

Bolton COVID-19 FAQs

1) Summary

Bolton, along with the rest of Greater Manchester, is being placed into the '[Very High](#)' alert level from 00.01am on 23 October.

This means extra restrictions are in place to prevent the spread of the virus:

- Pubs and bars must close. They can only remain open if they operate as a restaurant - serving substantial meals (like a main lunchtime or evening meal). They can only serve alcohol as part of the meal
- Wedding receptions will not be permitted, although services can go ahead with a limit of 15 people
- People should avoid travelling outside their local area, or entering another area rated Very High other than for work, education, accessing youth services, or to meet caring responsibilities
- People from Bolton should avoid staying overnight in another part of the UK and visitors from elsewhere should avoid staying overnight in Bolton

In addition:

- You must not socialise with anyone you do not live with (or have formed a [support bubble](#)) indoors, in a private garden or in outdoor hospitality.
- You can meet in one legally-permitted [childcare bubble](#) ([see section on childcare](#) for childcare only)
- You must not socialise in a group of more than 6 in an outdoor public space such as parks, allotments, or the countryside

However:

- Schools, colleges, and the university remain open
- Places of worship remain open but with no household mixing

Please remember:

- Wash your hands regularly for at least 20 seconds
- Wear a face covering when required
- Maintain social distance of 2 metres

You can report illegal gatherings to [Greater Manchester Police](#) and any business breaches to Bolton Council's [Environmental Health](#) team.

The measures for Bolton, introduced on 23 October, will be reviewed monthly. If you have any questions, or would like more information, please [email us](#).

2) Meeting family and friends

What are the rules around household and social mixing?

- You must not socialise with anybody in any indoor setting unless you live with them or they are part of [your support bubble](#). This includes private homes and indoors in hospitality venues, such as pubs.
- You must also not meet with people outside of your household or support or childcare bubble in a private garden or in most outdoor public venues

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- You may see friends and family you do not live with (or have formed a support or childcare bubble with) in groups of 6 or less (this includes children of any age) in outdoor public spaces such as parks, allotments, outdoor sports courts and playgrounds
- You must not meet in groups larger than six
- You can meet in a legally-permitted childcare bubble ([see section on childcare](#)). Childcare bubbles are to be used to provide childcare only, and not for the purposes of different households mixing where they are otherwise not allowed to do so.

These rules are set in law and the police can take action and issue fines:

- You can be fined £200 for the first offence, doubling for further offences up to a maximum of £6,400.
- If you hold, or are involved in holding, an illegal gathering of more than 30 people, the police can issue fines of £10,000

You are also advised to adhere to the following guidance:

- If you have to travel, walk and cycle where possible. If you have to use public transport, follow the [Safer Travel Guidance](#)
- Avoid staying overnight in another part of the UK if you live in Bolton and avoid staying overnight in Bolton if you are resident elsewhere. This includes going to live in a second home outside the area.
- Avoid travelling outside Bolton or entering another area rated Very High other than for work, education, or for caring responsibilities
- Don't attend amateur and semi-professional sporting events as spectators
- Follow [social distancing rules](#) when you meet up
- Limit how many different people you see socially over a short period of time

There are some exceptions where people from different households can meet in settings, including indoors in private homes. These exceptions are:

- In a legally-permitted [support bubble](#). A [support bubble](#) is where a household with one adult joins with another household. Households in that support bubble can still visit each other, stay overnight, and visit public places together
- In a legally-permitted [childcare bubble](#) ([see section on childcare](#))
- For work, volunteering to provide voluntary or charitable services (see guidance on [working safely in other people's homes](#))
- For registered childcare, education or training
- To allow contact between birth parents and children in care
- For arrangements where children do not live in the same household as both their parents or guardians
- For prospective adopting parents to meet a child or children who may be placed with them
- For supervised activities provided for children, including wraparound care (before and after school childcare), youth groups and activities, and children's playgroups
- For birth partners
- To see someone who is dying
- To provide emergency assistance, and to avoid injury or illness, or to escape a risk of harm
- To fulfil a legal obligation, such as attending court or jury service

