under the age of 18, who is a close contact of a positive case [of COVID-19], will no longer have to self-isolate. Instead they will be given advice about whether they should get tested, dependent on their age and will need to self-isolate only if they test positive. These measures will also come into force” on Monday, 16 August, “ahead of the autumn school term”. <p>Further information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Until at least the end of September, self-isolation enforcement and support will continue as it is now. <p>Self-isolation support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive cases and close contacts who cannot work from home and would experience financial hardship from isolation may be eligible for the £500 Test & Trace Support Payment or financial support from their local council. • Practical support for isolation will also continue to include a medicines delivery service and assistance provided by local councils. <p>Back to top</p>
<p>VENUES AND SETTINGS THAT CAN REOPEN</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All remaining closed settings can reopen, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Nightclubs ○ Enable large events, such as music concerts and sporting events, without any limits on attendance or social distancing requirements. <p>Back to top</p>
<p>LIFE EVENTS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All restrictions on life events such as weddings, funerals, bar/bat mitzvahs and baptisms will be removed, including the remaining restrictions on the number of attendees. • There will be no requirement for table service at life events, or restrictions on singing or dancing. <p>Back to top</p>

<p>COVID-SECURE REQUIREMENTS ON BUSINESSES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulations that place COVID-secure requirements on businesses, including table service, and distancing between tables, will be lifted. • ‘Working Safely’ guidance will be updated to provide examples of sensible precautions that employers can take to reduce risk in their workplaces. • Employers should take account of this guidance in preparing the risk assessments they are already required to make under pre-pandemic health and safety rules. • Businesses must not require a self-isolating worker to come to work and should make sure that workers and customers who feel unwell do not attend the setting. • Businesses will be encouraged to ask staff and customers to clean their hands regularly and clean surfaces that people touch regularly. • The Government will provide guidance on how businesses can reduce unnecessary contact in the workplace, where it is practical. Operators will still be encouraged to use outside space where practical, and to consider the supply of fresh air to indoor spaces. • Carbon dioxide (CO2) monitors could be used to help identify where a space is poorly ventilated with businesses encouraged to take steps to improve ventilation if CO2 readings are consistently high. • Businesses will be encouraged to display QR codes for customers to check in using the NHS COVID-19 app, to support NHS Test and Trace, although it will no longer be a legal requirement. <p>Back to top</p>
<p>CARE HOMES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Government will lift restrictions that limit each resident to five named visitors. • Specific guidance will advise how visits should be conducted to keep care homes safe whilst also making visits as normal as possible. • Care homes will need to retain infection prevention and control measures essential to protecting residents from the risk of infection. • The Care Minister, Helen Whately, has said that “there will still have to be some precautions. It’s step by step, getting things as close to normal as we can, while still protecting people who are at greater risk from COVID”. • The Minister has added that “that there will be circumstances...where people will need to continue to wear PPE, which includes masks”. <p>Back to top</p>
<p>EDUCATION</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All children under 18 will no longer need to be in consistent groups (‘bubbles’). • Social distancing will no longer be necessary, in schools and colleges.

- **The Government will be recommending that face coverings will no longer be necessary in any education setting.**
- **Schools will not need to stagger start and finish times**, though they can continue with existing arrangements until the end of term if they wish.
- Government say that schools may choose to continue with these measures until the end of the Summer term.

Testing and self-isolation

- **From Monday, 16 August, the legal requirement to self-isolate for contacts of a positive case will end for everyone aged under 18**, which will help to minimise the number of children isolating. From the autumn term, only those who test positive will need to self-isolate.
- **Early years settings, schools or colleges will not be required to routinely carry out contact tracing.** NHS Test and Trace will carry out contact tracing in all education settings. Contact tracing in specific educational settings would only be triggered if deemed necessary in response to a local outbreak. Those identified as close contacts will be advised to take a PCR test, and only need to isolate if they test positive. Children must self-isolate if they have symptoms of COVID or a positive test result.
- **Testing for close contacts under 18 will be split into two categories:** All Primary, Secondary and College age children should take a single PCR test. Early Years children should only take a PCR test if a member of their household tests positive.
- Education settings still operating over the summer will continue to test twice a week, with asymptomatic test kits still available to families over the summer break.

