

Core evidence bundle materials

Material to be relied upon by The Committee of Privileges and Rt Hon
Boris Johnson MP in the oral evidence session of the Committee on
22 March 2023

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Material to be relied upon by the Committee of Privileges

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13 November 2020

Paragraph 24 of Committee's Fourth Report

24. On 13 November 2020, when the rules and guidance in force for the prevention of the spread of Covid included restrictions on indoor gatherings of two or more people and maintaining social distancing of 2 metres or 1 metre with risk mitigations in the workplace wherever possible,³⁰ Mr Johnson attended an impromptu leaving gathering in the vestibule of the Press Office. Mr Johnson joined the gathering and made a speech.³¹ Photographs were taken of the event which the Committee has received.³² The photographs show that there was no social distancing.

30 Regulations stated:

"No person may participate in a gathering which—

(a) consists of two or more people, and

(b) takes place indoors (including indoors within a private dwelling)."

Exceptions included "where the gathering is reasonably necessary for work purposes, or for the provision of voluntary or charitable services". See: The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) (No. 4) Regulations 2020 ([SI 2020/1200](#)) (as amended 10 November 2020), Part 3.

Workplace guidance stated:

"You must maintain social distancing in the workplace wherever possible".

It advised social distancing of 2 metres, or 1 metre with risk mitigations where 2 metres was not viable. It encouraged business to take "all the mitigating actions possible" where social distancing could not be followed in full. For meetings, this included using remote working tools to avoid in-person meetings, only absolutely necessary participants attending, and holding meetings outdoors or in well-ventilated rooms. See: GOV.UK, [Working safely during coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Offices and contact centres](#), as updated 9 November 2020.

31 GOV.UK, [Findings of the Second Permanent Secretary's Investigation into alleged gatherings on government premises during Covid restrictions](#), 25 May 2022, pp 18:

The Prime Minister attended on his way to his Downing Street flat, having left his office at 19.17. He went to the Press Office area, joined the gathering and made a leaving speech for Lee Cain."

32 See Appendix for photographs

Regulations

The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) (No. 4) Regulations 2020

UK Statutory Instruments ► 2020 No. 1200 ► PART 3

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Changes over time for: PART 3

Version Superseded: 02/12/2020

05/11/2020 | 10/11/2020 (Point in time) | 02/12/2020

Status: Point in time view as at 10/11/2020.

Changes to legislation: There are currently no known outstanding effects for the The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) (No. 4) Regulations 2020, PART 3.

PART 3

Restrictions on gatherings

Participation in indoor gatherings

8.—(1) No person may participate in a gathering which—

- (a) consists of two or more people, and
- (b) takes place indoors (including indoors within a private dwelling).

(2) Paragraph (1) does not apply if any of the exceptions set out in regulation 11 apply.

[...]

Exceptions in relation to gatherings

11.—(1) These are the exceptions referred to in regulations 8, 9 and 10.

Exception 1: same or linked households

(2) Exception 1 is that all the people in the gathering—

- (a) are members of the same household, or
- (b) are members of two households which are linked households in relation to each other (see regulation 12).

Exception 2: gatherings necessary for certain purposes

(3) Exception 2 is that the gathering is reasonably necessary—

- (a) for work purposes or for the provision of voluntary or charitable services;
- (b) for the purposes of education or training;
- (c) to provide emergency assistance;
- (d) to enable one or more persons in the gathering to avoid injury or illness or to escape a risk of harm;
- (e) to provide care or assistance to a vulnerable person, including relevant personal care within the meaning of paragraph 7(3B) of Schedule 4 to the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 ^{F9};
- (f) to facilitate a house move.

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Guidance

Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19)

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From: [Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy](#) and [Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport](#)
Published: 11 May 2020
Updated: 9 November 2020, [see all updates](#)

Offices and contact centres

Guidance for people who work in or run offices, contact centres and similar indoor environments.

[...]

3. Social distancing for workers

^

In this section

- [3.1 Coming to work and leaving work](#)
- [3.2 Moving around buildings and worksites](#)
- [3.3 Workplaces and workstations](#)
- [3.4 Meetings](#)
- [3.5 Common areas](#)
- [3.6 Accidents, security and other incidents](#)

Objective: Ensuring workers maintain social distancing guidelines (2m, or 1m with risk mitigation where 2m is not viable), wherever possible, including while arriving at and departing from work, while in work and when travelling between sites.

You must maintain social distancing in the workplace wherever possible.

Where the social distancing guidelines cannot be followed in full in relation to a particular activity, businesses should consider whether that activity can be redesigned to maintain a 2m distance or 1m with risk mitigations where 2m is not viable.

Mitigating actions include:

- further increasing the frequency of hand washing and surface cleaning
- keeping the activity time involved as short as possible
- using screens or barriers to separate people from each other
- using back-to-back or side-to-side working (rather than face-to-face) whenever possible
- reducing the number of people each person has contact with by using 'fixed teams or partnering' (so each person works with only a few others)

Where the social distancing guidelines cannot be followed in full, even through redesigning a particular activity, businesses should consider whether that activity needs to continue for the business to operate, and if so, take all the mitigating actions possible to reduce the risk of transmission between staff.

[...]

3.4 Meetings

Objective: To reduce transmission due to face-to-face meetings and maintain social distancing in meetings.

Steps that will usually be needed:

- 1 Using remote working tools to avoid in-person meetings.
- 2 Only absolutely necessary participants should physically attend meetings and should maintain social distancing (2m, or 1m with risk mitigation where 2m is not viable).
- 3 Avoiding transmission during meetings, for example avoiding sharing pens, documents and other objects.
- 4 Providing hand sanitiser in meeting rooms.
- 5 Holding meetings outdoors or in well-ventilated rooms whenever possible.
- 6 For areas where regular meetings take place, using floor signage to help people maintain social distancing.

Engagements

Volume 679: debated on Wednesday 2 September 2020

[...]

The Prime Minister >

 Share

As the right hon. Gentleman knows, there are a great number of schemes in addition to the job retention scheme that support people in work in all sorts of sectors—the coronavirus loans, the bounce back loans, and the grants that we have made to businesses of all kinds. He mentions the tourism and hospitality sector, and we have made huge investments in those, including the very successful eat out to help out scheme that we have been running. But it is also very important that we get people back into the workplace in a covid-secure way and, unlike the Leader of the Opposition, we do everything we can to give them confidence that it is a good idea to go back. An ounce of confidence is worth a ton of taxpayers' money.

Speech

Prime Minister's statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 9 November 2020

Prime Minister Boris Johnson made a statement at the coronavirus press conference.

[...]

And I want to thank the fantastic support of the army, the people of Liverpool and Liverpool City Council.

And we are now going further by sending out hundreds of thousands of rapid lateral flow tests to local authorities right across England - and also of course to the Devolved Administrations.

We're also working with universities to establish, as soon as possible, similar mass testing capacity for students up and down the country.

But while we are making progress this project is still in its infancy.

And neither mass testing nor progress on vaccines –both vital arrows in our epidemiological quiver, both key parts of our fight against Covid - are at the present time a substitute for the national restrictions, for social distancing, for hand hygiene and all the rest.

So it is all the more important to follow the rules.

Evidence relating to the gathering

Extract of the written evidence of Lee Cain, dated 27 January 2023

(b) On 25 January 2022 you said to the Cabinet Office Investigation Team relating to the gathering on 13 November 2020 that: "The Prime Minister unexpectedly arrived and gathered 15-20 people, gave a speech and joined the team for alcohol. The event lasted approximately 30 minutes from memory."; and, relating to another gathering on 13 November 2020 that:

Extract of Mr Johnson's official diary for Friday 13 November 2020

1826-1848 With Lee Cain
1848-1917 Box work
1917 To Flat

Extract of correspondence with Metropolitan Police, dated 13 March 2023

I can confirm that, of the five gatherings identified in your letter, FPNs were issued to participants of two of those gatherings. Using the numbering in your letter, the gatherings for which one or more participants received FPNs were:

- 1.b. A gathering in No. 10 Downing Street on the departure of a special adviser on 13 November 2020; and
- 2.c. A gathering in No. 10 Downing Street on the departure of two No. 10 officials on 17 December 2020.

Pictures

Pixelated photograph from Committee's Fourth [Report](#), appendix, page 20



Pixelated photograph from Committee's Fourth [Report](#), appendix, page 20



Paragraph 25 of Committee's Fourth [Report](#)

25. On 27 November 2020, when the rules and guidance in force for the prevention of the spread of Covid included restrictions on indoor gatherings of two or more people and maintaining social distancing of 2 metres or 1 metre with risk mitigations in the

workplace wherever possible,³³ Mr Johnson attended and gave a speech at a gathering in the vestibule of the No. 10 Press Office to thank a member of staff who was leaving.³⁴ We received evidence that there was no social distancing and people were standing 4–5 deep.³⁵ We received evidence that Mr Johnson said that it was “probably the most unsocially distanced gathering in the UK right now”.³⁶

33 Regulations stated:

“No person may participate in a gathering which—

(a) consists of two or more people, and

(b) takes place indoors (including indoors within a private dwelling).”

