

Dear valued members,

I hope that you are all doing well, thinking about your wellbeing and keeping safe during these times.

The Prime Minister recently shared new advice for employers in England as part of the UK Government's Recovery Strategy, announcing that from 1st August, the Government was giving employers 'more discretion on how they ensure employees can work safely.'

As with previous announcements, we appreciate that guidance changes over time and that's why we continue to monitor advice, and the risk that this has our charity and friends.

Whilst the new advice wasn't a directive to 'get back to work or normal life,' it does however signal a defining shift in social distancing relaxation terms.

As we can appreciate the impact that this has had on all our lives, transport providers and those enterprises that rely on commuters for revenue, are desperate save their businesses and you can see in part why the Government's position is shifting. We however have to balance the needs of 'all' our people, and for now, our position at the SAGB remains unchanged.

We currently offer a growing array of personal appointments by phone, Skype and Zoom. In addition, public events such as Sunday Service and lectures are currently being offered through this technology as well as training and development including healing. We plan to extend these services accordingly.

These were the words from our Prime Minister recently as he set out the new 'rule of six' which restricts gatherings to a maximum of six people, enforceable by police able to issue fines or make arrests.

The new "rule of six" means:

- Social gatherings of more than six people in England will not be allowed in law from Monday 14 September
- The new rule applies to people in private homes, indoors and outdoors, and places such as pubs, restaurants, cafes and public outdoor spaces
- It applies to all ages
- The rule does not apply to schools and workplaces, or weddings, funerals and organised team sports
- A full list of exemptions is due to be published before the law changes
- People who ignore the police could be fined £100 - doubling with each offence to a maximum of £3,200

These measures come at a time where the nation perceive the current rules as being quite complicated, confusing and against a backdrop where the UK reported another 2,659 coronavirus cases, the fourth day running of over 2,000 reported cases. In the last week, cases have risen from 12.5 infections per 100,000 people to 19.7 per 100,000 across the UK, where coronavirus has become more prevalent among young people, with 54 cases per 100,000 people in the 19 to 21-year-old age group.

Furthermore, these new interventions are not considered to constitute another lockdown but a means to avoid one. UK chief medical adviser Prof Chris Whitty warned that this winter will be hard. He also added that "the period between now and spring is going to be difficult" and people shouldn't see the restrictions "as a very short term thing" because they were unlikely to be lifted after just two or three weeks. This also comes at a time where initial clinical trials for a coronavirus vaccine at Oxford University have been put on hold after a participant had an adverse reaction.

The Government also announced that:

- Venues such as pubs and restaurants will be legally required to request contact details of everyone visiting, hold it for 21 days and provide it to NHS Test and Trace. They face fines of £1,000 if they fail to comply
- Business opening hours could be restricted across the whole nation if cases continue to rise. But initially the measure will be limited to local lockdown areas such as Bolton, where venues must close between 22:00 and 05:00
- "Covid-secure marshals" will be introduced to help ensure social distancing in town and city centres
- The passenger locator form, filled out by travellers arriving in the UK to enforce quarantine rules, will be simplified and Border Force will increase enforcement
- Plans to try out larger audiences in venues later this month will be revised, and the government is reviewing its plan to allow spectators back into sports stadiums from 1 October.

With this in mind it is clear that the SAGB still face some very difficult decisions ahead. We have had to review these further restrictions against the risk of opening our doors and putting our members, workers and friends at risk.

Please ensure you keep yourselves safe and well. We thank you all for your continued support.

SAGB president,

Charles Hutchinson

September 2020

'We must act' to avoid another lockdown!