

# Guidance for local authorities, owners and operators to support the safe use and management of outdoor public places while the risk of COVID-19 transmission remains.

From:

[Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government](#)

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Applies to:

[England \(see guidance for Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland\)](#)

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## Introduction

As of 19 July, this guidance replaces the following pieces of MHCLG safer public places guidance:

- COVID-19: safer public places - urban centres and green spaces
- COVID-19: guidance for managing playgrounds and outdoor gyms
- COVID-19: guidance for managing beaches, the countryside and coastal areas
- COVID-19: guidance to support local authority compliance and enforcement activity, including COVID-19 Secure Marshals

Following Step 4 on 19 July, many COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted. This guidance includes key principles and other information local authorities, owners and operators may wish to continue to consider to support the safe use and management of outdoor public places while the risk of COVID-19 transmission remains.

This guidance includes considerations for the following spaces:

- urban centres
- green spaces
- outdoor playgrounds
- outdoor gyms
- tourist hotspots, including beaches, the countryside and coastal areas

## **Principles for individuals**

Local authorities, owners and operators should be aware of and should consider advice provided to the public and individuals on how to protect themselves and others during the ongoing coronavirus pandemic:

### **1. Stay at home if you have COVID-19 symptoms**

Self-isolate immediately if you develop COVID-19 symptoms and get a PCR test, even if your symptoms are mild. You should self-isolate at home while you book the test and wait for the results.

### **2. Limit close contact**

Although social distancing is no longer advised from 19 July, you may choose to limit the close contact you have with people you do not usually live with, particularly if you are not fully vaccinated. This is a personal choice which can help reduce your risk of catching or spreading COVID-19.

### **3. Wash your hands**

Wash your hands with soap and water or use hand sanitiser regularly throughout the day.

You should wash your hands:

- after coughing, sneezing and blowing your nose
- before you eat or handle food
- after coming into contact with surfaces touched by many others, such as handles, handrails and light switches
- after coming into contact with shared areas such as kitchens and bathrooms
- as soon as you return home

#### **4. Use the NHS COVID-19 app**

The NHS COVID-19 app is a vital part of NHS Test and Trace in England and Wales. Using the app helps stop the spread of the virus by informing you that you have been in close contact with someone who has since tested positive for coronavirus, even if you don't know each other.

The app also allows people to report symptoms, order a coronavirus test and check in to venues. To help protect yourself and others, download and use the latest version of the [NHS COVID-19 app](#).

The app does not track individuals and does not hold personal information about individuals such as name, address or date of birth.

#### **General actions to reduce the spread of infection**

There is more information available on [how to take action to avoid catching and spreading coronavirus](#). Advice should be followed throughout daily activities, including in outdoor public places.

## **Social distancing**

From 19 July, social distancing guidance will no longer apply. This means that local authorities, owners and operators do not need to implement social distancing (2m or 1m+) in outdoor public places, and

the public do not need to keep apart from people they don't live with. However, local authorities, owners and operators may wish to consider that some may make a personal choice and limit their close contact.

Local authorities, owners and operators may also wish to consider that businesses still have a legal duty to manage risks to those affected by their business and will therefore take reasonable steps to mitigate risks they identify and decide which interventions are appropriate to adopt.

See more information on [how people can stay safe and help prevent the spread of COVID-19](#).

## **Face coverings**

The government expects and recommends face coverings to be worn in crowded and enclosed areas, such as public transport. For more information please see the [guidance on face coverings](#).

## **Cleaning**

COVID-19 spreads through small droplets, aerosols and direct contact. Surfaces and belongings can be contaminated with COVID-19 when people with the infection touch them or cough, talk or breathe over them.

Viruses on a surface could infect another person if they touch the surface and then touch their eyes, nose and mouth. Cleaning surfaces will reduce the amount of contamination and so reduce the risk of transmission.

The more a surface is cleaned, the more likely you are to remove viruses from an infected surface before you or another person touches it.