Exceptions included “where the gathering is reasonably necessary for work purposes, or for the provision of voluntary or charitable services”. See: The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) (No. 4) Regulations 2020 ([SI 2020/1200](#)) (as amended 10 November 2020), Part 3.

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34 GOV.UK, [Findings of the Second Permanent Secretary's Investigation into alleged gatherings on government premises during Covid restrictions](#), 25 May 2022, pp 19:

“The Prime Minister finished a meeting at 18.19 and then attended the Press Office to say goodbye. He remained for a short time, saying a few words of thanks and 20 farewell, before returning to his office for his next meeting which was scheduled for 18.45. The special adviser left the building by 18.58.”

35 Written evidence submission received 7 February 2023 [evidence not yet published but being disclosed to Mr Johnson]

“It must have been about 4 deep, where the press office moved into this offending room, I remember vividly that it was about 4–5 people deep.”

36 Written evidence submission received 7 February 2023 [evidence not yet published but being disclosed to Mr Johnson]

“I do remember him saying “this is probably the most unsocially distanced gathering in the UK right now”.

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 - (f) to facilitate a house move.

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From: [Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy](#) and
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Published: 11 May 2020
Updated: 27 November 2020, [see all updates](#)

Offices and contact centres

Guidance for people who work in or run offices, contact centres and similar indoor environments.

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In this section

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Volume 679: debated on Wednesday 2 September 2020

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So it is all the more important to follow the rules.

Evidence relating to the gathering

Extract of the written evidence of Jack Doyle, dated 1 March 2023

- (c) On 13 December 2021 you said to the Cabinet Office investigation team relating to the gathering on 27 November 2020 that there were "Certainly more than 20 [people in attendance]."

Extract of written evidence of No. 10 official, dated 7 February 2023

- (a) On 13 December 2021 you said to the Cabinet Office investigation team relating to the gathering on 27 November 2020 that "I wasn't there. What happened was, because of where my office is, I came out and there's quite a group of people in the doorway where it happened, so I stood on tiptoes and thought how do I get out?"; that "I stood on tiptoes to see what was going on then tried to figure out how the hell to get out."; that "It must have been about 4 deep, where the press office moved into this offending room, I remember vividly that it was about 4-5 people deep."; and that "I remember thinking "I'd like to get out of my office and I can't, oh, it's [REDACTED] leaving do.""

Extract of Written evidence of No. 10 Official, dated 7 February 2023

- (a) On 17 December 2021 you had the following exchange with the Cabinet Office investigation team relating to the gathering on 27 November 2020:
"Interviewer: 27th November. It's what is being alleged to be [REDACTED] leaving drinks. Do you remember anything?
[REDACTED] Yes. I remember, again I was in the edit and heard something going on, I popped my head out. It was the PM who was making a speech to everyone in the vestibule because [REDACTED] was leaving and she was there. I can't remember what he said but I do remember him saying "this is probably the most unsocially distanced gathering in the UK right now". He had a glass of water in his hand, made a short speech and then went up to his flat. He was the most sensible person there to be honest."

2. Specific questions asked by the Committee.

- a) In 1. (a) above you attribute the quote "this is probably the most unsocially distanced gathering in the UK right now" to Mr Johnson on 27 November 2020. Can you confirm that you are confident that this was the date when this was said by Mr Johnson?

I can confirm this is true.

- (b) In an interview with the Cabinet Office Investigation Team relating to the gathering on 27 November 2020 in response to the question “would the PM walk around on his own?” you said “Oh yes, absolutely, He’d regularly pop around the building and with the little boy upstairs he might pop up for bath time. People would pop up to him as well”; and that the “The PM was heading, I think, to his flat or going to see the Chancellor, but for whatever reason he can look down the corridor and see people milling around the press office”; and that “I don’t think he was deliberately coming around to the press office”; and that “You’re talking probably 40”; and that “As is standard on a Friday evening they were working away at their desks. ... As has been standard practice for years there’ll be bottles of wine on the table and people will go past and drop in.”

When I say ‘probably 40’ this is what I estimated to be the number of people working in the press office (it is a large operation), working in there but therefore present for my departure. When I say ‘I don’t think he was

deliberately coming around to the press office’ that is my own speculation. He was free to move around the building and would sometimes come down to the press office on a Friday evening to hear the weekend stories and chat. But he was not, as I recall, deliberately invited down for any kind of organised gathering in this instance. I hope you have noted that Sue Gray and the Met investigated this date and concluded that no rule-breaking gathering took place.

On 10 December 2021 you said to the Cabinet Office Investigation Team relating to the gathering on 27 November 2020 that: "I think I saw the PM stood there and █████ stood there, I think I remember the PM saying a few words"; and that "It was slightly odd and awkward with the PM as he had asked her to leave".

4. Subject to the caveats that follow I can confirm the truth of this specific statement. I should say, however, that I do not hold a record of my interviews with the Second Permanent Secretary's Investigation Team. Nor was I at any point asked to verify a transcript. Moreover, my recollection is that I was summoned to interview at short notice (less than 24 hours) without a clear agenda of the precise subject matter to be discussed, i.e. which gatherings I might be asked about. I attended all interviews alone; I was told that I was not permitted to have someone attend with me. As such, it is possible there are errors in the notes that you hold.

5. In respect of the gathering on 27 November, my recollection is that I was present at a small, brief gathering in the open space outside of the Number 10 Press Office at around 6pm. It included the Prime Minister and █████, a member of the political team in No10. It was not a formal event to which I had been invited; rather, it was an impromptu gathering that I happened upon. I stayed briefly, observing the PM make a short speech to mark █████ departure. I did not stay more than 20 minutes. Indeed, my understanding is that the gathering did not last much longer than this. I did not at the time consider this event to be in contravention of the Covid regulations in force at that time. As it happens, I presume that the Metropolitan Police later reached the same conclusion.

Paragraph 23 of Committee's Fourth [Report](#)

23. On 19 June 2020, when the rules and guidance in force for the prevention of the spread of Covid included restrictions on indoor gatherings of two or more people and maintaining social distancing in the workplace of 2 metres wherever possible,²⁷ Mr Johnson attended a gathering in the Cabinet Room to celebrate his birthday. A cake and alcohol were provided. The attendees included individuals who were not work colleagues of Mr Johnson.²⁸ Some attendees, including Mr Johnson, received fixed penalty notices in relation to this event. The event was neither "reasonably necessary for work purposes" nor socially distanced. Photographs were taken of the event which the Committee has received.²⁹

27 Regulations stated:

"No person may participate in a gathering which takes place in a public or private place—

(a) outdoors, and consists of more than six persons,

(b) indoors, and consists of two or more persons.

Exceptions included "where the gathering is reasonably necessary for work purposes, or for the provision of voluntary or charitable services". See: The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) Regulations 2020 ([SI 2020/350](#)) (as amended 15 June 2020), Regulation 7.

Workplace guidance stated:

"You must maintain social distancing in the workplace wherever possible".

It encouraged business to take "all the mitigating actions possible" where social distancing could not be followed in full. For meetings, this included using remote working tools to avoid in-person meetings, only absolutely necessary participants attending, and holding meetings outdoors or in well-ventilated rooms. See: GOV.UK, [Working safely during coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Offices and contact centres](#), as updated 15 June 2020.

28 GOV.UK, [Findings of the Second Permanent Secretary's Investigation into alleged gatherings on government premises during Covid restrictions](#), 25 May 2022:

"A number of individuals gathered in the Cabinet Room in No 10 Downing Street to wish the Prime Minister a happy birthday. Food, alcohol and soft drinks were provided, having been organised in advance that morning ... Those attending included No 10 officials and Mrs Johnson."

29 See Appendix for photographs

Regulations

The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) Regulations 2020

UK Statutory Instruments ► 2020 No. 350 ► Regulation 7

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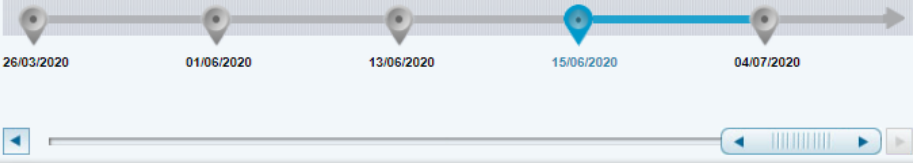
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Changes over time for: Section 7
Version Superseded: 04/07/2020



Status: Point in time view as at 15/06/2020. This version of this provision has been superseded.

Changes to legislation: There are currently no known outstanding effects for the The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) Regulations 2020, Section 7.

Restrictions on gatherings

[F1] 7.—(1) During the emergency period, unless paragraph (2) applies, no person may participate in a gathering which takes place in a public or private place—

- (a) outdoors, and consists of more than six persons, or
- (b) indoors, and consists of two or more persons.

