

Scotland unveils next steps in virus lockdown easing

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Face coverings will be mandatory on public transport in Scotland next week while most retail stores can reopen from June 29, First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said on Thursday

The latest moves come as Scotland transitions to the second phase of its

four-step plan to lift [coronavirus](#) lockdown restrictions, which has seen the nation move at a slower pace than neighbouring England.

"There is no perfect route out of lockdown," Sturgeon told Scottish lawmakers, as she announced the next steps in her staged approach "to avoid bearing all of the risk at the same time".

Sturgeon said working from home should remain the norm, and people should not travel more than five miles (eight kilometres) unless meeting a small group of family and friends.

However from Friday those deemed particularly vulnerable and shielding can meet outdoors with people from another household in groups of up to eight, and also do non-contact activities such as golfing.

Meanwhile those who are not shielding can meet up to two other households in groups of no more than eight people, while still maintaining social distancing of at least two metres.

From Monday, dentists can provide urgent care, places of worship are allowed to host individual prayers and [professional sport](#) can resume.

But retail outlets like outdoor markets will have to wait until June 29 to restart operations, while shopping centres' non-essential stores will remain closed until the next stage in the plan.

The decision to move to that phase will be made on July 9.

"We said in the route map that we hoped to allow small shops to re-open in phase two, and we will," Sturgeon added.

"But by waiting a bit longer, until midway through this phase, we can go a bit further, though still with some limitations."

Prime Minister Boris Johnson has lifted restrictions in England at a swifter pace, with non-essential stores opening this week and is hoping to allow some pubs and restaurants to restart next month.

Britain has been one of the worst-hit countries by the pandemic, with the government counting nearly 300,000 cases and more than 42,000 deaths of those who have tested positive.

Scotland has recorded 18,077 confirmed cases and 2,464 deaths, Sturgeon said in an update on Thursday.

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