

Plans to ease lockdown measures, new alert system and increased fines

The Prime Minister yesterday outlined some of the proposed steps to ease the country out of lockdown. Further guidance is expected over the next few days with measures – such as allowing people to spend more time outdoors – set to be in place from Wednesday.

Part of the announcement focused on asking people who cannot work from home to return to their workplace this week but avoid public transport where possible. A new five-level COVID alert system indicating the danger level to the UK will dictate which measures can be lifted and when, he said.

Previous messaging advising everyone to 'Stay Home' has been replaced with a new 'stay alert, control the virus, save lives' slogan. We will continue to use our 'Stay Home, Be Kind, Stay Safe' messaging on our own channels.

As mentioned, residents will be permitted to spend more time exercising outdoors but they must stick to social distancing guidelines. Fines will be increased for those who do not adhere to the rules, the Prime Minister added.

A supporting document issued today explaining the new measures in greater detail will be assessed by our officers and leadership team.

We will then be able to determine exactly how all this will impact on our borough and our local approach. We will of course keep you updated with any decisions as soon as is possible.

There are some FAQs [here](#)

Covid 19 updates from the Council Week beginning May 11th

Re-opening of schools

A phased return to school for some primary age children could start from June 1 at the earliest. The Prime Minister indicated pupils in Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 would be prioritised as long as infection rates continue to decline.

Primary school year groups outside of those mentioned could then return by the summer if the first stage proves successful.

In terms of secondary school pupils, it was mentioned that there is an 'ambition' for some years, such as 10 and 12, to have time back at school before the summer holidays.



If it's safe!!!

Extension to furlough scheme

The chancellor is expected to announce an update to the furlough scheme which will see the government pay wages until the end of September, although this may involve pay outs falling from 80 per cent of normal pay to 60 per cent.

We will keep you and our business community updated with any developments as they happen this week.

Encouraging residents to cycle and walk

The government has announced a £2bn package to help with cycling and walking routes across the country. The first stage will see schemes such as pop-up bike lanes, wider pavements and cycle and bus-only streets.

On a more local level, The Mayor of Greater Manchester has launched a #safestreetssavelives campaign to encourage safe essential travel.

As mentioned in a previous briefing, a number of measures have also been introduced in Wigan Borough to support cyclists and pedestrians.

They are:

- Temporarily extend the pedestrian zone times in Wigan and Leigh town centres from 10:30am to 4pm to 9am to 5pm to help walking and cycling movements
- Introducing 20mph speed limits on some Wigan town centre roads including Standishgate, Market Street, Millgate, Crompton Street and Mesnes Street. Permanent signage will be in place. It is hoped that this particular measure will become permanent following a six-month trial period.
- Extending the operating times of the bus lane on Leigh Road from peak hour to 24/7.



Support for domestic abuse charities

Details on how domestic abuse charities can access vital funds have been released on Monday.

This funding will support domestic abuse safe accommodation services who not only provide beds, but also offer the critical help victims and their children need.

The support can be used to ensure existing services remain open as well as to create additional capacity and support during these unprecedented times.

More information is available [here](#)

Helpline offers wider range of support

Our community helpline working alongside our hub system has already come to

the aid of many residents who have required urgent support, such as delivery of food and medicine supplies.

The facility is now being used to offer more general welfare support, including helping residents deal with issues around social isolation.

Our dedicated staff have been able to offer reassurance and advice and will continue to do so.

The coordinated effort has seen those in isolation helped through volunteers walking their dog, dropping round books and DVDs or simply providing someone to catch-up with on the other end of the phone.

Please continue to encourage residents to utilise this service (01942 489018) and for more information, visit www.wigan.gov.uk/bekind

Healthy Start Vouchers – Applications Made Simpler



Families can now apply for Healthy Start food vouchers without a health professional's signature on the form, as was previously required.

[Healthy Start](#) is the UK's food welfare scheme for pregnant women and young children in low-income families. The vouchers, worth £3.10 per week and can be used to purchase fresh fruit and vegetables, milk or infant formula, and vitamin coupons are issued in addition.

Regulations around the application process have now been changed, so Healthy Start application forms (which can be found [here](#)) no longer require a health professional to complete and sign Part B.

[Find out more about Healthy Start vouchers and how to apply here.](#)

5 Things you can do to make a positive difference in your community

 <p>Think of others, consider your actions & be kind</p> <p>People in every community will face the challenges of Covid-19 in some way – from needing basic provisions to help while they are unwell.</p>	 <p>Connect and reach out to your neighbours</p> <p>As self-isolation increases, we need to find new ways to stay connected and check in on one another for our physical and mental wellbeing. Share phone numbers and stay in touch.</p>	 <p>Make the most of local online groups</p> <p>Keep up to date, share information and be a positive part of your local community conversations.</p>	 <p>Support vulnerable or isolated people</p> <p>Different groups in our communities are at increased risk and social isolation and loneliness are key concerns for all ages. There are things you can do like volunteering for local support services or donating to food banks to help.</p>	 <p>Share accurate information and advice</p> <p>Support anyone who may be anxious about Covid-19. Sign post them to the correct advice from Public Health England and encourage people to follow the correct hygiene practices.</p>
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Parks and outdoor spaces

Keeping residents' and our workforce safe has been our key priority throughout the coronavirus pandemic. To ensure we can continue to do that we will be carrying out risk assessments across all of our parks, greenspaces and buildings to make sure the appropriate measures are in place before we fully open to the public again.

The parks have always been open, but the facilities, such as car parking, play areas and toilets, were closed to avoid mass gatherings and to prevent the spread of the virus in line with social distancing guidelines. Other areas such as council-owned golf courses, bowling greens and basketball courts will also remain closed for now.

We will update residents next week, but for now these arrangements will stay in place while we review the latest guidelines alongside our priority to keep residents safe.



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