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- To [provide care or assistance](#) to someone vulnerable
- To facilitate a house move
- For a wedding or equivalent ceremony where the organiser has carried out a risk assessment and taken all reasonable measures to limit the risk of transmission of the virus – up to a maximum of 15 people (not to take place in private homes). Receptions must not take place in a very high alert level area.
- For funerals – up to a maximum of 30 people. Wakes and other commemorative events are permitted with up to 15 people present (not to take place in private homes)
- For elite sportspeople and their coaches if necessary for competition and training, as well as parents or guardians if they are a child
- For outdoor exercise and dance classes, organised outdoor sport, and licensed outdoor physical activity. These can take place in groups of more than 6 outdoors, where a risk assessment has been carried out, but you must not mix with more than five other participants.
- Indoor organised team sports for disabled people, and youth sport. The relevant [indoor sport facilities guidance](#) or [outdoor guidance](#) must be followed for these activities
- Outdoor organised sport and physical activity events are allowed provided they follow [guidance for the public on the phased return of outdoor sport and recreation in England](#).
- Support groups of up to 15 participants – formally organised groups to provide mutual aid, therapy or any other form of support (not to take place in private homes)

Where a group includes someone covered by such an exception (for example, someone who is working), they are not generally counted as part of the gatherings limit. This means, for example, a tradesperson can go into a household without breaching the limit, if they are there for work.

3) Businesses and hospitality

Bolton, along with the rest of [Greater Manchester, is now at Tier 3 or 'Very High' COVID Alert Level](#)

Thursday 22 October - [the Chancellor has announced further support for businesses](#) (see below)

We are currently awaiting further guidance from government on the financial package in the 'Very High Level' tier and will post more information about support available during the next week.

Which businesses must close?

- Pubs and bars which sell alcohol for consumption on the premises must close – they can only remain open where they operate as if they were a restaurant - which means serving substantial meals, like a main lunchtime or evening meal. They may only serve alcohol as part of such a meal
- Casinos, bingo halls, betting shops, adult gaming centres, and soft play areas must also close.

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The following businesses must also close between 10pm and 5am:

- Restaurants, including restaurants and dining rooms in hotels or members' clubs
- Cafes including workplace canteens but not including cafes/canteens in a hospital, care home, canteens at criminal justice accommodation, or services providing food and drink to the homeless
- Businesses selling food and drink for consumption off the premises (but not including supermarkets, convenience stores, corner shops, newsagents, pharmacists, chemists and petrol stations)
- Social clubs
- Bars and public houses (which have been allowed to remain open as they sell food)
- Bowling alleys, cinemas, theatres, amusement arcades, concert halls, bingo halls, funfairs

Food and drink businesses may continue to operate between 10pm and 5am for the following reasons:

- The delivery of takeaway food and drink if ordered over the phone or online (license required for operating after 11pm)
- Collection is permitted if the customer remains in the vehicle and does not enter the premises
- Drive-through services with customers remaining in vehicles
- Hospitality venues on transport services and in motorway service areas do not need to close at 10pm, but must not serve alcohol after that time

All businesses and venues should follow [COVID-secure guidelines](#) to protect customers, visitors and workers:

- Businesses must ensure that they operate in a COVID-secure manner, including restrictions on table service and group bookings
- Certain businesses and venues are required to collect customer, visitor and staff data to support NHS Test and Trace
- The wearing of face coverings for customers and staff [is compulsory in certain indoor settings](#)
- Businesses must ensure that if their workers are required to self-isolate, they do not work outside their designated place of self-isolation
- Businesses and venues must ensure people do not meet in their premises with people from outside of their household or support bubble
- Businesses and venues that fail to comply with these restrictions may face fines of up to £10,000, prosecution, or in some cases closure

What financial help and support is available for businesses?