(2) This paragraph applies where—

- (a) all the persons in the gathering are members of the same household **[F2]** or members of two households which are linked households in relation to each other;
- (b) the person is attending a funeral, as—
 - (i) a member of the deceased person's household,
 - (ii) a close family member of the deceased person, or
 - (iii) if no-one within paragraph (i) or (ii) is attending, a friend of the deceased person;
- (c) the person concerned is an elite athlete, the coach of an elite athlete, or (in the case of an elite athlete under the age of 18), the parent of an elite athlete, and the gathering is necessary for training or competition;

[F3] (ca) the person concerned is attending a drive-in cinema in a car or other vehicle, and the people in the vehicle are members of the same household, or of two households which are linked households in relation to each other;

- (d) the gathering is reasonably necessary—
 - (i) for work purposes, or for the provision of voluntary or charitable services;
 - (ii) to facilitate a house move;
 - (iii) to provide care or assistance to a vulnerable person, including relevant personal care within the meaning of paragraph 7(3B) of Schedule 4 to the Safeguarding of Vulnerable Groups Act 2006;
 - (iv) to provide emergency assistance;
 - (v) for the purposes of early years childcare provided by a person registered on the Early Years Register under Part 3 of the Childcare Act 2006;
 - (vi) to enable one or more persons in the gathering to avoid injury or illness or to escape a risk of harm;
 - (vii) to continue existing arrangements for access to, and contact between, parents and children where the children do not live in the same household as their parents, or one of their parents;

Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19)

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From: Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy
Published: 11 May 2020
Updated: 15 June 2020, [see all updates](#)

Offices and contact centres

Guidance for people who work in or run offices, contact centres and similar indoor environments.

[...]

3. Social distancing at work

In this section

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Mitigating actions include:

- further increasing the frequency of hand washing and surface cleaning
- keeping the activity time involved as short as possible
- using screens or barriers to separate people from each other
- using back-to-back or side-to-side working (rather than face-to-face) whenever possible
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Steps that will usually be needed:

- 1 Using remote working tools to avoid in-person meetings.
- 2 Only absolutely necessary participants should physically attend meetings and should maintain 2m separation throughout.
- 3 Avoiding transmission during meetings, for example avoiding sharing pens, documents and other objects.
- 4 Providing hand sanitiser in meeting rooms.
- 5 Holding meetings outdoors or in well-ventilated rooms whenever possible.
- 6 For areas where regular meetings take place, using floor signage to help people maintain social distancing.

Covid-19: Strategy

Volume 676: debated on Monday 11 May 2020

[...]

Bill Esterson >

(Sefton Central) (Lab) [V]

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People are worried about going back to work, about their safety and about infecting their loved ones. They do not understand why guidelines were not published before they were told to go back to work, and the Prime Minister's ambiguity and lack of clarity have just made matters worse. Will he take on board the concerns voiced by unions, workers and employers? Will he tell us how he will enforce those guidelines to keep people safe? Will he say how workers will be able to voice their concerns about their safety at work?

The Prime Minister >

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This country has made huge progress in the last two months, and thanks to our collective efforts we have got the R down below one. Now is the time to make small, calibrated changes, respectful always of the science and the risk of a second spike. That is why we are emphasising that if you must go to work and cannot work from home, you should do so, provided—the hon. Gentleman is right to draw attention to this—that your workplace is covid secure, and that you observe the rules on social distancing. We are publishing further guidance on that. It is common sense, and I think the British people understand what we are trying to do. I think they also understand that this is the right time to begin those modest steps.

Speech

Prime Minister's statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 10 June 2020

[...]

We do fully intend to bring all children back to school in September, provided the progress we are making continues, which I hope it will. That is our focus and it is consistent with the approach that has been taken by many other countries in Europe.

In the meantime we must stick to our roadmap.

I urge everyone to continue to show restraint and respect the rules which are designed to keep us all safe. It's only because of the restraint that everyone, you all have shown so far that we are able to move gradually out of this lockdown.

So please, to repeat what you've heard so many times before, stay alert, maintain social distancing and keep washing your hands.

Help control the virus by getting tested if you have symptoms and isolating if you are contacted by NHS Test and Trace.

Then, if we all do that together, we will all save lives and begin to rebuild our country.

Evidence relating to the gathering

Extract of written evidence of No. 10 official, dated 6 January 2023

- (a) On 28 January 2022 you said to the Cabinet Office Investigation Team relating to the gathering on 19 June 2020 that: Martin Reynolds was “responsible for consulting the covid taskforce on issues such as this and flagging concerns”; and that the PM’s fiancé “was planning an evening gathering in the garden with the family and saying he would be pleased if his team marked the occasion during the day”; and that “I hadn’t expected to see Ms Lytle as she was not one of the staff members details had been circulated to.”
- Regarding the communication from the PM’s fiancée, I think it is important to note that I do not know if the evening gathering went ahead, she just said that is what she planned to do. It is perhaps also worth noting that her message did not suggest the PM wished for his team to mark the occasion of his birthday but that he would be pleased if they did so. i.e. I do not believe he was aware of the gathering in advance of it happening and it was intended as a pleasant surprise from his then-fiancée. I should also make clear that when I refer to Ms Lytle as a staff member I am trying to be diplomatic. I was aware she was not a staff member but she was accompanying the PM’s fiancée, who initiated the gathering, and despite feeling surprised she was there it did not feel right to question her attendance.*

Extract of written evidence of Martin Reynolds, dated 7 February 2023

- Birthday gathering for the Prime Minister on 19 June. This was a short event, although I cannot now remember exactly how long, in advance of a Covid meeting and involved wishing him happy birthday.

Pictures

Pixelated photograph from Committee's Fourth [Report](#), appendix, page 19



Pixelated photograph from Committee's Fourth [Report](#), appendix, page 19



20 May 2020

Paragraph 22 of Committee's Fourth [Report](#)

22. On 20 May 2020, when the rules and guidance in force for the prevention of the spread of Covid included restrictions on gatherings of more than two people and maintaining social distancing of 2 metres in the workplace wherever possible,²³ Mr Johnson attended a gathering in the garden of No 10 which was attended by 30 to 40 people.²⁴ The invitation list was extensive and the planning and communications are evidence that the purpose of the gathering was social.²⁵ Alcohol was provided by staff.²⁶ Fixed penalty notices were issued to a number of those who attended.

23 Regulations stated:

"No person may participate in a gathering in a public place of more than two people".

Exceptions included "where the gathering is essential for work purposes". See: The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) Regulations 2020 ([SI 2020/350](#)) (as amended 13 May 2020), Regulation 7. Workplace guidance stated:

"You must maintain social distancing in the workplace wherever possible".

It encouraged business to take "all the mitigating actions possible" where social distancing could not be followed in full. For meetings, this included using remote working tools to avoid in-person meetings, only absolutely necessary participants attending, and holding meetings outdoors or in well-ventilated rooms. See: GOV.UK, [Working safely during coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Offices and contact centres](#), as updated 19 May 2020.

24 GOV.UK, [Findings of the Second Permanent Secretary's Investigation into alleged gatherings on government premises during Covid restrictions](#), 25 May 2022:

"It has been difficult to ascertain exact numbers in attendance, but it is likely that there were approximately 30–40 people in the garden."

25 GOV.UK, [Findings of the Second Permanent Secretary's Investigation into alleged gatherings on government premises during Covid restrictions](#), 25 May 2022:

"The email invitation was sent to a number of group distribution lists, as well as individuals, comprising in total around 200 staff across No 10 Downing Street. The invitation was also sent to special advisers in the Chancellor's office and a member of staff in the No 10 Covid-19 Coordination unit. Martin Reynolds also sent a separate email invitation to other senior officials"; and the email issued on behalf of Martin Reynolds which said "Hi all, After what has been an incredibly busy period we thought it would be nice to make the most of this lovely weather and have some socially distanced drinks in the garden this evening. Please join us from 6pm and bring your own booze!"

26 GOV.UK, [Findings of the Second Permanent Secretary's Investigation into alleged gatherings on government premises during Covid restrictions](#), 25 May 2022:

"Drinks and pizza were provided and paid for by staff." On 21 May 2020, a No 10 special adviser emailed Martin Reynolds saying "Thank you so much for organising these drinks and for providing the wine!"

Regulations

The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) Regulations 2020

UK Statutory Instruments ► 2020 No. 350 ► Regulation 7

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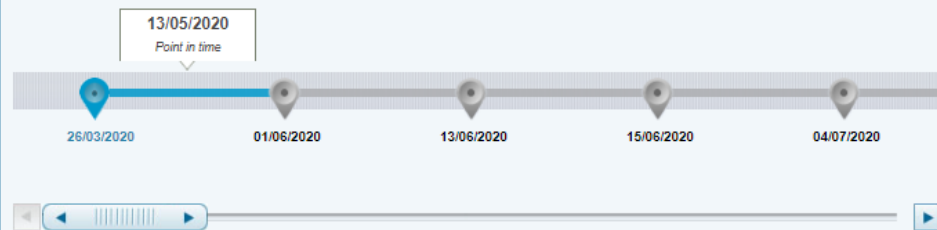
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Changes over time for: Section 7

Version Superseded: 01/06/2020



Status: Point in time view as at 13/05/2020. This version of this provision has been superseded. ?

