



Christmas Guidance

Christmas Bubbles rules will be in place between 23rd to 27th December.

Before and **after** these dates the Tier 2 regulations are in place in Milton Keynes.

Meeting friends and family

We cannot mix with anyone indoors who is not part of our household or support bubble.

For example:

- pubs and restaurants
- shops
- leisure and entertainment venues
- personal care/close contact services
- places of worship
- public buildings, such as libraries, community centres and halls
- recycling and waste centres, car parks and public toilets

At least one person in the group should give their contact details to the venue or check in using the official NHS COVID-19 app so NHS Test and Trace can contact we if needed.

We can meet with up to 6 people in a garden or outside space.

Visiting bars, pubs and restaurants

When the Christmas Bubbles are in place between 23rd and 27th December, the rules on who we can meet in **bars, pubs and restaurants will not change, in other words we cannot meet anyone who is not in our own household.**

Businesses are not allowed to have a Christmas lunch or party.

Visiting churches and other places of worship

We can attend places of worship, but we cannot meet with other people whilst at places of worship (other than our own household.)

Between 23 and 27 December, we can attend a place of worship with members of our Christmas bubble.

There is further information here: [guidance for the safe use of places of worship during the pandemic](#).

Visiting shops and Christmas markets

Santa's grottos are able to open where they are located in venues otherwise permitted to open. Venues should put in place appropriate [COVID-secure measures](#), including social distancing.

Between 23 and 27 December, the rules on who we can meet in shops will not change, **so we cannot meet anyone who is not in our household**. This includes Boxing Day sales.

There is further information in the [guidance for people who work in or run shops, branches, stores or similar environments](#).

Attending events, including performances and Christmas lighting ceremonies

Between 23 and 27 December, the rules on indoor events will not change (we cannot meet anyone who is not in our household). We can attend outdoor events with our Christmas bubble.

Celebrating New Year's Eve

We must follow the rules on where we can go and who we can meet, including on New Year's Eve. The Christmas bubble rules will no longer apply. Hospitality venues are all required to close by 23:00 at the latest.

Carol singing

Although all carol singing must be outside, we need to be aware of the dangers of singing.

COVID-19 spreads from person to person through small droplets, aerosols and through direct contact. Singing, shouting and physical activity increases the risk of transmission through small droplets and aerosols. If singing does take place, steps should be taken to reduce the risk of transmission, including limiting the number of people participating as far as possible. The cumulative effect of aerosol transmission means the more people involved, the higher the risk of transmission.

Carol singing or carol services can take place if all attendees follow advice in the suggested principles of safer singing and guidance for the Performing Arts developed by an expert group coordinated by Public Health England. This applies to both professional and amateur choirs.

Please see this article about the devastating effect of one carol singing practice:

COVID-19 infected 87% of an American Choir

In March, early in the US outbreak, 61 members of a choir group in Skagit County, Washington, met for their weekly choir practice. One person at the two-and-a-half-hour meeting displayed cold-like symptoms.

Days later, after an investigation by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 53 Covid-19 cases were identified - 87% of the group that had assembled to sing. Two members of the group later died.

During the rehearsal, chairs were arranged in six rows of 20 chairs each, spaced 6-10 inches apart, according to a report by the CDC. Members took their usual rehearsal seats, with some space left over by the roughly 40 people not present that night.

Although some shared snacks during a 15-minute break, no member reported physical contact between those present.

So why the spread? The key factor is that the group were singing. When you sing, similar to when you speak loudly or shout, you expel respiratory droplets from your mouth and nose.

When you are breathing out heavily from your airway, you're producing more aerosol which are smaller droplets that can hang around in the air.

In the Skagit County choir, the initial sick member could have expelled these droplets as they rehearsed, which then hovered in the air as members sang and socialised for more than two hours.

Support and childcare bubbles

Support bubbles have been expanded.