Thursday 22 October - [the Chancellor has announced further support for businesses](#)

- [Job Support Scheme](#) - a company will continue to pay its employee for time worked, but the cost of hours not worked will be split between the employer, the Government (through wage support) and the employee (through a wage reduction), and the employee will keep their job. [Further information can be found on this factsheet.](#) **(Updated 22 Oct 2020).**
- [Extension of the SEISS Grant for the self employed.](#) **(Updated 22 Oct 2020).** The extension will provide two grants and will last for six months from November 2020 to

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April 2021. Grants will be paid in two lump sum instalments each covering a three-month period

- [Local Restrictions Support Grant \(Tier 2\) business grants](#) - additional funding to support cash grants of up to £2,100 per month primarily for businesses in the hospitality, accommodation and leisure sector who may be adversely impacted by the restrictions in high-alert level areas. These grants will be available retrospectively for areas who have already been subject to restrictions. **(Updated 22 Oct 2020)**.

[Business Bolton](#) has information on the support that may be available for your business.

Other measures announced by the Chancellor in September include:

- Extension of the temporary 15% VAT cut for the tourism and hospitality sectors to the end of March next year
- New Payment Scheme - business who deferred their VAT bills will be able to pay back in smaller instalments. Rather than paying a lump sum in full at the end March next year, they will be able to make 11 smaller interest-free payments during the 2021-22 financial year
- Self-assessment taxpayers will be able to benefit from a separate additional 12-month extension from HMRC on the "Time to Pay" self-service facility, meaning payments deferred from July 2020, and those due in January 2021, will now not need to be paid until January 2022
- Businesses who took out a Bounce Back Loan will benefit from a new Pay as You Grow flexible repayment system. This includes extending the length of the loan from six years to ten, which will cut monthly repayments by nearly half. Interest-only periods of up to six months and payment holidays will also be available to businesses
- Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme - giving lenders the ability to extend the length of loans from a maximum of six years to ten years if it will help businesses to repay the loan
- Extending application deadlines until the end of November for the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme, the Bounce Back Loan Scheme and the Future Fund

What financial support is there for employees?

You may be able to get financial help through the:

- [Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme](#) (until 31 October)
- [Job Support Scheme](#) (from 1st November)
- [New Style Employment and Support Allowance](#)
- [Self-isolation grant](#) (see also Self-isolation section)

4) Work, education, and childcare

Going to work

- People living inside and outside of the very high alert level area can continue to travel in and out of the areas for work.
- To help contain the virus, office workers who can work effectively from home should do so over the winter. Where an employer, in consultation with their employee, judges an employee can carry out their normal duties from home they should do so.
- Public sector employees working in essential services, including education settings, should continue to go into work where necessary

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- Anyone else who cannot work from home should go to their place of work
- The risk of transmission can be substantially reduced if [COVID-secure guidelines](#) are followed closely. Extra consideration should be given to those people at higher risk.
- Those classed as [clinically extremely vulnerable](#) can go to work as long as the workplace is COVID secure, but should carry on working from home wherever possible. For more information, follow the guidance on [how to return to work safely](#)
- There is no limit to the group size when you are meeting or gathering for work purposes, but workplaces should be set up to meet the COVID-secure guidelines.

Going to school, college and university

The government has prioritised ensuring all children can attend school safely, to support their wellbeing and education and help working parents and guardians.

You can find out more about the government's [approach to education](#) and how schools have prepared. This is applicable in all the local COVID alert levels

Universities have welcomed students back and the government has published [guidance advising universities on reopening](#) to ensure they have safety measures in place to minimise the spread of the virus.

You can move home and travel to go to university but there are some stricter rules in place for very high alert level areas:

- You must not move back and forward between your permanent home and student home during term time – subject to limited exemptions set out in law
- Students living at their university term time address in a very high alert level area should follow the same guidance on meeting other people and travel as others in that area

Commuter students (those who live at a family home which may not be in the same area as their university and who travel to/from university each day) can continue to travel to/from their university as required, for education purposes

If you commute into very high alert level area to go to university you must not:

- Meet people you do not live with in their home inside one of the affected areas, unless they're in your household, childcare or support bubble
- Host people you do not live with in your home, if they live in one of the affected areas, unless they're in your household, childcare or support bubble
- Meet people you do not live with in their student halls, whether inside or outside of one of the affected areas, unless they're in your household or childcare or support bubble

If you move out of, or currently live outside of, an affected area you should not:

- host people you do not live with in your home or student halls if they live in a high or very high alert level area (unless they're in your household, support bubble or childcare bubble).