Changes to legislation: There are currently no known outstanding effects for the The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) Regulations 2020, Section 7. ?

Restrictions on gatherings

7. During the emergency period, no person may participate in a gathering in a public place of more than two people except—
- (a) where all the persons in the gathering are members of the same household,
 - (b) where the gathering is essential for work purposes,
 - (c) to attend a funeral,
 - (d) where reasonably necessary—
 - (i) to facilitate a house move,
 - (ii) to provide care or assistance to a vulnerable person, including relevant personal care within the meaning of paragraph 7(3B) of Schedule 4 to the Safeguarding of Vulnerable Groups Act 2006,
 - (iii) to provide emergency assistance, or
 - (iv) to participate in legal proceedings or fulfil a legal obligation.

Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19)

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From: [Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy](#)
Published: 11 May 2020
Updated: 19 May 2020, [see all updates](#)

Offices and contact centres

Guidance for people who work in or run offices, contact centres and similar indoor environments.

[...]

3. Social distancing at work

In this section

- [3.1 Coming to work and leaving work](#)
- [3.2 Moving around buildings and worksites](#)
- [3.3 Workplaces and workstations](#)
- [3.4 Meetings](#)
- [3.5 Common areas](#)
- [3.6 Accidents, security and other incidents](#)

Objective: To maintain 2m social distancing wherever possible, including while arriving at and departing from work, while in work, and when travelling between sites.

You must maintain social distancing in the workplace wherever possible.

Where the social distancing guidelines cannot be followed in full in relation to a particular activity, businesses should consider whether that activity needs to continue for the business to operate, and, if so, take all the mitigating actions possible to reduce the risk of transmission between their staff.

Mitigating actions include:

- further increasing the frequency of hand washing and surface cleaning
- keeping the activity time involved as short as possible
- using screens or barriers to separate people from each other
- using back-to-back or side-to-side working (rather than face-to-face) whenever possible
- reducing the number of people each person has contact with by using 'fixed teams or partnering' (so each person works with only a few others)

[...]

3.4 Meetings

Objective: To reduce transmission due to face-to-face meetings and maintain social distancing in meetings.

Steps that will usually be needed:

- 1 Using remote working tools to avoid in-person meetings.
- 2 Only absolutely necessary participants should attend meetings and should maintain 2m separation throughout.
- 3 Avoiding transmission during meetings, for example avoiding sharing pens and other objects.
- 4 Providing hand sanitiser in meeting rooms.
- 5 Holding meetings outdoors or in well-ventilated rooms whenever possible.
- 6 For areas where regular meetings take place, using floor signage to help people maintain social distancing.

Covid-19: Strategy

Volume 676: debated on Monday 11 May 2020

[...]

The Prime Minister >

[...]

Let me summarise by saying that people should stay alert by working from home if you possibly can, by limiting contact with others, by keeping your distance to 2 metres apart where possible and by washing your hands regularly. If you or anyone in your household has symptoms, you all need to self-isolate. If everyone stays alert and follows the rules, we can control the virus, keep the rate of infection down and keep the number of infections down. That is how we will be able to save lives and to save livelihoods as we begin to recover from coronavirus. I commend this statement to the House.

[...]

Perhaps I can sum up. We all share the strong view that people should stay at home if they can, and that remains the position. The steps we are taking today are modest, and entirely governed by the science. We hope—and this is entirely conditional—that we may be in a position to take further steps in the next few weeks. Given the complexity of what is being said, the right hon. gentleman raised a perfectly reasonable point about people moving across the border into Wales for recreational purposes, and there will be myriad other hypothetical situations that people can raise. But let us be clear: everybody understands what we are trying to do together. We are working together as a country to obey the social distancing rules, which everybody understands. The British people understand that this is the moment for the whole country to come together, obey those rules, and apply common sense in their application of them.

[...]

Bill Esterson >

(Sefton Central) (Lab) [V]

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People are worried about going back to work, about their safety and about infecting their loved ones. They do not understand why guidelines were not published before they were told to go back to work, and the Prime Minister's ambiguity and lack of clarity have just made matters worse. Will he take on board the concerns voiced by unions, workers and employers? Will he tell us how he will enforce those guidelines to keep people safe? Will he say how workers will be able to voice their concerns about their safety at work?

The Prime Minister >

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This country has made huge progress in the last two months, and thanks to our collective efforts we have got the R down below one. Now is the time to make small, calibrated changes, respectful always of the science and the risk of a second spike. That is why we are emphasising that if you must go to work and cannot work from home, you should do so, provided—the hon. Gentleman is right to draw attention to this—that your workplace is covid secure, and that you observe the rules on social distancing. We are publishing further guidance on that. It is common sense, and I think the British people understand what we are trying to do. I think they also understand that this is the right time to begin those modest steps.

Evidence relating to the gathering

Extract of written evidence of Lee Cain, dated 27 January 2023

- (a) On 23 January 2022 you said to the Cabinet Office investigation team relating to the gathering on the 20 May 2020 that: "I received an all-staff email in the afternoon of the 20th May from Martin Reynolds proposing a social event in the No10 garden. The email's tone was clearly social and in breach of covid guidance so I politely replied (copying in Dominic Cummings and [REDACTED] [REDACTED]) informing Martin that having as many as 200 people in the Downing Street garden was a mistake and he should review. Following the email Martin immediately came to my office and asked why I thought it was an error – stating that it would probably be more of a communications risk to send a further email cancelling the event. On this point we disagreed and I strongly advised the event should be cancelled. He said he would speak to the Prime Minister but that he was sure it was okay. After talking to Martin I went to find Dominic Cummings to inform him of my discussion and the risks of the event. He agreed it should not take place and said he would raise the issue with Martin and the Prime Minister. Later in the afternoon we spoke again, Dominic said he had informed the PM but they had argued about multiple staffing issues and he was very clearly very frustrated. I do not recall if I personally had a conversation with the PM about the garden party but it would have been highly unusual for me not to have raised a potentially serious communications risk with the PM directly – especially having raised it with his PPS and the matter remaining unresolved."; and that "From memory there were around 40 people in attendance including the PM, the PPS, Mrs Johnson and – unusually – advisers from other departments. They were joined by a cross section of staff from across Downing Street. It was clear observing all who attended and the layout of the event that this was purely a social function."

Event email invitation to No. 10 staff and Lee Cain reply, dated 20 May 2020

From: Lee Cain [REDACTED] on behalf of Lee Cain
Sent on: Wednesday, May 20, 2020 14:36
To: Martin Reynolds [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]; Dominic Cummings [REDACTED]
Subject: FW: Socially Distanced Drinks! [OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE-No10 ONLY]

I'm sure it'll be fine – and I applaud the gesture - but a 200-odd person invitation for drinks in the garden of no10 is somewhat of a comms risk in the current environment...

From: [REDACTED] On Behalf Of Martin Reynolds
Sent: 20 May 2020 13:44
To: Front Of House Team [REDACTED]; Operations (Everyone)
[REDACTED]; Special Advisers [REDACTED];
Speechwriters [REDACTED]; Questions [REDACTED]; BusinessTeam
[REDACTED]; PMPOST - ALL [REDACTED]; Direct
Communications [REDACTED]; PU Team [REDACTED]; Research
and Messaging [REDACTED]; No10 Press Officers
[REDACTED]; Lee Cain [REDACTED]; No10 MediaSpads
Subject: Socially Distanced Drinks! [OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE-No10 ONLY]

Hi all,

After what has been an incredibly busy period we thought it would be nice to make the most of this lovely weather and have some socially distanced drinks in the No10 garden this evening.

Please join us from 6pm and bring your own booze!

Martin

Martin Reynolds CMG | Principal Private Secretary to the Prime Minister | 10 Downing Street, London SW1A 2AA
Diary Manager | [REDACTED]
Twitter: @10DowningStreet

18. I believe the idea of the event on 20 May was to move the regular weekly Private Office meeting into the garden and make it somewhat relaxed so staff could talk to each other informally and to ask the Prime Minister to say thank you to them for their efforts after a remarkable period. I believe the invitation was extended to a small number of staff working in the Cabinet Office and the small joint No 10/HMT team working in the building. [REDACTED] the Director General leading on Covid in No 10, attended the event and I believe sent me an email afterwards thanking me for organising it.
19. The invitation was issued in my name on the day itself by my diary secretary. It went first to the Private Office and then later to a wider distribution to ensure it was seen by everyone working in the building that day. We had no easy way of knowing who was in the building but believed it would be no more than 30-40 people given working patterns at that time. The garden was big enough to hold that number of people without significant risks of spreading the virus. I did not draft the message but did sign it off and agree the distribution list.
20. With the benefit of hindsight, the language used was totally inappropriate and gave a misleading impression of the nature of the event. It was an event held because staff needed a morale boost after an extremely difficult period when all sorts of tensions had begun to surface and I hoped that being thanked by the PM and talking to each other might strengthen their sense of being part of one team. The event was not a party in any normal sense of the word.