From 2 December we can form a support bubble with another household if any of the following apply:

- we are the only adult in our household – any other members of the household having been under 18 on 12 June 2020
- We are an under-18-year-old living alone
- we live with someone with a disability who requires continuous care and there is no other adult living in the household
- we live with a child who is under 1, or who was under 1 on 2 December 2020
- we live with a child who is under 5, or who was under 5 on 2 December 2020, with a disability

Meeting in larger groups

There are exceptions where people can continue to gather indoors, or in groups larger than 6 outdoors, including:

- as part of a single household or support bubble
- in a childcare bubble (for the purposes of childcare only)
- for work, or providing voluntary or charitable services, including in other people's homes (see guidance on working safely in other people's homes)
- for registered childcare, education or training – meaning education related to a formal curriculum, or training that relates to work or obtaining work.
- for supervised activities provided for children, and those who were under 18 on 31 August 2020, including wraparound care (before and after school childcare), children's groups and activities for under-18s, and children's playgroups
- for parent and toddler groups – up to a maximum of 15 people (under-5s do not count towards this limit). These cannot take place in private dwellings
- for arrangements where children do not live in the same household as both their parents or guardians
- to allow contact between birth parents and children in care, as well as between siblings in care
- for prospective adopting parents to meet a child or children who may be placed with them
- support groups of up to 15 participants – formally organised groups to for prospective adopting parents to meet a child or children who may be placed with them
- support groups of up to 15 participants – formally organised groups to provide mutual aid, therapy or any other form of support, where it is necessary for these to take place in person. These cannot take place in private dwellings. Under-5s do not count towards the 15-person limit for support groups

- for birth partners
- to provide emergency assistance, and to avoid injury or illness, or to escape a risk of harm
- to see someone who is dying
- to fulfil a legal obligation, such as attending court or jury service
- for gatherings within criminal justice accommodation or immigration detention centres
- to provide care or assistance to someone vulnerable, or to provide respite for a carer
- for a wedding or equivalent ceremony and reception 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 15 people. These cannot take place in private dwellings, except for deathbed weddings that take place in exceptional circumstances where one of the parties is seriously ill and not expected to recover
- for funerals – up to a maximum of 30 people and for linked commemorative events, such as wakes or stone settings – up to 15 people. These cannot take place in private dwellings
- to visit someone at home who is dying, or to visit someone receiving treatment in a hospital, hospice or care home, or accompanying a family or friend to a medical appointment
- for elite sportspeople (and their support team if necessary, or parents/guardians if they are under 18) to compete and train
- for organised outdoor sport and physical activity, and organised sports for disabled people
- to facilitate a house move

Other activities, such as hobby groups, organised indoor sport, physical activity and exercise classes can continue to take place, provided that different households or support bubbles do not mix. Where it is likely that groups will mix, these activities should not go ahead.

There are exceptions for indoor disability sport, and supervised sport and physical activity for under-18s, which can take place with larger groups mixing.

Where a group includes someone covered by an exception (for example, someone who is working or volunteering), 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, and the officiant at a wedding would not count towards the limit.

If we break the rules

The police can take action against anyone who meets in larger groups. This includes breaking up illegal gatherings and issuing fines (fixed penalty notices).

You can be given a fixed penalty notice of £200 for the first offence, doubling for each further offence up to £6,400. If anyone holds, or are involved in holding, an illegal gathering of over 30 people, the police can issue fines of £10,000.

Business and venues

- Nightclubs and adult entertainment venues must remain closed.
- Pubs and bars may not provide alcohol for consumption on the premises, unless with a substantial meal, so they are operating as a restaurant. They may remain open for take-away services
- Other hospitality businesses – including cafes, restaurants and social clubs – can only serve alcohol with substantial meals.
- Hospitality venues must stop taking orders after 10pm and must close between 11pm and 5am (with exceptions on public transport services and in motorway service areas).

Businesses and venues that fail to comply with these restrictions may face fines of up to £10,000, prosecution, or in some cases closure

See full guidance on which businesses and venues are permitted to be open under each local restriction tier.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/tier-2-high-alert#visiting-venues-including-shops-restaurants-pubs-places-of-worship-and-public-buildings>