Local authorities, owners and operators responsible for outdoor public places should consider implementing or retaining cleaning protocols to limit coronavirus transmission in public places with particular focus on touch points (e.g. handrails and gates).

- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): disposing of waste in non-healthcare settings](#)
- [COVID-19: cleaning of non-healthcare settings outside the home](#)

## Hygiene

Washing or sanitising hands removes viruses and other germs, so people are less likely to become infected if they touch their face. Using soap and water is the most effective way to clean hands, especially if they are visibly dirty. Hand sanitiser can be used when soap and water is not available.

Local authorities, owners and operators responsible for public places, for example public toilets, should consider the use of signs and posters to make people aware of the following:

- how to wash their hands well
- that they should wash their hands frequently
- where possible, avoid touching their eyes, nose and mouth. If they do need to touch their face (for example to put on or take off your face covering), wash or sanitise their hands before and after
- that they should cough or sneeze into a tissue which is binned safely, or into their arms if a tissue is not available

When providing regular reminders and signage to maintain hygiene standards, local authorities, owners and operators may wish to consider:

- addressing different needs of multiple user groups, for example, young people, older people and people with disabilities
- using simple, clear and accessible images and messaging to explain guidelines, with consideration for groups whose first language may not be English or where alternative formats may be required

## Toilets

Toilets should be kept open and carefully managed to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19. Steps should be taken by local authorities, owners and operators to make the use of toilets as safe as possible, such as:

- using signs and posters (see Hygiene above)
- making hand sanitiser available on entry to toilets where safe, practical and accessible
- ensuring suitable handwashing facilities are available. This includes running water and liquid soap and suitable options for drying. Namely paper towels, continuous roller towels or hand dryers. Consideration should be given to the needs of people with disabilities
- setting clear use and cleaning guidance for toilets, with increased frequency of cleaning in line with usage. Normal cleaning products should be used and attention paid to frequently touched surfaces. Disposable cloths or paper roll to clean all hard surfaces should be considered
- keeping facilities well ventilated, for example by ensuring extractor fans work effectively and opening windows and vents where possible
- special care should be taken for cleaning of portable toilets and larger toilet blocks
- following and putting up a cleaning schedule that is kept up to date and visible
- providing more waste facilities and more frequent rubbish collection

Local authorities, owners and operators should also be aware of the [COVID-19: ventilation of indoor spaces guidance](#).

## **Keeping staff safe**

Local authorities, owners and operators should follow the [guidance on working safely](#).

## **Role of marshals**

Local authorities can determine whether to use marshals, stewards or their equivalents for on-going support. These staff can provide in-

person advice and support to businesses and to the public. For example, this could be considered as part of [local outbreak management planning](#) in areas of higher risk, or where there is demand from businesses or the public locally for this type of intervention.

## Events

For events that could take place in or interact with outdoor public settings, local authorities, owners and operators should consult the [events and attractions guidance](#) which is included as part of the guidance on working safely. This guide is designed to help organisers reduce the risk from COVID-19 during their events. The guide also aims to assist local authorities in England in ensuring that events are able to go ahead as safely as possible.

## Pavement licences

The Business and Planning Act 2020 included a temporary streamlined and cheaper route for businesses such as cafes, restaurants and bars to secure a licence to place furniture on the highway. In March 2021 the government announced this would be extended for a further 12 months. This is a streamlined process to allow businesses to secure these licences and where they are deemed to have been granted, allow these licences to remain in place for a year but not beyond 30 September 2022.

Where a pavement licence is granted, clear access routes on the highway will need to be maintained, taking into account the needs of all users, including disabled people. See guidance on pavement licenses:

- [Pavement licences: guidance](#)
- [Press notice: Extension of pavement licences to help the high street recover](#)

## Travel

Guidance to support transport operators to assess and address the risks of coronavirus (COVID-19) and for passengers to plan ahead and travel safely can be found below.

- [COVID-19: safer travel guidance for passengers](#)
- [COVID-19: safer transport guidance for operators](#)

## **Tourist areas**

It is noted that tourist areas, such as beaches, the countryside and coastal areas, may experience high footfall during the coronavirus pandemic. This section includes information to support local authorities, owners and operators in managing these areas.

