

## Guidance

# Meeting people from outside your household

### How you can see people that you do not live with while protecting yourself and others from coronavirus (COVID-19).

The government recognises how difficult it has been for people to be cut off from their family and friends in recent months. This has been necessary to help us all [stay alert](#), control the virus and save lives. This guidance explains how you can now see people you do not live with, while protecting yourself and others from coronavirus.

In England, there are 2 ways that you can do this:

- meeting outdoors in a group of up to 6 people with those you do not live with, but you should do this while observing social distancing guidelines and keeping at least 2 metres apart
- single adult households – in other words adults who live alone or with dependent children only – can form a ‘support bubble’ with one other household. All those in a support bubble will be able to spend time together inside each others’ homes, including overnight, without needing to stay 2 metres apart. We are making this change to support the loneliest and most isolated. It is a targeted intervention to provide extra support to some of those most impacted by the most difficult effects of the current social restrictions, while ensuring we continue to keep the rate of transmission down

### You must not:

- meet other people indoors – including in their home or your home – unless you are in a support bubble, or for other [limited circumstances listed in law](#)
- meet outdoors in a group of more than 6 with people who are not in your household or (where applicable) support bubble, or for other limited circumstances listed in law
- form a support bubble with another household if neither you nor they are in a single adult household

- stay overnight in another household that is not in your support bubble, unless it is for the limited set of circumstances outlined in law

## **Staying alert when meeting people you do not live with**

You should continue to stay alert and limit your contact with others. Staying at home is the easiest way to do this but, as above, you are permitted to meet family and friends subject to strict rules – on which there is more detail below. At all times, it's important to maintain social distancing guidelines to reduce the risk of spreading the virus.

In order to keep you and your family and friends safe, it remains very important that you [stay alert](#) outside your home and follow some key principles:

- you should limit your interactions with people outside of your household or your support bubble (if applicable) as much as possible
- you should continue to follow strict social distancing guidelines, particularly ensuring you are two metres away from anyone not in your household or your support bubble
- you should take hygiene precautions by washing your hands as soon as you are home for at least 20 seconds, use hand sanitiser when you are out, use a tissue when sneezing and dispose of it safely and cough into the crook of your elbow
- you should only form a support bubble with one other household, should not change or add to your support bubble once formed, and must only form a support bubble with another household if you or they are in a single adult household
- you should access private gardens externally wherever possible – if you need to go through someone else's home to do so, avoid touching surfaces and loitering
- you should avoid using toilets in other people's home (outside of your support bubble) wherever possible and wipe down surfaces after every use

- you should wipe down any surfaces or door handles people from outside of your household or support bubble come into contact with if walking through your home
- you should avoid sharing plates and utensils with people outside of your household or your support bubble
- you should avoid using paddling pools or other garden equipment with people outside of your household or bubble

If you or someone in your household or your support bubble (if applicable) are showing coronavirus symptoms, everyone in your support bubble should stay home. If you or a member of your support bubble is contacted as part of the [test and trace programme](#), the individual contacted should [stay at home](#). If the individual becomes symptomatic, everyone in the support bubble must then isolate. This is critical to staying safe and saving lives.

## **Meeting outdoors with people you do not live with or are not in your support bubble**

You are allowed to meet in groups of either:

- up to 6 people from different households outdoors
- any number if everyone is a member of your own household – or a member of your support bubble

You must not meet in a group of more than 6 with people you do not live with or who are not in your support bubble unless one of the other limited exceptions as set out in law apply. This is prohibited in law. The relevant authorities, including the police, have the powers to enforce the law – including through fines and dispersing gatherings.

## **Support bubbles and meeting outdoors**

It is already the case that households can spend time outdoors together even if the household is larger than 6 people. You can also meet outdoors with everyone in your support bubble, even if this is more than 6 people

Since 1 June, you have been allowed to meet outdoors in groups of up to 6 people from different households. This might include members of your own household and people in your support bubble too. A group that includes people who are not in your household or support bubble must not be more than 6 people.

### **Meeting outdoors if you have a carer from another household**

You can meet in a group of up to 6 people, including you and any carers, but it remains important to observe strict social distancing and keep 2 metres apart. But where you need personal care from your usual carer this may involve being closer than 2 metres.

### **Where to meet outdoors**

You can meet people in both public or private outdoor spaces, such as gardens, yards or roof terraces – as long as you maintain social distancing at all times with people who are not in your household or support bubble.