Childcare

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There are exceptions from legal gatherings limits for registered childcare, education or training, and supervised activities provided for children, including wraparound care, youth groups and activities, and children's playgroups.

This means you can continue to use early years and childcare settings, including childminders, after-school clubs and nannies See guidance on [working safely in other people's homes](#).

The following people can provide childcare support in private homes and gardens:

- Registered childcare providers, including nannies
- People in your support bubble
- People in your childcare bubble

What is a childcare bubble?

A childcare bubble is where someone in one household provides informal (unpaid and unregistered) childcare to a child aged 13 or under in another household. This must always be between the same 2 households.

Friends or family who do not live with you and are not part of a support or childcare bubble must not visit your home to help with childcare.

Childcare bubbles are to be used to provide childcare only, and not for the purposes of different households mixing where they are otherwise not allowed to do so.

Decisions on any restrictions necessary on childcare settings are taken separately on a case-by-case basis in the light of local circumstances.

Community centre activities?

Under the current guidelines, outlined on the government website, socialising with people who you do not live with or not within your social bubble is not permitted in indoor venues which includes community centres.

If you run such a business or organise events on their premises, you should take steps to ensure people do not interact with people they do not live with, in line with COVID-19 secure guidance – see question below for detail.

You may attend these venues with people you live with (or are in a support bubble with), but should avoid interaction with individuals or groups from other households.

You should not socialise with people you do not live with in other indoor public venues or outdoor places – such as shops, places of worship, community centres, leisure and entertainment venues, or visitor attractions.

Can I run my afterschool club / slimming world / mental health group / other group whether it be in a community centre or elsewhere?

Socialising with people who you do not live with, or who are not in your support bubble, is not permitted in either indoor venues or outdoor spaces. If you run a business or organise events, you should take steps to ensure people do not interact with people they do not live with – see below for clarification.

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The legislation sets out regulations for gatherings both in **private dwellings** and **other gatherings**. The 'other gatherings' section of the legislation is relevant to various local providers and settings. For 'other gatherings' the main point is that no one should meet in a gathering of more than 15 people and a gathering should not take place unless it meets the following criteria:

The gathering has been organised by a charitable, benevolent, philanthropic, public, or political body **AND**

The organiser has undertaken **risk assessments and taken necessary measures** to limit transmission **AND**

The event is reasonably necessary and is for:

- Work, voluntary, or charitable services
- Education and training
- Childcare by: person registered under Childcare Act or supervised children's activities
- Emergency assistance provision
- To support people to avoid injury or illness, or escape a risk of harm
- Fulfilling a legal obligation

5) Protecting people at risk and care home visits

Clinically vulnerable people are those who are:

- Aged 70 or older (regardless of medical conditions)
- Under 70 with an underlying health condition listed below (that is, anyone instructed to get a flu jab each year on medical grounds):
 - chronic (long-term) mild to moderate respiratory diseases, such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), emphysema or bronchitis
 - chronic heart disease, such as heart failure
 - chronic kidney disease
 - chronic liver disease, such as hepatitis
 - chronic neurological conditions, such as Parkinson's disease, motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis (MS) or cerebral palsy
 - diabetes
 - a weakened immune system as the result of certain conditions or medicines they are taking (such as steroid tablets)
 - being seriously overweight (a body mass index (BMI) of 40 or above)
- Pregnant women

If you have any of the above health conditions, it means you could be at higher risk of severe illness from coronavirus. You can:

- Go outside as much as you like but you should still try to keep your overall social interactions low
- Can visit businesses, such as supermarkets, pubs and shops, whilst keeping 2 metres away from others wherever possible or 1 metre plus other precautions

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- Should continue to wash your hands carefully and more frequently than usual and maintain thorough cleaning of frequently touched areas in your home and/or workspace

There is a further group of people who are defined, also on medical grounds, as clinically extremely vulnerable to coronavirus – that is, people with specific serious health conditions.

