



## COVID-19

### Social Distancing

Coronaviruses can be spread when people with the virus have close, sustained contact with people who are not infected. This typically means spending more than 15 minutes within two metres (6 feet) of an infected person, such as talking to someone for instance.

The more you come into contact with the droplets from coughs and sneezes of an infected person, the more likely you are to catch the infection. This is why we ask that people who have the infection are quarantined at home or in a hospital and do not go out and about where they can pass it on.

However, on its own self-isolation may not be enough to slow the spread of a virus.

Public Health Services recognise that as we start to see more cases in the UK, and more widespread community transmission of the virus, further measures to reduce the contact people have with each other may be needed.

These measures, sometimes referred to as “social distancing”, may well include things like temporarily reducing socialising in public places such as entertainment or sports events, reducing our use of non-essential public transport or recommending more home working.

Public Health Services will assess the need for each measure as the outbreak progresses, balancing their effectiveness against any impact on society. These decisions will recognise that for most people coronavirus will be a mild illness, but it can cause severe symptoms in older people or people with health conditions. It has the potential to increase the demands on our public services, especially our Health and Care services, particularly if large numbers of people became ill at once.

Everyone has a part to play, and we’re asking people to think about what they do in a typical week. Can you limit contact with others? How you could help people in your community, who might need support now and when certain social-distancing measures are put in place? This might include helping older relatives and neighbours to get some food in, so that they would have supplies for a week or so if required, ensuring someone would be available to go shopping for them or arranging for online delivery if they needed it.



The evidence suggests that coronavirus is affecting older people and people with existing health conditions, such as lung and heart conditions. We would therefore encourage anyone with symptoms to avoid seeing older relatives or people with health conditions to avoid passing the virus on to them.

The simple things we are asking the public to do now are:

- Continue to practice good hand hygiene
- Consider how you or your family would manage if you had to self-isolate for a couple of weeks
- Consider the possibility of home working
- Think about what you do in a typical week and what steps you would need to take to limit non-essential contact with others

### When will social distancing measures start?

**The Director of Public Health is asking people to start social distancing now.**

These measures are being implemented as Public Health Services evaluate their need, taking into account national and international evidence.

This decision balances both the need to protect people, with the social impact and the importance of maintaining day to day life, such as going to work or school.

We are first putting social distancing measures in place in specific situations, rather than island-wide and are issuing advice about travel and public events. Our decisions are based on the pattern of transmission and evidence on how well the measures could work.

### What measures are being put in place now?

We are currently in the “contain” phase of the outbreak which means it is still possible and effective to identify individual cases and trace their close contacts. However, we are putting in additional measures to contain spread, for example advice on travel and public events.

Once we move into the ‘delay’ phase, where we try to slow the spread of the virus and push widespread transmission to the summer months when there’s less pressure on our health and care services, we will then consider further social distancing strategies based on the latest information and evidence.



## How will these measures help to slow the spread of the infection?

By limiting the amount of contact people have with each other, we can slow down the spread of the infection and try to delay widespread transmission to the summer

## Should I go to work as normal?

Right now, you should continue going to work as normal, unless you have been told otherwise by your employer. We are working with businesses to encourage them to look at options for minimising contact, such as home working, and so your employer may ask you to think about what you would need to put in place to be able to work from home.

## Can people still travel abroad?

We are encouraging islanders to consider their travel arrangements and only travel off island if this is considered to be absolutely essential. We are also discouraging non-essential travel to the islands.

## Will pubs, theatres, gyms, nightclubs close? What about big sport games?

COVID-19 spreads through close sustained contact with someone who has the virus (for instance being within 2 metres of someone for longer than 15 minutes).

We are issuing advice on public events but are conscious of the fact that any public health actions to stop or slow the spread of the infection will be balanced against the need to keep the islands running.

## Will you close schools?

Current evidence on COVID-19 suggests that children are less likely to experience severe illness. We are still learning about how children get infected and how likely they transmit it to older people or to people with underlying health conditions.

Closing schools can be disruptive for both children and parents so this is something we would need to consider very carefully. This will be considered on a case-by-case basis, should the need arise.



## Will you tell businesses to close?

We know that coronavirus spreads through close and sustained contact with someone who is infected with the virus and so office environments, for instance, are a place where the virus could spread.

We are working with businesses to look at how they can put contingency plans in place, for example looking at more home working for employees. Any measures to stop the spread of the virus need to be carefully balanced against the need to keep the islands running.

## Is the Bailiwick doing things differently from other countries?

We are looking carefully at all the scientific evidence on which measures might be most effective at slowing the spread of the virus. This includes looking at measures other countries are taking. However, we need to specifically consider the resilience of our island infrastructure, for example we have only one hospital in Guernsey and a very small unit in Alderney.

We will put in place measures which we believe will have the biggest impact on slowing the spread of the infection, based on the most up to date science and evidence.

## How will you police this?

We will ask islanders to slow the spread of the infection and to think about what their role in this can be. The current evidence suggests that older people and those with existing health conditions are more likely to be affected by the virus and so it's important to consider how our behaviour can limit the spread of the infection and protect them, as well as help reduce pressure on our health and care services by slowing down spread. This is particularly important in our context where we have a single hospital in Guernsey and we need to ensure that this does not become overwhelmed.

We all have a role to play and most importantly that includes practicing good hand and respiratory hygiene such as washing hands regularly and catching coughs and sneezes in a tissue.



## What if social distancing measures don't work?

Social distancing is one of a range of measures that are being considered. The evidence suggests that a combination of actions is likely to help slow the spread of the virus and we will look at each of these closely.

Measures such as social distancing are not expected to completely end an outbreak but can slow it down and lessen the impact on people and our health services.

## How long will social distancing go on for?

Decisions are made by Public Health Services guided by the latest science and evidence and the patterns of transmission (how the virus is spreading). We would always look to balance the need to keep people safe with the need to keep the country running.

This document is an update and is to be read in association with the Guidance For Social or Community Care and Residential Settings-12 March 2020 on

<https://www.gov.gg/coronavirus>