Protective measures

- **Protective measures will remain in place for the autumn term in all education settings** including practicing good hygiene, ventilation, and regular testing until the end of September to strike a balance between relaxing restrictions and minimising further disruption to children's education. Two onsite tests should be taken by each secondary school and college student on return, followed by twice weekly testing at home. The Government will review testing requirements by the end of September.

Outbreak Management Plan

- Education settings will continue to have an outbreak management plan and work with local health teams, as is standard practice. Local Directors of Public Health may advise a setting to temporarily reintroduce some control measures in the event of an outbreak.

	<p>School activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All school trips, drama, music and sporting activity will be able to resume in line with the relaxation of restrictions across society from Step 4. <p>Education staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All education staff are urged to get both vaccine doses if they have not yet done so, helping further reduce any potential disruption as a result of self-isolation. Further detailed guidance has been published to enable schools and colleges to plan for how they will operate from September. <p>Further information</p> <p>Exams in 2022</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Education Secretary has said that it is the Government’s “intention to move back to an exam system” in 2022 “ but we recognise that we must ensure that mitigations are in place for pupils taking that assessment in the next academic year. We will look at sharing more information about what those mitigations are before the summer”. <p>Back to top</p>
<p>UNIVERSITIES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There will be no restrictions on in-person teaching and learning in universities. <p>Back to top</p>
<p>INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Prime Minister has said that Government “will maintain” it’s “border controls – including the red list. From 4am on Monday, 19 July, the guidance on travel to and from ‘amber list’ countries to England will change. If you have been fully vaccinated, with an NHS administered vaccine, you will be able to travel to ‘amber list’ countries, 14 days after receiving their second dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. You will not have to quarantine on your return to England. The recommendation for people not to travel to ‘amber list’ countries will also be removed from Monday, 19 July. Those who have been fully vaccinated with an NHS administered vaccine in the UK and are returning from ‘amber’ countries will still be required to complete a pre-departure test before arrival into England, alongside a PCR test on or before day-2 after arrival. You will not have to take a day 8 test or self-isolate. Children under the age of 18 will not have to isolate when returning to England. Children aged 4 and under will continue to be exempt from any travel testing. Children

aged 5 to 10 will only need to do a day 2 PCR and 11 to 18 year olds will need to take both a pre-departure test and a day 2 PCR – as is the case for arrivals from [‘green list’](#) countries.

- Those who are part of approved COVID-19 vaccine clinical trials in the UK will be treated as vaccinated.
- At this stage, there will be no changes to requirements for those returning from ‘green’ or [‘red list’](#) countries, nor for unvaccinated passengers travelling from ‘amber’ countries who do not have a valid exemption.
- The Government is exploring plans to remove quarantine for vaccinated non-UK residents arriving from ‘amber’ countries later this summer. The [Test to Release scheme](#) remains an option for non-fully vaccinated travelers returning from ‘amber’ countries to shorten their quarantine period, by paying for a private test and being released early if they receive a negative COVID-19 test result.
- Government will continue to rollout e-gates over the summer, with many already in operation across airports and more to be added over the coming months.
- Carriers will have a critical role in carrying out primary checks on all passengers before boarding, checking people have the right COVID-19 certification documents. Anyone not complying with health measures could face a fine, and carriers will be required to ensure proper checks are carried out.
- People should continue to check FCDO travel advice before booking travel.
- Government highlight that “passengers should expect their experience to be different and may face longer waiting times than they are used to”.
- An announcement about fully vaccinated non-residents coming to England will be made at a later date.

[Further information](#)

[International travel from amber list countries and territories](#)

[Red, amber and green list rules for entering England](#)

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Government has also published the following:

- The full Roadmap guidance - [COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021 \(Roadmap\)](#)
- [COVID-19 Response: Summer 2021](#)
- [Coronavirus: how to stay safe and help prevent the spread](#)
- [PM statement at coronavirus press conference: 5 July 2021](#)
- [Prime Minister sets out plan to ease restrictions at step 4](#)
- [Health Secretary’s Statement to the House of Commons](#)

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The Government has also published the results of their reviews into Social Distancing, on COVID-19 certification, and information on the Events Research Programme:

Social distancing review

- The Government has completed a review of social distancing measures and other long-term measures that have been put in place to limit transmission. The results of the review have helped inform decisions on the timing and circumstances under which rules on 1 metre plus, face masks, and working from home.

