

England ends self-isolation for COVID contacts

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Fully vaccinated people in England will from Monday no longer be required to self-isolate if they have had close contact with a coronavirus case, as restrictions continue to be eased.

Instead of self-isolating, those double jabbed and the under 18s will be

advised to get a free polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test if they are identified as being in close contact with a case.

The change was announced last month, as part of step four of the government's plan to open up after more than a year of rolling lockdowns.

Anyone who tests positive following the PCR test will still be legally required to self-isolate.

Britain is still battling another wave of the virus, with the emergence of the Delta variant.

Although cases are down around 50 percent from their peak, the number of people catching the disease has been rising slightly over the last two weeks, with around 100 people a day dying from the disease.

Britain has been one the countries worst hit by the virus, recording more than 130,000 fatalities, but has been able to ease restrictions thanks to a successful vaccine rollout, with 75 percent of adults receiving both doses.

Before Monday, people who were "pinged" by the National Health Service app, warning them that they had come into close contact with a positive case, were required to self isolate for 10 days.

England officially fully opened up again on July 19, but millions were subsequently contacted by the country's test-and-trace scheme, forcing them to stay away from family, friends and the workplace.

The so-called "pingdemic", which even grounded Prime Minister Boris Johnson, severely disrupted businesses and critical services, hampering efforts to kickstart the ailing economy.

"Asking the close contacts of people with COVID-19 to self-isolate has played a critical role in helping us get this virus under control, and millions of people across the UK have made enormous sacrifices by doing this," said health minister Sajid Javid.

"Getting two doses of a vaccine has tipped the odds in our favour and allowed us to safely reclaim our lost freedoms, and from Monday we can take another huge step back towards our normal lives," he added.

Removing self-isolation for under 18s comes three weeks before thousands of pupils and students return to school and college, and they will no longer be required to socially distance.

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