### **Dealing with anti-social behaviour**

A high volume of visitors to outdoor public places for exercise and outdoor recreation may create an increase in incidents of anti-social behaviour such as littering, public defecation/urination, drug use and drunk and disorderly behaviour.

Further information can be found within the links below:

- [Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014: Anti-social behaviour powers statutory guidance for frontline professionals](#)
- [Summary of the powers and links to help and advice in England & Wales](#)
- [Core public health guidance](#)
- [LGA best practice across local government for anti-social behaviour](#)

### **Car parking**

See [guidance for local authorities on enforcing parking restrictions](#), to maintain access for emergency services, residents' vehicles and pedestrians.

Local authorities may wish to consider how temporary changes to permitted development rights can support car parking management in their areas. Government has allowed up to 56 days for the temporary



use of land in 2021 through a time-limited permitted development right. This could be useful to alleviate pressure on existing on-street and off-street parking when visitor numbers are expected to be higher than normal.

Local authorities also have duties placed on them through legislation to provide safe movement for all traffic and permitted development rights do not override the need for relevant highways requirements. Further information on the temporary changes can be found below.

- [Explanatory memorandum to the Town and Country Planning \(Permitted Development and Miscellaneous Amendments\) \(England\) \(Coronavirus\) Regulations 2020](#)
- [When is permission required?](#)

## **Beach safety and emergency access**

The information below will help local authorities, owners and operators in these areas in ensuring safety and emergency access is maintained during the COVID-19 pandemic as well as communicating with visitors on how to keep safe.

- [Maritime and Coastguard Agency: Managing beach safety](#)
- [National Water Safety Forum](#)
- [Maritime and Coastguard Agency: Coastguard safety campaign](#)
- [Maritime and Coastguard Agency: Keeping safe at the coast: beach safety advice](#)
- [RNLI: Beach safety](#)

## **Waste management**

Bins should be emptied frequently. Local authorities, owners and may wish to consider providing additional refuse collection bins where high footfall is expected. Further information on disposing of personal or business waste can be found below.

- [COVID-19: disposing of waste](#)
- [Litter and refuse: code of practice](#)

## Where to obtain further information

- [COVID-19 response: summer 2021 \(Roadmap\)](#)
- [COVID-19 restrictions: what you can and cannot do](#)
- [Coronavirus: how to stay safe and help prevent the spread](#)
- [Working safely during coronavirus \(COVID-19\): guidance from Step 4](#)
- [COVID-19: guidance for local government](#)
- [Meeting friends and family \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Face coverings: when to wear one, exemptions, and how to make one](#)
- [COVID-19 contain framework: a guide for local decision-makers](#)
- [Working safely during coronavirus \(COVID-19\): guidance from Step 4 - Events and attractions](#)
- [Guidance on coronavirus \(COVID-19\) measures for grassroots sport participants, providers and facility operators](#)
- [Local authority powers to impose restrictions: Health Protection \(Coronavirus, Restrictions\) \(England\) \(No 3\) Regulations 2020](#)
- [Welcome Back Fund guidance](#)
- [Pavement Licences: Guidance](#)
- [The Growth Hub Network](#)
- [COVID-19: Business Support](#)
- [Get help and support for your business](#)
- [HSE: Managing risks and risk assessment at work](#)
- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): safer transport guidance for operators](#)
- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): transport and travel guidance](#)
- [Ventilation of indoor spaces to stop the spread of coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [NHS test and trace: workplace guidance](#)
- [NHS test and trace: what to do if you are contacted](#)
- [COVID-19: cleaning of non-healthcare settings outside the home](#)
- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): disposing of waste](#)
- [The Countryside Code](#)
- [Guidance for DCMS sectors in relation to coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Working safely during coronavirus \(COVID-19\): guidance from Step 4 - Hotels and guest accommodation](#)
- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): guidance on the phased return of elite sport](#)
- [COVID-19: planning update on cultural venues and holiday parks](#)