[...]

24. Lee Cain had flagged concerns to me during the afternoon: *"I'm sure it will be fine – and I applaud the gesture – but a 200 odd person invitation for drinks in the garden of No 10 is somewhat of a comms risk in the current environment"*. This email did not suggest that the event was against the rules but said that it was a comms (communications) risk that the invitation had been sent so widely. I believe the concern was that the invitation or a photo of the Prime Minister with a glass of wine taken on a phone would leak and this could be misconstrued in the media.
25. I believe I spoke to Lee and explained that the event was likely to involve 30-40 staff and there was never any intention or possibility that 200 people would attend. I believe he agreed with me on the morale and wider benefits of a staff gathering with the Prime Minister at this time. I do not believe he suggested that the event be cancelled or that it was against the Covid rules but if he had argued it was against the rules I am sure we would have double-checked this with the Covid team, either in No 10 or the Cabinet Office. This is consistent with the wording of Lee's email to me and the fact that he subsequently attended the event, chatting and circulating with staff.
26. I understand that Dom also believes that he warned me about the event, although Sue Gray found no evidence of this happening. I do not recall him doing so. It is inconceivable that an event would have taken place against his or Lee's strong wishes. They were in charge of managing comms risks which are a constant feature of Downing Street life. Had either had serious concerns they would almost certainly have raised them directly with the Prime Minister (rather than using me as a conduit). Dom would have had ample opportunity to do so, sitting as he did outside the Prime Minister's Office. He and Lee were in a meeting on transport issues with the Prime Minister (and others) from 16.03 to 16.50 that day. If there had been a problem, it would have been straightforward and normal for them to have spoken to the Prime Minister and for me to join the discussion. There is no evidence from the formal diary that this happened.
27. I do not recall raising any concerns about the event with the Prime Minister. It is possible I did so, but, on the basis of the above analysis, it seems more likely that I believed that any issue had been resolved. If I had spoken with the Prime Minister about the event, I believe I would have flagged the comms risk, not that

the event was against the rules (which I did not believe to be the case).

- (g) On 14 January 2022, you said to the Cabinet Office investigation Team, relating to the gathering on 20 May 2020, that “I saw the invite and I expressed my concern to Martin that I thought this was a bad idea. I declined the invitation. I heard that there were so many people who were unhappy about the party that they were not going to go”.
- (h) On 14 January 2022, you said to the Cabinet Office investigation Team, relating to the gathering on 20 May 2020, that “At 6pm I went out for a cigarette and saw one person sitting at a table with a drink and I went to join them, while socially distancing, and they told me they were there for the drinks. Then there were another four people or so but not many. When it became clear that the party was going ahead I left and my pass will say I left at 6.30p[m. As I left I crossed with the PM who was coming out at the same time I think. I don’t remember there being a long table or a bar”.
- (i) On 19 January 2022, you said to the Cabinet Office Investigation Team in an email, relating to concerns you recalled raising about the gathering on 20 May 2020, that “It wasn’t on WhatsApp to Martin [Reynolds] – I have checked. At that time we didn’t have WhatsApp on work phones – only personal. I may have sent an email? But can’t remember and I think if I had you would have found in searches already. I was in the office that day (unusually) so I may have expressed views to Martin directly but cannot be 100% certain. I am pretty certain I spoke to [REDACTED] on the phone. I spoke about it with [REDACTED] [REDACTED] as she was in my office saying I thought it was madness”.

- (a) On 19 January 2022, you said to the Cabinet Office investigation team in an email, relating to the gathering on 20 May 2020, that “The idea the PM could have thought this drinks event was ‘work’ is comical, given the tables covered in bottles of drink, everyone standing around drinking etc”; and that “The PM certainly knew it was a drinks party because I told him and when he walked outside he saw a drinks party”.
- (b) On 20 January 2022, you said to the Cabinet Office investigation team in an email, relating to the gathering of 20 May 2020, that “My memory is that [REDACTED], who was highly organised & competent – also questioned the wisdom of the drinks, & wd definitely have urged MR [Martin Reynolds] to check with PM [Prime Minister] on whether to go ahead if concerns were raised, which they were”.

[...]

The BYOB event was explicitly organised by M Reynolds as a drinks party to thank staff for their efforts. This is why I and Lee Cain said we thought it a mistake.

[...]

Re 2(b). I did not give Johnson any such assurances. I told him that Reynolds had organised the drinks party that was against the rules and he should overrule and stop it. He declined. Note — no spads in No10 have formal authority to issue such orders to Reynolds or other officials. We can only make suggestions. If I could have issued such orders, this event would not have occurred. Because Reynolds issued the invitations for this event, it was reasonable for junior officials to assume it was WITHIN the rules as Reynolds was responsible for ensuring No10 was either a) acting within the normal rules, or b) was acting outside the normal rules but nevertheless properly. (No10 inevitably could deviate from some rules in order to do its job properly and sometimes No10 was used as an experiment, e.g over use of fast tests in summer 2020. The BYOB was in my opinion clearly not an example of a reasonable deviation from the rules. But junior officials acted reasonably in assuming this must have been approved by the Covid Taskforce. The PM had no such excuse.)

Emails between No. 10 official and Internal Events/Facilities Management, dated 18 May 2020

On 18 May 2020, at 12:50, FM Service Desk <[HYPERLINK](#)

[REDACTED]
> wrote:

Thank you [REDACTED], you mean the fold out oblong Trestle tables used to serve drinks out on yes?

[REDACTED]

On 18 May 2020, at 12:48 [REDACTED]

<[HYPERLINK](#) [REDACTED]
> wrote:

Hi FM,

Could you please pop out a couple of tables for us to host these drinks in the garden on Weds evening from around 5 to 7? It is for Private Office and then whoever is in the House on the day.

Thanks!

Extract of written evidence of Cabinet Office official, dated 7 February 2023

(b) On 19 January 2022 you said to the Cabinet Office Investigation Team relating to the gathering on 20 May 2020 that "I was sitting in a group of other advisers. I think I was talking to [REDACTED] Lee was also there."

Extract of Mr Johnson's official diary for 20 May 2020

1712-1720	With Martin Reynolds and [REDACTED]
1727-1802	Virtual voting + [REDACTED] and Martin Reynolds
1802-1830	In garden with staff
1830-1858	Phone call with Her Majesty The Queen
1858	To Flat

14 January 2021

Paragraph 27 of Committee's Fourth [Report](#)

27. On 14 January 2021, when the rules and guidance in force for the prevention of the spread of Covid included restrictions on indoor gatherings of two or more people and maintaining social distancing of 2 metres or 1 metre with risk mitigations in the workplace wherever possible,⁴⁰ Mr Johnson attended and gave a speech at a leaving gathering for two officials involving 15–20 people.⁴¹ The photographs show Mr Johnson in attendance.⁴² Fixed penalty notices were issued to staff for this event.

- 40 On this date, London (together with the rest of England) was classified as a 'Tier 4' area. Regulations stated: "No person may participate in a gathering in the Tier 4 area which—
(a) consists of two or more people, and
(b) takes place in a private dwelling or in any indoor space."
Exceptions included "where the gathering is reasonably necessary for work purposes, or for the provision of voluntary or charitable services". See: The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (All Tiers) (England) Regulations 2020 ([SI 2020/1374](#)) (as amended 6 January 2021), Schedule 3A Part 2.
Workplace guidance stated:
"Currently, you can only leave home for work purposes where it is unreasonable for you to do your job from home. If it is unreasonable for you to do your job from home, you must maintain social distancing in the workplace wherever possible".
It advised social distancing of 2 metres, or 1 metre with risk mitigations where 2 metres was not viable. It encouraged business to take "all the mitigating actions possible" where social distancing could not be followed in full. For meetings, this included using remote working tools to avoid in-person meetings, only absolutely necessary participants attending, and holding meetings outdoors or in well-ventilated rooms. See: GOV.UK, [Working safely during coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Offices and contact centres](#), as updated 7 January 2021.
- 41 GOV.UK, [Findings of the Second Permanent Secretary's Investigation into alleged gatherings on government premises during Covid restrictions](#), 25 May 2022; Notes of interviews conducted as part of the Second Permanent Secretary's investigation into alleged gatherings on government premises during covid restrictions [evidence not yet published but being disclosed to Mr Johnson]
- 42 See Appendix for photographs.

Regulations

The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (All Tiers) (England) Regulations 2020

UK Statutory Instruments ▶ 2020 No. 1374 ▶ SCHEDULE 3A ▶ PART 2

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Version Superseded: 20/01/2021

06/01/2021
Point in time

26/12/2020 31/12/2020 06/01/2021 20/01/2021 08/03/2021

Status: Point in time view as at 06/01/2021.

Changes to legislation: There are currently no known outstanding effects for the The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (All Tiers) (England) Regulations 2020, PART 2.

