

Prime Minister Boris Johnson has announced a move to Plan B in England

By Jonathan Maude, Daniel Stander and Rachel Easton

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What are the changes?

A full list of guidance on these changes will be available on gov.uk in the coming days, but the key points published to date are as follows:

- From Friday 10 December, face coverings will be compulsory in most public indoor venues, such as cinemas, theatres and places of worship, unless it is not practical to wear one. Face masks will not be required in hospitality settings.
- From Monday 13 December, those who can will be advised to work from home.
- From Wednesday 15 December, and subject to parliamentary approval, the NHS COVID Pass (showing a negative lateral flow test or full vaccination) via the NHS App will be mandatory for entry into nightclubs and settings where large crowds gather. This includes unseated indoor events with 500 or more attendees, unseated outdoor events with 4,000 or more attendees and any event with 10,000 or more attendees.

What does this mean for employers?

The key takeaway for most employers is the working from home guidance. This is a return to the previous position where employees should work from home unless it is not possible for them to do so. All employers should therefore be reviewing their working arrangements, revisiting any working from home policies to ensure compliance with the current guidance and check that people are receiving the support they need (both from a work and overall well-being perspective).

Can our Christmas party still go ahead?

The Prime Minister has said that such parties should not be canceled; however, this is of course subject to compliance with the updated rules. If you are still planning to have a Christmas party, you should consider the following points:

- *Communication is key.* Talk to your employees to understand whether they still feel comfortable attending.
- *Continue to be inclusive.* Try not to exclude anyone who does not feel comfortable physically taking part in your Christmas party. Consider offering them the chance to attend virtually.
- *Be clear with what you expect.* Send out clear communications to ensure your employees understand what the expected standards of behaviour are. Consider what measures you will have in place that employees will need to abide by.
- *Know your duties as an employer.* As an employer you owe a duty of care to provide a safe working environment. Consider requiring a negative lateral flow test beforehand and ensuring sufficient ventilation.

Given the short time frames that the Government has provided for in publishing this guidance, we appreciate that immediate action may well be required on several fronts. The London Employment Law team would be happy to lend its support in any way that it can.

Specific advice should be commissioned for specific situations. This document does not constitute legal advice for individual circumstances. If you would like to discuss any of the measures outlined above, please contact **Jonathan Maude** at jmaude@vedderprice.com, **Daniel Stander** at dstander@vedderprice.com or **Rachel Easton** at reaston@vedderprice.com of the London Employment Law team.