

Coronavirus new restrictions announced

21 December 2020

Coronavirus new restrictions announced

- Tier 4 Restrictions in England – Clinically Extremely Vulnerable
- Key worker letter for essential travel between Tiers
- Cessation of van sharing in Tier 4
- Gym closures in Tier 4
- Customer Service Points – no changes to opening times
- Growing number of countries announce travel restrictions to/from the UK
- Reminder of the basic preventative guidance to minimise infection spread
- Faith and Prayer rooms
- Support your own and others mental wellbeing

The UK Government has created a new tier 4 for England which mirrors very closely the restrictions in place during national lockdown. This new tier 4 includes all of London, and many of the surrounding counties. You can see a full list of which areas are [impacted here](#). You can also find [more information here](#). Additional measures have also been taken in parts of Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales and you can [find more information on those areas here](#). Most of the changes came into effect yesterday.

Tier 4 Restrictions in England – Clinically Extremely Vulnerable

On Sunday 20 December the UK Government announced some areas in England (e.g. London and South East) were moving into Tier 4; with the very highest restrictions.

Employees who are Clinically Extremely Vulnerable and live in a Tier 4 area in England have been advised to shield.

Please note, the advice for Clinically Extremely Vulnerable **only** applies in Tier 4 in England.

Clinically extremely vulnerable to coronavirus living in Tier 4 in England

People, who are clinically extremely vulnerable, who live in a Tier 4 area in England have been advised not to go to work if they cannot work from home. Employees in this group will have received a letter during the previous lockdown in November from the UK Government/NHS.

We have decided to extend Royal Mail sick pay to colleagues with CEV status who live in Tier 4 in England who are required to shield as we did during the last lockdown. Exceptionally, we will offer full sick pay to support CEV colleagues who are due to move to half pay / nil pay or Statutory Sick Pay (SSP). This means CEV colleagues who live in Tier 4 areas in England with less than a year's service are also covered. This will apply where employees cannot work from home. Employees who are on half / nil / SSP and in this category will receive a letter confirming this arrangement.

The extension of our policy is at our discretion. This approach will continue to be in place as long as the advice to shield is in place or until early January when it will be reviewed. Please note that due to the timing of tier 4 notification over the weekend, and non-standard payroll operations due to Bank/Public holidays, pay adjustments providing full sick pay are likely to be made in arrears.

As a condition of extending sick pay colleagues must:

- Live in a Tier 4 area in England
- Provide their manager with the letter they received previously from the Government/NHS advising them to shield and not come to work, if they cannot work from home
- Agree to book and take all their full annual leave entitlement this holiday year (ending 31 March 2021) even if it overlaps with shielding
- Agree to take any pre-booked annual leave, even if that overlaps with shielding

Employees will receive their usual pay when taking holiday.

Managers should record any shielding self absence on PSP using, 'Sick Coronavirus' from the absence type drop-down box then 'SDU070 – Shielding Self'. This absence code should only be used for CEV "shielding-self" employees.

People who are defined as clinically extremely vulnerable are at very high risk of severe illness from COVID-19, so if an employee living in a Tier 4 area previously received a letter from the UK Government/NHS advising them to shield, they should do so. If they are unable to work from home, they should not come to work. We encourage our managers to contact them to check their current situation.

Clinically extremely vulnerable – living in Tier 1, Tier 2 or Tier 3

People who are clinically extremely vulnerable living in Tiers 1, 2 or 3 have not been advised to shield and can continue to work if they cannot work from home.

Colleagues who live in a Tier 1, Tier 2 or Tier 3 area, however work in a Tier 4 area in England, should work from home where possible. If they are unable to work from home, they should not attend for work in a Tier 4 office in England but attend for work at an alternative office in Tier 1, Tier 2 or Tier 3. Colleagues should be especially careful to follow the rules and minimise their contact with others.

Clinically vulnerable (e.g. aged over 70, aged under 70 with an underlying health condition listed on the UK [Government guidance](#))

People who are considered to be clinically vulnerable can continue to come to work (if they cannot work from home) and should be especially careful to follow the rules and minimise their contact with others.

If you have employees in this group who are concerned about coming to work in Tier 4 areas, talk to them to try to understand their concerns and remind them of the measures in place and that our workplaces are 'COVID-19 secure'. Consider if there is alternative work they could do while Tier 4 restrictions apply.

If the employee continues to have concerns and wants to stay away from the office, work with them to agree how they can take time away from work. There are a range of options which can be considered including annual holiday, flexible working and unpaid special leave. When entering any unpaid absence, you should select 'Special Leave unpaid' and then choose 'Personal Commitments'.

Shielding others

Employees living with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable can still come to work. However, if those employees have concerns about coming into work, managers should agree with them how they can cover their absence if they cannot work from home, by using either annual holiday and/or unpaid special leave. Record unpaid leave on PSP as, ZZSCCR - 'Special leave unpaid' from the absence type drop-down box; then 'COVID Shield Others'.

Further support

For further help and support managers can either call 0345 604 2787 or contact coronavirus.support@royalmail.com.

Key worker letter for essential travel between Tiers

Royal Mail Group workers across the UK are included in the list of those whose work is critical to the COVID-19 response. We are connecting customers and communities, which is more important now than ever. If Royal Mail Group employees are stopped or questioned by authorities when they are attending for work they can share the key worker letter available [here](#).

