

The changes to COVID-19 restrictions on Monday (19 JULY) will see us all return to a more normal way of life.

The Government has announced an end to many of the remaining rules, including compulsory face coverings and social distancing.

These changes will give us more freedom, but we must remember that we are still living with COVID and that it has not gone away. We must take personal responsibility to still do the right things and protect ourselves and one another from the virus.

The changes on Monday mean we all have to learn to live with the virus and do so responsibly.

We know that COVID is still circulating across our region. Positive case rates have risen by around 350% in the last three weeks across Coventry and Warwickshire, and the new Delta variant has raised the threat of infection.

When restrictions ease, we can expect the infection rates to increase even more as we have seen at previous steps of the roadmap out of lockdown.

That puts an even greater responsibility on us all to play our part in protecting our loved ones, our neighbours, and our colleagues.

Face coverings and social distancing may no longer be compulsory, but they will still protect us. We know that these measures are effective at helping to reduce transmission and we would ask you to continue with these in settings such as shops and on public transport. Our respective organisations will also ask you to wear a mask when you visit our buildings. These measures not only help to protect you, they reduce the risks for others around you, including those who are vulnerable or anxious.

Please also continue to wash your hands regularly and thoroughly, use hand sanitiser and continue all the good practices around hygiene that have kept us safe.

We must also continue with the vaccination roll-out that is proving so effective in reducing the seriousness of many positive cases, as well as the regular tests that show whether we are unknowingly carrying the virus.

For vaccines to be as effective as they can be, and to fend off the genuine threat of new and more dangerous variants, we need everybody who is eligible to come forward for both doses.

Everyone over the age of 18 is now eligible for a vaccine. If you haven't done so already, we would urge you to book appointments through the national booking system at www.nhs.uk or attend a local drop-in centre – details of which can be found by visiting www.happyhealthylives.uk/vaccinationdrop-ins. The more people who come forward for both jabs, the greater the level of protection we all have.

The truth is that COVID-19 will be with us for a considerable time to come. But with the lessons we have learned throughout the pandemic, coupled with the testing and vaccines, we can restrict the spread and live with the virus sensibly.

We must be responsible and continue to protect one another and particularly the vulnerable and continue the good work so far.

Please stay safe, think about how you act and stay healthy.

Yours,

Liz Gaulton, Director of Public Health, Coventry City Council

Dr Shade Agboola, Director of Public Health at Warwickshire County Council

Dr Sarah Raistrick, Chair of NHS Coventry and Warwickshire Clinical
Commissioning Group

Professor Kiran Patel, Chief Medical Officer at University Hospital Coventry and
Warwickshire NHS Trust

Dr Charles Ashton, Medical Director at South Warwickshire NHS Foundation Trust

Daljit Athwal, Director of Nursing, George Eliot Hospital

Dr Sharon Binyon, Medical Director at Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership NHS
Trust