[Further information](#)

COVID status certification review

- The Government have reviewed whether COVID-status certification could play a role in reopening the economy, reducing restrictions on social contact and improving safety.
- **COVID-status certification will not be required in law as a condition of entry for visitors to any setting.** Organisations are already able to ask visitors for proof of COVID-status, as long as they meet existing legal obligations including under equality law.
- The Government is providing a way for individuals to easily demonstrate their COVID-status. This can be achieved by completion of a full vaccine course, a recent negative test, or proof of natural immunity - through the NHS COVID Pass on the NHS app.

[Further information](#)

Events Research Programme (ERP)

- The Government commissioned a review of how events with larger crowd sizes could return without social distancing, while limiting the transmission of COVID-19 as much as practical. [Further information](#)

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VARIANTS

Delta variant

- **Public Health England (PHE) has reported that numbers of the Delta variant in the UK have risen by 54,268 since last week to a total of 216,249.** This represents a 32% increase. Of these, 44 are the Delta AY.1 sub lineage (also known as Delta Plus). The Delta variant currently accounts for approximately 99% of cases that are sequenced across the UK.
- PHE has also published an updated [variant technical briefing](#). This shows that secondary attack rates amongst household contacts of cases with Delta has continued to fall and is estimated at 10.3% for exposure events in week commencing 7 June 2021. Despite this continued fall, secondary attack rates for both household and non-household contacts of cases with Delta remain higher than for Alpha. [Further information](#)

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VACCINES

New vaccine take-up campaign

- Celebrities have joined forces to encourage everyone to get their COVID-19 vaccines in a new film released on Saturday, 3 July.

[Further information](#)

- **Public Health England (PHE) published its latest weekly [COVID-19 vaccine surveillance report](#) on Thursday, 8 July 2021.** PHE estimates that 30,300 deaths and 8,151,000 infections have been prevented as a result of the COVID-19 vaccination programme, up to 25 June. PHE also estimates that 46,300 hospitalisations have been prevented in people aged 65 or older in England up to 27 June (approximately 7,000 admissions in those aged 65 to 74, 18,000 in those aged 75 to 84, and 21,300 in those aged 85 and over). [Further information](#)
- **The Office for national Statistics (ONS) published its latest [antibody and vaccination data](#) on Wednesday, 7 July.** This covers the week beginning 14 June. In England, it is estimated that around 9 in 10 adults, or 89.8% of the adult population would have tested positive for antibodies against COVID-19 on a blood test in the week beginning 14 June 2021, suggesting they had the infection in the past or have been vaccinated. ONS add that across all four countries of the UK, there is a clear pattern between vaccination and testing positive for COVID-19 antibodies but the detection of antibodies alone is not a precise measure of the immunity protection given by vaccination.

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TESTING

NHS Test & Trace

- The latest NHS Test & Trace figures report that a total of 135,685 people tested positive for COVID-19 in England at least once in the week to 30 June. This is a rise of 71% on the previous week. [Further information](#)
- In the week to June 30, 356,036 alerts were sent to users of the NHS COVID19 app in England, telling them they had been in close contact with someone who had tested positive for COVID-19. The previous figure was 219,391, and this is the highest figure since January 2021.

NHS COVID19 app

- **The Chief Executive of the UK Health Security Agency, Dr Jenny Harries OBE, has [indicated](#) to the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee that Government is looking at making changes to the [NHS COVID19 app](#),** saying that they “have a piece of work ongoing at the moment” which is “working through what a vaccinated population using [the NHS] app” means.
- The Transport Secretary has said that the Government will “keep this under review and tweak the app to be suitable to the circumstances of the time. Double vaccination for example being at record highs in this country with over half the adult population already double vaccinated. We will see that all fit in to make it an extra tool — and a very important one — but not the ultimate arbiter of everything that happens with coronavirus”.

Real-world use of rapid tests

- Findings from [three studies](#) on the real-world use of rapid tests, known as lateral flow devices (LFDs), have been published.