Cessation of van sharing in Tier 4

In light of the Government announcement and the uncertainty around the new strain, we have taken the decision to temporarily cease the use of shared vans in full lockdown or tier 4 areas. This means shared vans should stop in the areas [listed here](#), and all of Wales, with immediate effect. Changes should be made in mainland Scotland and Northern Ireland from **26 December**. For more information on the rules in mainland Scotland [please click here](#), for Wales please [click here](#) and for Northern Ireland, [please click here](#).

Gym closures in Tier 4

The newly introduced restrictions means that in tier 4 areas certain non-essential businesses and venues in England had to close from midnight on Saturday 19 December, all Royal Mail gyms in tier 4 must close. Guidance for gyms in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland continues to remain separate aligned to local/national restrictions.

Customer Service Points – no changes to opening times

There are no changes to the CSP planned opening times, please ensure continued focus on social distancing and the wearing of face coverings in CSPs.

Growing number of countries announce travel restrictions to/from the UK

Following identification of a new variant of coronavirus, international travel from your area may be increasingly restricted because of domestic regulations. Different rules apply in [England](#), [Scotland](#), [Wales](#) and [Northern Ireland](#). For example, those in Tier 4 areas in England will not be permitted to travel abroad apart from limited exceptions, such as work purposes.

If permitted to travel abroad, you should follow all the rules that apply to you and keep up-to-date with the latest developments for your destination before your trip. Sign up for [travel advice](#) email alerts and check the [TravelHealthPro website](#) for travel health guidance.

Reminder of the basic preventative guidance to minimise infection spread

The introduction of further restrictions emphasises the need for the basic precautions we can all take, please regularly remind your teams of the following key points:

- Hands - Regularly Wash your hands
- Face - Wear a face covering (Mandatory indoors, recommended outdoors)
- Space - Maintain Social Distancing

Faith and Prayer rooms

Faith/prayer rooms are able to remain open for individual prayer only where 2m social distancing can be maintained.

Support your own and others mental wellbeing

The past year has been tough for everyone and we recognise that things are incredibly difficult at this time. Any sudden change in plans or having to isolate for prolonged periods may impact on people's mental health and it is important therefore that we continue to do all we can to look after our own health and wellbeing and support others to do the same.

Some top tips to help support your physical and mental health at this time include:

1. Accept that some things are beyond your control – limit time watching speculation on the news or social media if this helps
2. Maintain relationships and stay in touch with friends and family – digitally if you are restricted meeting in person
3. Talking about how you are feeling and ask for help if you need it – again digitally if required
4. Keep check of your finances
5. Get enough good sleep
6. Try to eat and drink sensibly
7. Keep as active as possible

A [Covid-19 Toolkit](#) is available on the First Class Support digital platforms along with other self-service content and tools to help support you at this time, including an online chat facility to speak directly with a trained professional.

A reminder that help is at hand to support you:

First Class Support is free and confidential for employees including direct access to counselling services. Call **0800 6888 777**, visit www.rmgfirstclasssupport.co.uk or download the 'Lifeworks' app. New website/app users can 'sign up' using a unique invitation code, which is RMG- and then your payroll number, e.g. **RMG-12345678**.

Rowland Hill Fund: 0345 600 4586 www.rowlandhillfund.org offering financial aid to colleagues, pensioners and their families in times of need.

Shout Mental Health Text Service is a free, nationwide, 24/7, text based service. Text **Shout to 85258** in the UK to text with a trained Crisis Volunteer.

Neyber: Through My Bundle's Financial Wellbeing option you can access debt consolidation loans and financial education. Log into My Bundle through PSP or visit mybundle.myroyalmail.com.

Stepchange: Offering expert, tailored advice and practical solutions to problem debt, contact the UK's leading debt charity on **0800 138 1111** or visit www.stepchange.org.

The **National Domestic Abuse helpline** is available, including for concerned friends. Call **0808 2000 247** freephone 24 hours a day or visit www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk.

Cruse Bereavement Care: Phone: 0808 808 1677 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm) or visit www.cruse.org.uk.

For urgent mental health support in a crisis: call the Samaritans on **116 123** (open 24/7) or in the case of a suicide or other emergency situation, ring 999, or 9999 from a Royal Mail landline.

If you are worried that someone is at immediate risk of taking their own life you should stay with that person and take one of the following steps:

- Encourage them to call the First Class Support helpline (open 24/7) or the Samaritans on **116 123** (open 24/7)
- Contact their GP for an emergency appointment or the out of hours support service
- Call their Community Mental Health Team (CMHT) if they have one

Ring 999 (9999 from a Royal Mail landline), NHS direct (111) or go to the nearest Accident and Emergency (A&E) department.

Further support

For further help and support managers can either call 0345 604 2787 or contact coronavirus.support@royalmail.com.

Visit the [Coronavirus Information Intranet page](#) for further information including a link to a regularly updated frequently asked Questions and Answers document.

First Class Support is free and confidential for employees including direct access to counselling services. Call **0800 6888 777**, visit www.rmgfirstclasssupport.co.uk or download the 'Lifeworks' app. New users of the website/app can 'sign up' using a unique invitation code, which is RMG- and then your payroll number, e.g. **RMG-12345678**.

On the [Health and Wellbeing Intranet pages](#), our Feeling First Class – Mental Health page includes stress guidance, support and training as well as signposting to internal and external mental health support services.

[Feeling First Class Mental Health](#) for the stress toolkit to help prevent and manage workplace stress as well as other mental health guidance.

RMtv MRM app Intranet myroyalmail.com

FOLLOW US

This information has been sent to specific colleagues within Royal Mail Group. Please do not share unless otherwise instructed. © Royal Mail Group 2020.