



Rt Hon Michael Gove MP  
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster  
Cabinet Office 70 Whitehall London SW1A 2AS

24 November 2020

Dear Colleague,

### **2020 CHRISTMAS ARRANGEMENTS**

Further to yesterday's announcement by the Prime Minister and the COVID-19 Winter Plan, we have reached agreement between the UK Government and the devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland on arrangements for the Christmas period.

Christmas is an important time of year for many people in the UK, regardless of their faith. COVID-19 continues, however, to pose a very real and ongoing threat. It will not be possible to take full advantage of the winter holiday season and to celebrate Christmas in the normal way. We recognise that there will be some hard choices for families and friends, and that there will be situations where it is not possible to gather in the way many usually would.

In this context, we have reached agreement on a single set of UK-wide measures to help people come together with their loved ones in a way that is as safe as possible.

- Between 23 and 27 December, up to three households will be able to join together to form an exclusive Christmas 'bubble'.
- Everyone can be in one bubble only, and cannot change bubble during this time period (an exemption to this is children, aged under 18, of separated parents).
- People (e.g. nannies, cleaners, tradespeople) can continue to work in someone's home where necessary during this period. To reduce risk, they should observe social distancing wherever possible, and where it can be avoided should not go into homes that are hosting Christmas bubbles.
- A Christmas bubble will be able to spend time together in private homes, to attend places of worship, or meet in a public outdoor place.
- Travel restrictions across the UK will be lifted to allow people to travel to and from their bubble. But beyond this, people should follow local restrictions in the area in which they are staying.
- [Students who move home from university for holidays](#) will count as part of their family's household, and in England an existing support bubble will count as one household.

Even where it is within the rules, meeting with friends and family over Christmas will be a matter of personal judgement for individuals, mindful of the risks to themselves and others. People should as much as possible reduce unnecessary social contact with those with whom they do not live in the two weeks before forming their Christmas bubble. We need everyone to think carefully about what they do during this period, balancing some increased social contact with the need to keep risk of increased virus transmission as low as possible. This is particularly important when considering those who are vulnerable and elderly.

The clinically extremely vulnerable can form part of a Christmas bubble, but this would be a personal choice and should be balanced against the increased risk of infection for those people. Given the additional risks, visits out of care homes should only be considered for care home residents of working age, where the home is in agreement, and has completed an individual risk assessment.

Parents should continue to send their children to school and students should continue to attend college, in line with local guidance. The UK's four Chief Medical Officers continue to advise that the best place for children and young people is in education. There is no need for children to be taken out of school early.

It is essential that everyone follows the rules applicable to where they are in the UK. In England, that means continuing to follow the local tiers that will apply from 2 December. It will be particularly important for everyone to follow the social distancing guidelines early in the new year. Historically, this period is when the NHS sees the greatest pressure on services such as Accident & Emergency, and the highest rates of bed occupancy, and this year the NHS is dealing with COVID-19 as well.

Further information and guidance can be found on gov.uk:

- [Joint statement on UK-wide Christmas arrangements from the UK Government and Devolved Administrations](#)
- [Making a Christmas bubble with friends and family](#)

While this will not be a normal Christmas, we hope that this UK-wide agreement will offer hope for families and friends who have made many sacrifices over this difficult year.

**With every good wish,**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Gove". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'M' and a long, sweeping tail.

**Rt Hon Michael Gove MP  
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and  
Minister for the Cabinet Office**

## Summary

A Christmas Bubble	Each household across the UK can form one exclusive 'Christmas bubble' with up to two other households. In England, existing support bubbles will count as one household.
Time period	People can meet with their Christmas bubble any time in the window from 23 to 27 December.
What people can do with their Christmas bubbles	Time can be spent with a Christmas bubble in private homes (including gardens), in places of worship, or in outdoor public places.
Care home residents	Spending time with others outside the care home will increase risk of exposure to coronavirus for the resident and the other residents in their home on their return.  Given this, visits out of care homes should only be considered for care home residents of working age. A care home resident may form a bubble with one other household and should not form a three-household Christmas bubble at any point. Residents, their families and care homes should very carefully consider whether this is the right thing to do, or whether visiting at the care home would provide meaningful contact in a safer way. Members of the bubble should talk to the care home about getting tested prior to meeting the resident. In order to return safely to the home, the resident will need to be tested and isolated.
The Vulnerable and Clinically Extremely Vulnerable	Everyone must continue to take personal responsibility to limit the spread of the virus and protect our loved ones.  For someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable, forming a Christmas bubble carries additional risks but it is a personal choice. These people should take all precautions, including maintaining social distance from those they don't live with at all times, and consider seeing their bubble outside where the risks are lower.
Wider restrictions	Existing local restrictions on contact outside the home will remain in place. It is essential that everyone follows the rules of the country they stay in across the different parts of the UK.
Travel	From 23-27 December, travel is permitted between tiers and between nations for the purposes of joining a Christmas bubble. People coming to or from Northern Ireland will be permitted to travel a day either side of 23-27 December.
Education	The UK's Chief Medical Officers continue to advise that the best place for children and young people is in education. There is no need for any children to be taken out of school early. College and

	University students who have moved home from university for the holidays will be counted as part of their family's household.
Accommodation	In England, hotels and other accommodation will be able to open in Tier 3 areas (where they are otherwise required to close) for the period 23-27 December, enabling people to stay near the other members of their Christmas bubble where necessary.
Other festive activities	We will set out more guidance for England this week on other festive activities that people like to enjoy at this time of year. If in doubt, people should continue to follow the wider restrictions that apply in their area.
Guidance	There is further guidance available on gov.uk. This sets out how to form a Christmas bubble, and the steps the public should take to ensure that they meet friends and family - within or outside a Christmas bubble - as safely as possible during the festive period.