[Further information](#)

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LONG-COVID

- The Local Government Association (LGA) has called for a public debate about the impact of Long-COVID on the NHS and social care. The Chair of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, David Fothergill, has said that "central and local Government, the medical and scientific community - need to have an honest debate about the potential implications of long COVID on resources and capacity, not just in terms of pressures on the NHS, but also on our...social care system and other vital council services".
- While, England's Chief Medical Officer, Professor Chris Whitty, said that "we will get a significant amount more long-COVID, particularly in the younger ages where the vaccination rates are currently much lower. Fundamentally the two ways to prevent long Covid in my view are to keep Covid rates right down and make sure everyone is vaccinated so they get very mild disease". He added that Government "don't know how big an issue it's going to be, but I think we should assume it's not going to be trivial".

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EDUCATION

English and maths catch-up sessions

- **From the autumn term, pupils in participating schools are set to benefit from more support in maths and English**, as part of a £10 million scheme.
- Specialist training and materials will be provided to support focused sessions to boost numeracy and literacy skills and help pupils catch-up in these core subjects.
- The scheme reflects year groups where pupils can have significant difficulties catching up on maths and English if they fall behind. For maths, participating schools will receive fully funded training to deliver focused sessions. The sessions (covering Reception, Year 1, Year 2 and Year 7) will help children to have a strong grasp of numbers by the end of Key Stage 1, while the Year 7 programme will focus on supporting a secure start to secondary school maths.
- For English, eligible primary schools will receive up to £6,000 each for validated phonics programmes, along with additional training and support days for teachers to support the delivery of these programmes.
- Schools with high proportions of children from disadvantaged backgrounds will be prioritised for the schemes in order to support those most impacted by the disruption to education.
- Schools can find out more about how to participate in the Maths programmes by contacting their local [Maths Hub](#) or visiting the [NCETM website](#) for maths.
- The Government has launched an [information site](#) for parents, to support children of all age ranges and abilities and catch up on lost learning from the pandemic. The site features advice and support for parents of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), as well as programmes for the summer. [Further information](#)

Pupil attendance

- The Government has [published the latest](#) figures for the number of children absent from school in England due to COVID-19.
- The Prime Minister [gave evidence](#) to the Commons Liaison Committee on Wednesday, 6 July. The Prime Minister said that part of his plan for “endemic absence” is “lengthening the school day”, “I do think it’s the right thing to do. The question is how you do it, what sorts of activities, is it enrichment, is it academic, what’s the mixture... We’re doing a proper review of all of that to get the evidence”. [The transcript of the session](#).

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CHILDREN’S SOCIAL CARE

The Children’s Social Care COVID-19 Regional Recovery and Building Back Better Fund

- **A new ‘Children’s Social Care COVID-19 Regional Recovery and Building Back Better Fund’ has been announced**, backed with £24 million
- **The new fund will support projects tackling the issues facing the most vulnerable children in society in 2021-22**, including care for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, preventing adolescents from being caught up in harms outside the home such as gangs.
- Working through England’s network of nine Regional Improvement and Innovation Alliances (RIIAs), it will also provide funding to accelerate the roll-out more family hubs to provide early help, build on existing projects with a proven record of success and offer investment in recruiting, developing and retaining social work staff.
- The fund also aims to build firm foundations for future reform through the Care and SEND Reviews.
- The fund will be distributed according plans drawn up by each Regional Improvement and Innovation Alliance (RIIA) and based on local priorities. Each region will be allocated funds worth between £2 and £3 million, including a flat rate of £50,000 for each region to help local authorities play their part in accommodating unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

[Further information](#)

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SUPPORT FUNDING

COVID-19 loans

- H M Treasury figures report that businesses have been supported through the COVID-19 pandemic with nearly £80 billion of emergency Government-backed loans.

[Further information](#)

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ECONOMY

Economic growth

- The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has [reported](#) that UK GDP expanded by 0.8% during May, but remains 3.1% below its pre-pandemic peak.

Productivity

- The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has [reported](#) – the fastest annual growth in productivity since 2018.