At each local COVID alert level, there is [additional advice that clinically extremely vulnerable people must follow](#).

Visiting relatives in care homes

You should not visit a care home except in exceptional circumstances, for example to visit an individual who is at the end of their life. [See the guidance on visiting relatives in care homes](#).

6) Travel, sport, moving home and ceremonies

Travel

You should avoid travelling outside Bolton or entering another area rated Very High other than for work, education, accessing youth services, or to meet caring responsibilities.

- You are asked not to stay overnight in another part of the UK, including travel to hotels and other guest accommodation, except if you need to for work, education or caring responsibilities. The same guidance applies to trips abroad.
- You can travel to hotels and other guest accommodation within Bolton but you should only do this with people in your household or support bubble.
- You may continue to travel to venues or amenities which are open, for work, or to access education, within a very high alert level area, but you should and aim to reduce the number of journeys you make
- If you need to travel we encourage you to walk or cycle where possible, or to plan ahead and avoid busy times and routes on public transport. This will allow you to practise social distancing while you travel
- If you need to use public transport, you should follow the [safer travel guidance](#). This includes the rules on wearing face masks and [advice on car sharing](#)
- If you are travelling, you must only do so with members of your household or support bubble, and should follow the [safer travel guidance](#)
- You are advised not to leave the borough to stay in a second home, if you own one

You must not:

- Stay with anyone you do not live with elsewhere in the UK or visit their home
- Stay with anyone you do not live with from a very high alert level area or visit their home

Remember, you must not travel if you are experiencing any coronavirus symptoms, are self-isolating as a result of coronavirus symptoms, are sharing a household or support bubble with somebody with symptoms, or have been told to self-isolate after being contacted by NHS Test and Trace.

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When considering travelling internationally, you should look at the rules in place at your destination, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office [travel advice](#) and the current [travel corridor list](#).

Sport and physical activity

Gyms and leisure centres remain open.

In line with [guidelines](#) from national sporting bodies, you can take part in sport and physical activity outdoors.

Organised exercise classes are only permitted indoors if it is possible for people to avoid mixing in with people you do not live with or share a support or childcare bubble with.

There are exceptions to enable disability and youth sport and physical activity indoors, in any number.

You should follow the guidance on:

- the return of [recreational team sport](#)
- the return of [outdoor sport and recreation](#) in England

Moving home

You can still move home if you are in a very high alert level area.

Estate and letting agents and removals firms can continue to work and people looking to move home can continue to undertake viewings.

Follow the [national guidance on moving home safely](#), which includes advice on social distancing and [wearing a face covering](#).

Weddings, civil partnerships, religious services and funerals

- Attending places of worship

You can attend places of worship for a service but you must not mingle with anyone outside of your household or support bubble, and keep a safe social distance.

You should follow the [national guidance on the safe use of places of worship](#).

- Weddings, ceremonies and funerals

Wedding and civil partnership ceremonies must only take place in COVID-secure venues or in public outdoor spaces unless in exceptional circumstances.

Weddings and civil partnership ceremonies are restricted to 15 people. Receptions must not take place in a very high alert level area.

Funerals must only take place in COVID-secure venues or in public outdoor spaces with up to 30 people in attendance. Wakes or linked ceremonial events before or after the funeral are limited to 15 people and must not take place in private homes. Where food or drink is consumed, this should be in the form of a sit-down meal to ensure people can keep their distance from each other.

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Anyone working at a wedding, civil partnership ceremony, wake or funeral is not generally counted as part of the limit. Within these larger gatherings, people do not need to limit their interaction to groups of 6 or their own household, but social distancing should still be followed between people who do not live together or share a support bubble.

People can travel to the borough to attend a ceremony, but they must not meet with another household in a private home or garden and we are asking them not to stay overnight.

Read the [guidance on small marriages and civil partnerships](#) and [guidance on managing a funeral during the coronavirus pandemic](#).