You should not go indoors. If you do need to use the toilet or are passing through to access someone's garden, avoid touching surfaces and if you use the toilet wash your hands thoroughly, wipe down surfaces, use separate or paper towels and wash or dispose of them safely after use.

If you no longer want to remain outdoors, you should go home. Do not go into garages, sheds or cabins – these are all indoor areas and where the risk of transmission is higher.

### **Using garden equipment**

You should not be sharing garden equipment with people outside of your household or your support bubble because of the risk of transmission. You could bring your own or if you have to use chairs, for example, you should wipe them down carefully with household cleaner before and after use.

You should try to avoid shared equipment. For example you should use your own tennis racquet, golf club or basketball. Any equipment

that is used should be cleaned frequently. Cleaning should be particularly thorough if it is to be used by someone else.

You should avoid using paddling pools and private swimming pools with people outside of your household.

### **Sharing food and drink outdoors, including picnics and barbeques**

You should not pass each other food or drink unless you live together or are in a support bubble together. You should not use plates or utensils that someone from another house has touched – either bring your own or ensure you have thoroughly cleaned them before using. Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly for at least 20 seconds and use disposable towels if possible.

If you are in someone else's garden, you must not go inside to help the host carry the food out or to help with the washing up.

### **Playing sport with someone you don't live with**

You can exercise or play sport in groups of up to 6 people from other households, but should only do so where it is possible to maintain a 2 metre gap from those you do not live with. You will be able to play sport outdoors in groups of more than 6 people and without social distancing if they are all from our household or in your support bubble.

People who play team sports can meet to train together and do things like conditioning or fitness sessions but not in groups of more than 6 and you should be 2 metres apart at all times. While groups could practise ball skills like passing and kicking, equipment sharing should be kept to a minimum and strong hand hygiene practices should be in place before and after.

You can also play doubles tennis with people from outside of your household (or bubble) as long as you remain 2 metres apart wherever possible. Any equipment that is used should be cleaned frequently. Cleaning should be particularly thorough if equipment is to be used by someone else.

If you are showing coronavirus symptoms, or if you or any of your household, or your support bubble, are self-isolating, you should stay at home – this is critical to staying safe and saving lives.

### **Travelling to meet people outdoors**

You can travel to outdoor open space irrespective of distance, as long as you can return the same night and do not put others at risk because of services you may need in the time you are away. You should continue to avoid using public transport and should cycle, walk or drive wherever possible.

This guidance only applies to England. You must adhere to the individual country laws and guidance of the devolved administrations (Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland).

You should not travel with someone from outside your household or your support bubble unless you can practise social distancing, for example by cycling.

### **Making a support bubble with another household**

In England, if you live by yourself or are a single parent with dependent children – in other words, if there is only one adult in your home – you can expand your support network so that it includes one other household of any size. This is called making a ‘support bubble’ and means you are able to meet indoors or out, be less than 2 metres apart and stay overnight as you could if they were members of your own household.

We recognise how difficult this time has been, particularly on lonely and isolated people, and this change is designed to provide extra support to some of those most impacted by the current social restrictions. Once you are in a support bubble, you can think of yourself as in a single household.

There are key principles for how you can form a support bubble safely. These are critical to keeping you – and your friends and family – safe and saving lives:

- support bubbles must be exclusive – you should not change who is in your bubble or have close contact with anyone else you do not live with. This is critical to keeping you, and your family and friends, safe
- if you or someone in your support bubble is showing coronavirus symptoms, or otherwise self-isolating, everyone in your support bubble should stay home. If you or a member of your support bubble is contacted as part of the [test and trace programme](#), the individual contacted should stay at home. If the individual becomes symptomatic, everyone in the support bubble should then isolate

It is not yet possible for those who are not in a support bubble to start meeting inside other people's homes – that remains against the law unless covered by any other limited circumstances as set out in the law. This is critical to helping us control the virus and keep people safe.

The following provides more detail on how support bubbles work.

Forming a support bubble with another household means you can meet – indoors or out – and be closer than 2 metres from each other. You can also stay overnight as if you lived with that household. This means you are able to have closer contact with those in your support bubble, which should help provide additional support to those who need it. You should continue to adhere to social distancing guidelines in full with other households.