OBR ‘fiscal risks’ report

- The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) has published a [fiscal risks report](#).
- The report covers “three large, and potentially catastrophic risks”:
 - The economic and fiscal impact of the coronavirus pandemic over the past year and its potential medium and long-term legacy for the public finances. The OBR say “The pandemic could leave £10 billion per year in spending pressures and long-term economic scars”.
 - The risks to the public finances presented by climate change including a range of scenarios illustrating the fiscal impact of different ways to get to net zero by 2050.
 - The risks posed by changes in the cost of debt and the sensitivity of the public finances to global interest rates, inflation and an extreme case of a loss of investor confidence.

Living standards, poverty and inequality in the UK

- The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) has published their latest [Living standards, poverty and inequality in the UK](#) report. This examines how household incomes were changing in the UK up to the eve of the COVID-19 pandemic, and how other measures of household living standards have changed over the course of the pandemic.

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BUSINESS

Construction

- The IHS Markit/CIPS UK Construction Purchasing Managers’ Index has reported that “overall construction activity expanded at the fastest pace since June 1997”. Whilst, “supplier lead times lengthened to the greatest extent since the survey began just over 24 years ago amid severe stock shortages and shipping and haulage delays”. “Companies remained optimistic about growth prospects for the next 12 months, but the degree of confidence dropped to its lowest since January, in part reflecting concerns about labour supply and the sustainability of the demand surge”. [Further information](#)

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EMPLOYMENT

OECD Employment Outlook 2021

- The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has forecast, in their [Employment Outlook 2021](#), that the rise in the employment rate in recent

months will go backwards over the next six months, before rising again in 2022, when they say it will reach its March 2020 level of 75.5%.

Universal Credit

- **The Work and Pensions Secretary, has [told](#) the House of Commons Work and Pensions Committee that the temporary £20 Universal Credit uplift, introduced during COVID-19 pandemic, will start to be “phased out” from late September 2021.**
- The Chancellor has said that the uplift "was always intended to be a temporary measure".
- The Secretary of State said that the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) will be contacting claimants to make them aware, and they will be signposted to support.
- The Prime Minister [gave evidence](#) to the Commons Liaison Committee on Wednesday, 6 July. The Prime Minister said that as Government lifts COVID-19 restrictions “the emphasis has to be on getting people into work and getting people into jobs”. [The transcript of the session](#).

Government support

- Government has announced that the UK Government supported over 14.5 million jobs and individuals since pandemic began - more than a third of the working population.

[Further information](#)

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TRANSPORT

Bus Services funding

- **The Government has announced £226.5 million in recovery funding for the bus sector.**
- This will succeed the COVID-19 Bus Service Support Grant (CBSSG), which ends on 31 August.
- The funding will run from September 2021 to April 2022 and will support operators across England, outside of London.
- In addition to helping maintain services, recovery funding will support the key aims of the National Bus Strategy of encouraging local authorities and operators to work together to deliver better bus services. In return for receiving funding, operators will be asked to commit to co-operating with the process for establishing Enhanced Partnerships or franchising.

[Further information](#)

Cost of the railway system

- The House of Commons Public Accounts Committee has published a [Overview of the English rail system](#), in which they say that “£8.5 billion of Government financial support” has been provided to support the system through the COVID-19 pandemic.

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Local Government Association Conference

- The Local Government Association (LGA) have held their annual conference this week. as part of this event, they published [Build back local: Building back better](#) which looks at local government's role in building back from the "social and economic impact of the pandemic".