[F1] PART 2
Restrictions on gatherings

F1 Sch. 3A inserted (20.12.2020 at 7.00 a.m.) by The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (All Tiers and Obligations of Undertakings) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 (S.I. 2020/1611), regs. 1(2), 2(13)

Participation in gatherings in private dwellings and other indoor spaces

3.—(1) No person may participate in a gathering in the Tier 4 area which—

(a) consists of two or more people, and

(b) takes place in a private dwelling or in any indoor space.

[...]

Exception 3: gatherings necessary for certain purposes

(4) Exception 3 is that the gathering is reasonably necessary—

- (a) for work purposes or for the provision of voluntary or charitable services;
- (b) to provide emergency assistance;
- (c) to enable one or more persons in the gathering to avoid injury or illness or to escape a risk of harm;
- (d) to provide care or assistance to a vulnerable person or a person who has a disability, including relevant personal care within the meaning of paragraph 7(3B) of Schedule 4 to the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006;
- (e) for the purposes of a house move.

Guidance

Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19)

[Give feedback about this page](#)

From: Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy and
Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport
Published: 11 May 2020
Updated: 7 January 2021, [see all updates](#)

Offices and contact centres

Guidance for people who work in or run offices, contact centres and similar indoor environments.

[...]

3. Social distancing for workers

In this section

- [3.1 Coming to work and leaving work](#)
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Objective: Ensuring workers maintain social distancing guidelines (2m, or 1m with risk mitigation where 2m is not viable), wherever possible, including while arriving at and departing from work, while in work and when travelling between sites.

Currently, you can only leave home for work purposes where it is unreasonable for you to do your job from home. If it is unreasonable for you to do your job from home, you must maintain social distancing in the workplace wherever possible.

Where the social distancing guidelines cannot be followed in full in relation to a particular activity, businesses should consider whether that activity can be redesigned to maintain a 2m distance or 1m with risk mitigations where 2m is not viable.

Mitigating actions include:

- further increasing the frequency of hand washing and surface cleaning
- keeping the activity time involved as short as possible
- using screens or barriers to separate people from each other
- using back-to-back or side-to-side working (rather than face-to-face) whenever possible
- reducing the number of people each person has contact with by using 'fixed teams or partnering' (so each person works with only a few others)

Where the social distancing guidelines cannot be followed in full, even through redesigning a particular activity, businesses should consider whether that activity needs to continue for the business to operate, and if so, take all the mitigating actions possible to reduce the risk of transmission between staff.

[...]

3.4 Meetings

Objective: To reduce transmission due to face-to-face meetings and maintain social distancing in meetings.

Steps that will usually be needed:

- 1 Using remote working tools to avoid in-person meetings.
- 2 Only absolutely necessary participants should physically attend meetings and should maintain social distancing (2m, or 1m with risk mitigation where 2m is not viable).
- 3 Avoiding transmission during meetings, for example avoiding sharing pens, documents and other objects.
- 4 Providing hand sanitiser in meeting rooms.
- 5 Holding meetings outdoors or in well-ventilated rooms whenever possible.
- 6 For areas where regular meetings take place, using floor signage to help people maintain social distancing.

Speech

Prime Minister's statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 30 December 2020

[...]

So at this critical moment with the prospect of freedom within reach

We've got to redouble our efforts to contain the virus.

That's why the Health Secretary has announced that more areas of England will be moving into Tier 4 from tomorrow

And as I say again, no-one regrets these measures more bitterly than I do.

[...]

All of these measures are in the end designed to save lives and to protect the NHS.

And for that very reason,

I must ask you to follow the rules where you live tomorrow night

and see in the New Year safely at home.

That means not meeting up with friends or family indoors, unless they are in the same household or support bubble,

and avoiding large gatherings of any kind.

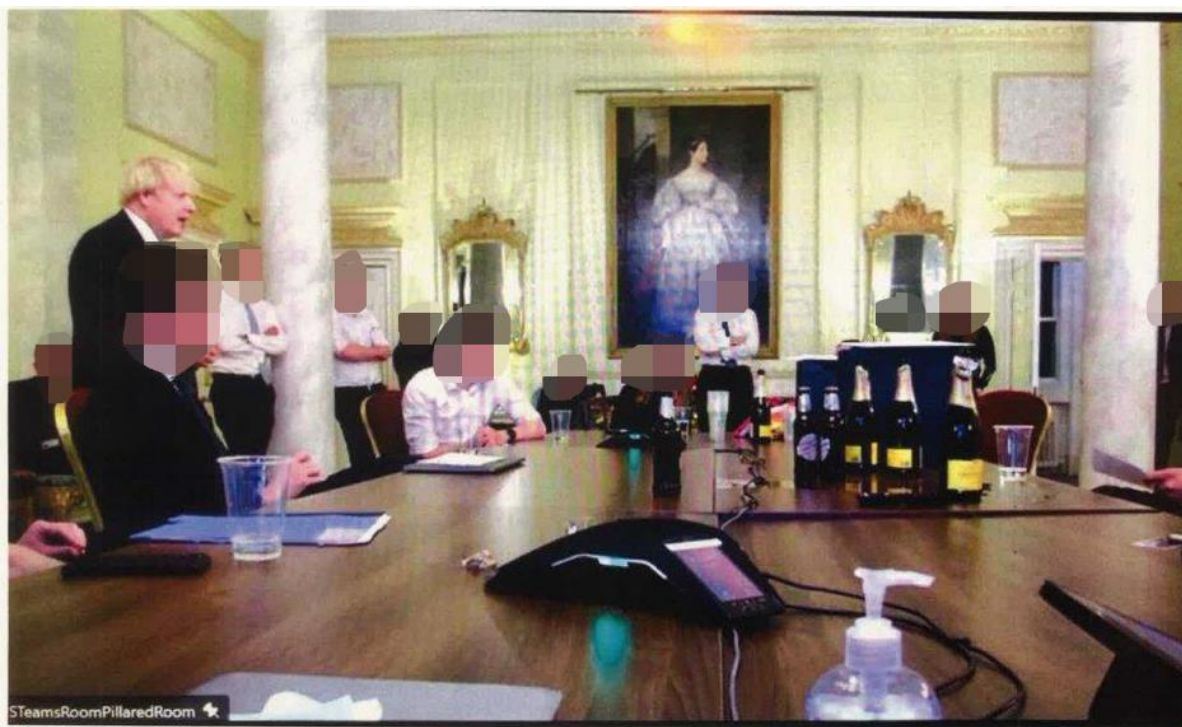
Evidence relating to the gathering

Written submission of No. 10 official, dated 6 February 2023

- On 14 January 2021 a number of colleagues (around 15) who were present in No10 for work, gathered along with 30-40 virtual attendees, to listen to a leaving presentation for two staff.
- The then Prime Minister was brought into the room by the then Principal Private Secretary. The Prime Minister gave a short speech, and was in the room for around 10-15 minutes. Photographs exist of the Prime Minister giving this speech.
- Those present included both civil servants and special advisers of a range of levels of seniority, including the PM's then Chief of Staff.
- Following the speeches, some colleagues remained in the room, sitting around the large meeting table, talking. There were some drinks available - both soft and some alcoholic.
- After leaving the room (I do not recall at what time), I returned to my desk and completed the day's work. My own records indicate that I left the building that day shortly after 11pm - this was in no way unusual for a working day in No10 during the pandemic - for example the previous two days I left between 10pm and 11pm.
- At no point at the time did I consider the leaving presentation or subsequent discussion with colleagues to be law or rule-breaking, nor would I have described it as a party. If I had thought that, I would never have attended. This may be in part because the colleagues gathered were the same colleagues that I worked alongside, in person, for long hours every day in those same rooms for work. The leaving presentation felt like a part of the working day, even if not strictly a meeting *about* work, and I did not feel that there was any additional risk of covid spread beyond that which was inherent in the working environment.
- Despite this, having reflected extensively in the two years that have passed since, I now believe that the judgement I - and we collectively - took on attending was wrong. I've learned from this experience and investigation.

Picture

Pixelated photograph from report, appendix, page 21



Paragraph 26 of Committee's Fourth [Report](#)

26. On 18 December 2020, when the rules and guidance in force for the prevention of the spread of Covid included restrictions on indoor gatherings of two or more people and maintaining social distancing of 2 metres or 1 metre with risk mitigations in the workplace wherever possible,³⁷ Mr Johnson was present in No 10. The Press Office held a 'cheese and wine Friday' which was neither socially distanced³⁸ nor reasonably necessary for work purposes. It was billed as a Christmas gathering and between 20 and 45 people attended.³⁹ Fixed penalty notices were issued to some of those who attended.

37 On this date, London was classified as a 'Tier 3' area. Regulations stated:

"No person may participate in a gathering in the Tier 3 area which—

(a) consists of two or more people, and

(b) takes place in a private dwelling or in any indoor space."