This is really important to keep you and others in your support bubble safe by avoiding the risk of infection to those in your bubble. The risk of infection rises with the number of people in a bubble and the number of interactions you have with people you do not live with, so it's important to take measures to try and protect against this. This means that support bubbles must be exclusive – you should only form a bubble with one household and they should only be in a bubble with you.

You must not gather indoors or stay overnight with anyone outside of this bubble and should not change your bubble. If you are in a single adult household, you may also want to consider making a bubble with another smaller household where possible. Everyone in a support bubble should isolate when one member of the bubble becomes symptomatic or tests positive for coronavirus.

### **Who can form a support bubble**

If you live in a single adult household – either you live alone or are a single parent living only with dependent children – you are allowed to form a support bubble. You can choose to do so with any other household. This should be used to help those most in need. If you choose to bubble with another household, you should keep to the principles outlined and otherwise maintain robust social distancing to avoid increasing risk of infection to those in your bubble.

### **Physical contact with members of your support bubble**

You can have close physical contact with members of your support bubble if you and they want to. Support bubbles are a cautious step to help people who may be lonely and therefore at greatest risk of isolation. You do not need to stay more than 2 metres from people in your bubble, but good hand hygiene and other measures can help to keep you and the people you meet safe.

Some people already take extra precautions with those they live with – for example, if one of them is clinically vulnerable, or one of them has a lot of contact outside the house, and you might want to do the same if you expand your bubble.

### **Support bubbles and isolation**

If any member of your support bubble – either someone in your own household or one that you have formed a bubble with – develops symptoms or tests positive for coronavirus you should follow advice on household isolation.

If you share custody of your child, and you and your child's other parent are both in separate bubbles, all households would need to isolate if someone becomes symptomatic in the group.

**If you are clinically extremely vulnerable (shielding)**

Unfortunately, we cannot advise anyone who is [shielding](#) to form a support bubble at this stage. However, we know how hard it is for people who are shielding and have been keeping this advice under close review. We will be setting out further advice for this specific group next week, now that the peak of the pandemic is past.

Those who are shielding are still advised to maintain strict social distancing and stay 2 metres apart from others – including those they live with.

**If you are clinically vulnerable or have a higher risk of catching coronavirus (such as a frontline healthcare worker)**

If you are [clinically vulnerable](#), you should continue to take particular care to minimise contact with others. You should bear this in mind when deciding to form a support bubble. If you are at a higher risk of exposure to those with coronavirus (for example, if someone in your house is a healthcare or care worker that interacts with patients that have coronavirus), you should take particular care when deciding whether to form a support bubble and who with.

**If you share custody of your child with someone you do not live with**

Children with separated parents are already permitted to move between both households and there is no change to that. It is also permitted for those households – if there is only a single adult in them – to form a support bubble with another household.

However, it is very important that if someone in any of these linked households shows coronavirus symptoms, or is otherwise self-isolating, you should all [stay at home](#). This is critical to controlling the virus, by avoiding a chain of transmission.

## **Using a support bubble for informal childcare**

If you are a lone parent you can form a support bubble with another household to provide informal (i.e. unpaid) childcare for them or for them to provide informal childcare for you. You should not form a support bubble with more than one household.

## **Lone adults with children over 18**

If you live with children over the age of 18, you will not be able to form a support bubble.

The exception to this is if the child was under the age of 18 on 12 June 2020 and is in a single-parent household. That household can continue to participate in their current support bubble or form a support bubble if they have not already done so, once that child turns 18.

We are making this change to support those who might be feeling lonely or isolated. It is a targeted intervention to provide extra support to some of those most impacted by the current social restrictions.

## **Lone adults with carers**

If you are the only adult in your household, then you will be able to form a support bubble with any other household that is willing to exclusively bubble with you. This is irrespective of whether carers visit you to provide support.

If you live with other adults including your carers, then you will still be able to form a support bubble, however this would need to be with a single adult household.

## **Travelling to form a support bubble**

There is no limit on how far you can travel in England to meet members of your support bubble but we recommend that you form a support bubble with someone who lives locally wherever possible. This will help to prevent the virus spreading from an area where there might be a higher rate of infection. You cannot form a bubble with someone who lives in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland.

## **Returning from abroad**

You should self-isolate in one place for the full 14 days, where you can have food and other necessities delivered, and stay away from others, including people you bubble with. See [guidance on how to self-isolate when you travel to the UK](#).