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INFECTION RATE

- **On Monday, 5 July, the Government's Chief Scientific Adviser, Sir Patrick Vallance, [said](#) that:**
 - **The most recent 7-day average for the number of people testing positive for COVID-19 in the UK was 25,447 cases.** The Health Secretary has separately said that "by the time we get to the 19 [of July], we would expect case numbers...to be at least double what they are now, so around 50,000 new cases a day. As we ease and go into the summer...they could go as high as 100,000...But what matters more than anything is hospitalisation and death numbers, and that is where the link has been severely weakened". While, Professor Neil Ferguson, the Imperial College epidemiologist, has added that "at the peak of the second wave 50,000 cases would translate into something like 500 deaths, but that's going to be much lower this time, more like 50 or so". "There's still the potential of getting very large numbers of cases and so if we get very high numbers of cases a day, 150,000 or 200,000 it could still cause some pressure to the health system. **The [Coronavirus Dashboard](#) has reported, that as of Thursday, 8 July, there had been a further 33,551 new COVID-19 infections.** A week ago the figure was 27,989. Week on week, there has been a rise of 34.9%.
 - **On 1 July, 1,905 people were in hospital with COVID-19.** Professor Vallance said that this figure is "rising and rising steeply in some places and we would expect that to increase".
 - **The most recent 7-day average for the number of confirmed COVID-19 deaths was 18 deaths.** Professor Vallance said that "deaths are increasing, they are at low levels" but "we would expect further increases". The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has [reported](#) that of the deaths registered in the week ending 25 June 2021, 99 mentioned COVID-19, accounting for 1.1% of all deaths; this was a slight decrease compared with the previous week (102 deaths). **The [Coronavirus Dashboard](#) has reported, that as of Thursday, 8 July, there had been a further 35 deaths from COVID-19.** Week on week, there has been a rise of 52.6%.
- **The Office for National Statistics (ONS) published their latest [COVID-19 Infection Survey](#) on Friday, 9 July 2021.** In England, the percentage of people testing positive for COVID-19 continued to increase in the week ending 3 July 2021. ONS estimate that 332,900 people within the community population in England had COVID-19. This equates to around 1 in 160 people. This is the highest level since the week to 19 February 2021. For the [week ending 26 June 2021](#), this was 1 in 260 people. ONS add that in the week ending 3 July 2021, cases that are compatible with the Delta variant

B.1.617.2 have continued to increase in England, Wales and Scotland, and increased in Northern Ireland; the Delta variant is now the most common variant across the UK.

- **Public Health England (PHE) published its [weekly Covid surveillance report](#) on Thursday, 7 July 2021.** This covers the week up to Sunday, 4 July. PHE report that at a national level COVID-19 activity has increased. Case rates rose in all age groups with the most significant increase seen in younger age groups. Case rates continued to be highest in those aged 20 to 29, with a 7-day rate of 614.3 per 100,000 population. The lowest case rates were in those aged 80 and above, with a 7-day rate of 27.9 per 100,000 population. Seven-day case rates per 100,000 population increased across all regions. Seven-day case rates per 100,000 population were highest in the North East at 615.4. Case rates per 100,000 were lowest in the East of England, with a 7-day rate of 166.4. Approximately 84.2% of blood donors aged 17 and over have antibodies to COVID-19 from either infection or vaccination, compared to 14.9% from infection alone. The hospital admission rate for week 26 was 2.65 per 100,000 population, in the previous week it was 1.97 per 100,000 population. Hospital admission rates for COVID-19 were highest in the North West, with a rate of 6.29 per 100,000 population.
- **Imperial College London and Ipsos MORI have published interim findings from the latest REACT-1 study data.** This has found that: around 1 in 170 people had COVID-19 during this period, or 0.59% of the population. This is four times higher than the study's [previous report](#) when 0.15% of people were infected, or 1 in 670, as of 7 June. The prevalence of infection has risen substantially in all age groups under 75. The biggest rise was seen in secondary school-aged children (aged 13-17) where infections were eight times higher than previous findings, with around 1 in 70 infected. The epidemic has grown in all parts of the country but most notably in London, where infections rose by eight-fold. Rates of infection were three times lower in fully vaccinated people under the age of 65 compared to unvaccinated people, both of these groups saw a similar proportionate rise in infections". [Further information](#)
- **The Department of Health and Social Care and Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) published their latest assessment of [The R value and growth rate](#) on Friday, 2 July.** The reproduction ('R') rate, for England has increased slightly to 1.2 to 1.5 (being previously 1.1 to 1.3). **The latest growth rate range for England is +3% to +7% per day** (being previously +2% to +5%). **For London**, the figures are 1.1 to 1.4, and 2 to 6 respectively (being previously 1.0 to 1.2, and 0 to 3). **For the south-east**, the figures are 1.3 to 1.6, and 4 to 9 respectively (being previously 1.1 to 1.3, and 2 to 5). An R value between 1.2 and 1.5 means that, on average, every 10 people infected will infect between 12 and 15 other people. A growth rate of between 3% and 7% means that the number of new infections is growing by between 3% and 7% every day. These estimates represent the transmission of COVID-19 2 to 3 weeks ago, due to the time delay between someone being infected, developing symptoms, and needing healthcare.

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