Exceptions included "where the gathering is reasonably necessary for work purposes, or for the provision of voluntary or charitable services". See: The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (All Tiers) (England) Regulations 2020 ([SI 2020/1374](#)) (as amended 2 December 2020), Schedule 3 Part 1.

Workplace guidance stated:

"You must maintain social distancing in the workplace wherever possible".

It advised social distancing of 2 metres, or 1 metre with risk mitigations where 2 metres was not viable. It encouraged business to take "all the mitigating actions possible" where social distancing could not be followed in full. For meetings, this included using remote working tools to avoid in-person meetings, only absolutely necessary participants attending, and holding meetings outdoors or in well-ventilated rooms. See: GOV.UK, [Working safely during coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Offices and contact centres](#), as updated 14 December 2020.

38 GOV.UK, [Findings of the Second Permanent Secretary's Investigation into alleged gatherings on government premises during Covid restrictions](#), 25 May 2022; Written evidence submission received 24 January 2023 [evidence not yet published but being disclosed to Mr Johnson]

39 GOV.UK, [Findings of the Second Permanent Secretary's Investigation into alleged gatherings on government premises during Covid restrictions](#), 25 May 2022; Written evidence submission received 7 February 2023; Written evidence submission received 24 January 2023 [evidence not yet published but being disclosed to Mr Johnson]

Regulations

The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (All Tiers) (England) Regulations 2020

UK Statutory Instruments ► 2020 No. 1374 ► SCHEDULE 3 ► PART 1

[Table of Contents](#) | [Content](#) | [Explanatory Memorandum](#) | [More Resources](#)

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What Version

☐ Latest available (Revised)

☒ Point in Time (02/12/2020)

☐ Original (As made)

Advanced Features

☐ Show Geographical Extent
(e.g. England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland)

☒ Show Timeline of Changes

Opening Options

More Resources

Changes over time for: PART 1

Version Superseded: 20/12/2020

Status: Point in time view as at 02/12/2020.

Changes to legislation: There are currently no known outstanding effects for the The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (All Tiers) (England) Regulations 2020, PART 1 .

PART 1

Restrictions on gatherings

Participation in gatherings in private dwellings and other indoor spaces

1.—(1) No person may participate in a gathering in the Tier 3 area which—

- (a) consists of two or more people, and
- (b) takes place in a private dwelling or in any indoor space.

(2) No person living in the Tier 3 area may participate in a gathering outside that area which—

- (a) consists of two or more people, and
- (b) takes place in a private dwelling or in any indoor space.

(3) Sub-paragraphs (1) and (2) do not apply if any of the exceptions set out in paragraph 4 or 5 applies.

(4) For the purposes of this Part of this Schedule, a gathering takes place in the Tier 3 area if any part of the place where it takes place is in the Tier 3 area.

[...]

Exception 4: gatherings necessary for certain purposes

(5) Exception 4 is that the gathering is reasonably necessary—

- (a) for work purposes or for the provision of voluntary or charitable services;
- (b) to provide emergency assistance;
- (c) to enable one or more persons in the gathering to avoid injury or illness or to escape a risk of harm;
- (d) to provide care or assistance to a vulnerable person or a person who has a disability, including relevant personal care within the meaning of paragraph 7(3B) of Schedule 4 to the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006;
- (e) for the purposes of a house move.

Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19)

[Give feedback about this page](#)

Offices and contact centres

Guidance for people who work in or run offices, contact centres and similar indoor environments.

[...]

3. Social distancing for workers

In this section

- [3.1 Coming to work and leaving work](#)
- [3.2 Moving around buildings and worksites](#)
- [3.3 Workplaces and workstations](#)
- [3.4 Meetings](#)
- [3.5 Common areas](#)
- [3.6 Accidents, security and other incidents](#)

Objective: Ensuring workers maintain social distancing guidelines (2m, or 1m with risk mitigation where 2m is not viable), wherever possible, including while arriving at and departing from work, while in work and when travelling between sites.

You must maintain social distancing in the workplace wherever possible.

Where the social distancing guidelines cannot be followed in full in relation to a particular activity, businesses should consider whether that activity can be redesigned to maintain a 2m distance or 1m with risk mitigations where 2m is not viable.

Mitigating actions include:

- further increasing the frequency of hand washing and surface cleaning
- keeping the activity time involved as short as possible
- using screens or barriers to separate people from each other
- using back-to-back or side-to-side working (rather than face-to-face) whenever possible
- reducing the number of people each person has contact with by using 'fixed teams or partnering' (so each person works with only a few others)

Where the social distancing guidelines cannot be followed in full, even through redesigning a particular activity, businesses should consider whether that activity needs to continue for the business to operate, and if so, take all the mitigating actions possible to reduce the risk of transmission between staff.

[...]

3.4 Meetings

Objective: To reduce transmission due to face-to-face meetings and maintain social distancing in meetings.

Steps that will usually be needed:

- 1 Using remote working tools to avoid in-person meetings.
- 2 Only absolutely necessary participants should physically attend meetings and should maintain social distancing (2m, or 1m with risk mitigation where 2m is not viable).
- 3 Avoiding transmission during meetings, for example avoiding sharing pens, documents and other objects.
- 4 Providing hand sanitiser in meeting rooms.
- 5 Holding meetings outdoors or in well-ventilated rooms whenever possible.
- 6 For areas where regular meetings take place, using floor signage to help people maintain social distancing.

Engagements

Volume 679: debated on Wednesday 2 September 2020

[...]

The Prime Minister >

 Share

As the right hon. Gentleman knows, there are a great number of schemes in addition to the job retention scheme that support people in work in all sorts of sectors—the coronavirus loans, the bounce back loans, and the grants that we have made to businesses of all kinds. He mentions the tourism and hospitality sector, and we have made huge investments in those, including the very successful eat out to help out scheme that we have been running. But it is also very important that we get people back into the workplace in a covid-secure way and, unlike the Leader of the Opposition, we do everything we can to give them confidence that it is a good idea to go back. An ounce of confidence is worth a ton of taxpayers' money.

Speech

Prime Minister's statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 9 November 2020

Prime Minister Boris Johnson made a statement at the coronavirus press conference.

[...]

And I want to thank the fantastic support of the army, the people of Liverpool and Liverpool City Council.

And we are now going further by sending out hundreds of thousands of rapid lateral flow tests to local authorities right across England - and also of course to the Devolved Administrations.

We're also working with universities to establish, as soon as possible, similar mass testing capacity for students up and down the country.

But while we are making progress this project is still in its infancy.

And neither mass testing nor progress on vaccines –both vital arrows in our epidemiological quiver, both key parts of our fight against Covid - are at the present time a substitute for the national restrictions, for social distancing, for hand hygiene and all the rest.

So it is all the more important to follow the rules.

Evidence relating to the gathering

Extract of written evidence submission of No. 10 official, dated 24 January 2023

- (a) On 16 December 2021 you said to the Cabinet Office investigation team, relating to the gathering on 18 December 2020, that "Friday night was a planned drinks event with cheese and wine. Jack [Doyle] gave out awards. There were approximately 25 people there. This ran into the early hours – 2am from memory"
- (b) On 16 December 2021 you said to the Cabinet Office investigation team, relating to the gathering on 18 December 2020, that "It wasn't like a party"; and that "Generally there was the end of day catch up which ran through the press stories for the weekend. This was part of the daily routine. The drinks started after that, probably around 5pm".
- (c) On 16 December 2021 you said to the Cabinet Office investigation team, relating to the gathering on 18 December 2020, that "[the gathering] Started off as press office attending but then others from across the house joined. It really got underway by 6.30pm when people stopped working"; that "People would get a drink and go back to their desk. When more properly started it was beyond desk drinks"; and that "After 6:30pm more people turned up across the house – in total about 35-40"
- (d) On 16 December 2021 you said to the Cabinet Office investigation team, relating to the gathering on 18 December 2020, that "There were WhatsApps. It was planned and the party had been cancelled and I look back on it now and it was planned to be a tight cross-press office party."
- (e) On 16 December 2021 you said to the Cabinet Office investigation team, relating to the gathering on 18 December 2020, that "There wasn't much social distancing, people were very close, not touching though"; that "People were relaxed pretty early on. There were conversations about life not just work conversations. Not arms around each other. It was far more relaxed than it should have been"; and that "[the] Gathering was like a normal Friday but this was beyond a normal Friday. Normally there were crisps on a Wine Time Friday but this was different with cheese etc".
- (f) On 16 December 2021 you said to the Cabinet Office investigation team, relating to the gathering on 18 December 2020, that "I was following a workplace culture Senior people led it. James Slack probably"; and that "I look back and wouldn't do it now. I did it because senior people decided to do it".

- (b) On 13 December 2021 you said to the Cabinet Office investigation team relating to the gathering on 18 December 2020 that “I don’t know in any depth or clarity but, on the Monday morning there was banter, gossip, rumour about the Friday night event being more than an event. I wasn’t in any meaningful sense there”; that “I know that I wasn’t at anything, I wasn’t at a party. I was elsewhere in Downing Street. All I know is that I obviously knew enough from being in the office that Monday morning to know to say I went home.”; and that “It’s likely I leave around 1825 because my aim that evening was to go and find the PM and have a conversation with him about no-deal. Once the formality of certificates etc had been done I walked across the corridor to the PM’s office. I went in and found the PM alone. He had his feet up and he was on the phone and I ask him if he wouldn’t mind having a private conversation about no deal. He and I, no-one else there, had a proper conversation about no deal.”
- (d) On 13 December 2021 you had the following exchanges with the Cabinet Office investigation team relating to the gathering on 18 December 2021:
- “Interviewer: In your view, do you think it was socially distanced.”
- ██████████: No. But I also remember we were all colleagues and we’d be standing next to each other all day. Whilst I think the principle is important we were, most of us, spending all day together.”
-
- “Interviewer: I have observed on a few occasions you’ve called it a party, or have stopped yourself from calling it a party. Now’s not the time to protect people.”
- “██████████: What I struggle with is that I didn’t physically see, I saw a work event, which I have to assume from the behaviour is that it was a work event that turned into a party. I didn’t witness it and I can’t see anyone. Anecdotally, and in terms of the gossip that was shared with me on Monday, I clearly ascertained that it escalated. To your question, I didn’t see a party but I heard descriptions of what turned into a party.”

1804-1806
1806-1833
1833-1848
1849-1917

2024-2157

2158

In with Martin Reynolds and [REDACTED] discussing Peerages
In office
With [REDACTED]
Covid discussion with [REDACTED] Dan Rosenfield, [REDACTED],
Martin Reynolds, [REDACTED], [REDACTED], Simon Case and
[REDACTED]
Pre-brief for Covid O meeting (Zoom)
Covid O meeting (Zoom) + Simon Case, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED], James Slack, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED], Dan Rosenfield, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] and [REDACTED]
To Flat

[Statements to the House](#)

1 December 2021

Paragraph 28 of Committee's Fourth [Report](#)

28. On 1 December 2021, Mr Johnson told the House: "All guidance was followed completely in No. 10".⁴³ We will consider why Mr Johnson told the House that no guidance had been broken in No. 10 when he knew what the guidance was and was in attendance at gatherings where the guidance was breached; and why he failed to tell the House about the gatherings at which he had been present.

Engagements

Volume 704: debated on Wednesday 1 December 2021

[...]

Keir Starmer >

(Holborn and St Pancras) (Lab)

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May I join the Prime Minister in his words on disability and the victims of extreme weather? May I also mark World AIDS Day? Extraordinary advances mean that people living with HIV on effective treatment can now enjoy normal life expectancy and are no longer at risk of passing on the virus. It is within our hands to end new transmissions in the UK this decade. We must do so.

As millions of people were locked down last year, was a Christmas party thrown in Downing Street for dozens of people on 18 December?

[Column 909](#)

The Prime Minister >

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What I can tell the right hon. and learned Gentleman is that all guidance was followed completely in No. 10. May I recommend that he does the same with his own Christmas party, which is advertised for 15 December and to which, unaccountably, he has failed to invite the deputy Leader of the Opposition?

Keir Starmer >

[Share](#)

Nice try, but that won't work. The defence seems to be that no rules were broken. Well, I have the rules that were in place at the time of the party. They are very clear that

"you must not have a work Christmas lunch or party".

Does the Prime Minister really expect the country to believe that while people were banned from seeing their loved ones at Christmas last year, it was fine for him and his friends to throw a boozy party in Downing Street?

The Prime Minister >

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I have said what I have said about No. 10 and the events of 12 months ago, but since the right hon. and learned Gentleman asks about what we are asking the country to do this year, which I think is a more relevant consideration, let me say that the important thing to do is not only to follow the guidance that we have set out but, when it comes to dealing with the omicron variant, to make sure that—as we have said, Mr Speaker—you wear a mask on public transport and in shops, and that you self-isolate if you come into contact with somebody who has omicron. Above all, what we are doing is strengthening our measures at the borders. But in particular, Mr Speaker—and I think that this is very valuable for everybody to hear—get your booster!

DAILY Mirror The Heart of Britain
Wednesday, December 1, 2021 90p

Hero of the Kop
Tributes as Ray Kennedy dies at 70
PAGE 17 & SPORT

Holly's in the lolly
Star's deal to stay with ITV
SEE PAGE 9

IT'S ONE RULE FOR THEM...

BORIS PARTY BROKE COVID RULES

EXCLUSIVE
BY PIPPA CREHAN, Chief Editor

BORIS Johnson and his staff have been accused of breaking Covid rules by enjoying crowded parties last year.

The PM gave a speech during an aide's leaving do at No10 on November 27 as the country was in its second lockdown. And on December 18, with London struggling under tough Tier 3 restrictions, members of his top team held an unofficial festive bash.

Around "40 or 50" people were said to have been crammed "cheek by jowl" into a room for the events. One source added: "It was a Covid nightmare." No10 did not deny the claims but insisted "rules were followed".

FULL STORY: PAGES 4&5

HERE'S TO ME
Mr Johnson's spin yesterday

No10 hosted boozy bashes while millions endured strict lockdown

8 December 2021

Paragraph 29 of Committee's Fourth [Report](#)

29. On 8 December 2021, Mr Johnson told the House: "The guidance was followed and the rules were followed at all times".⁴⁴ We will consider why Mr Johnson told the House that no rules or guidance had been broken in No. 10 when he knew what the rules and guidance were and was in attendance at gatherings where the rules and guidance were breached; and why he failed to tell the House about the gatherings at which he had been present.

Engagements

Volume 705: debated on Wednesday 8 December 2021

[...]

Catherine West >

(Hornsey and Wood Green) (Lab)

[Share](#)

Q6. Will the Prime Minister tell the House whether there was a party in Downing Street on 13 November?

(904648)

The Prime Minister >

[Share](#)

No, but I am sure that whatever happened, the guidance was followed and the rules were followed at all times.

Engagements

Volume 706: debated on Wednesday 12 January 2022

[...]

Keir Starmer >

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This just isn't working, Prime Minister. Everyone can see what happened. It started with reports of boozy parties in Downing Street during lockdown. The Prime Minister pretended that he had been assured there were no parties—how that fits with his defence now, I do not know. Then the video landed, blowing the Prime Minister's first defence out of the water. So then he pretended that he was sickened and furious about the parties. Now it turns out he was at the parties all along. Can the Prime Minister not see why the British public think he is lying through his teeth?

Hon. Members

[Share](#)

Withdraw!

Mr Speaker >

[Share](#)

Order. It was what the public think, not what the Member is saying. *[Interruption.]* I certainly do not need any help from round here. If somebody wants to help me, they can help somewhere else.

The Prime Minister >

[Share](#)

It is up to the right hon. and learned Gentleman to choose how he conducts himself in this place, and he is wrong—*[Interruption.]* He is wrong. I say to him that he is wrong in what he has said—*[Interruption.]* What he said is wrong in several key respects, but that does not detract from the basic point that I want to make today, which is that I accept that we should have done things differently on that evening. As I have said to the House, I believe that the events in question were within the guidance and were within the rules, and that was certainly the assumption on which I **operated**, but can I say to him that he should wait—he should wait—before he jumps to conclusions, and a lawyer should respect the inquiry? I hope that he will wait until the facts are established and brought to this House.

4. I do recall asking the then Prime Minister about the line proposed for PMQs on 7 December, suggesting that all rules and guidance had been followed. I cannot remember exactly when I did this but believe it would have been in the period (roughly an hour) immediately before PMQs on 7 December when the Prime Minister would have been preparing on his own, as he usually did. He did not welcome the interruption but told me that he had received reassurances that the comms event was within the rules. I accepted this but questioned whether it was realistic to argue that all guidance had been followed at all times, given the nature of the working environment in No 10. He agreed to delete the reference to guidance.

Engagements

Volume 706: debated on Wednesday 12 January 2022

The Prime Minister >

(Boris Johnson)

[...]

Though I cannot anticipate the conclusions of the current inquiry, I have learned enough to know that there were things that we simply did not get right, and I must take responsibility. No. 10 is a big department, with the garden as an extension of the office, which has been in constant use because of the role of fresh air in stopping the virus. When I went into that garden just after 6 o'clock on 20 May 2020, to thank groups of staff before going back into my office 25 minutes later to continue working, I believed implicitly that this was a work event, but with hindsight, I should have sent everyone back inside. I should have found some other way to thank them, and I should have recognised that even if it could be said technically to fall within the guidance, there would be millions and millions of people who simply would not see it that way—people who suffered terribly, people who were forbidden from meeting loved ones at all, inside or outside—and to them, and to this House, I offer my heartfelt apologies. All I ask is that Sue Gray be allowed to complete her inquiry into that day and several others, so that the full facts can be established. I will of course come back to this House and make a statement.

Assurances

Paragraph 30 of Committee's Fourth [Report](#)

30. On 8 December 2021, Mr Johnson told the House "I have been repeatedly assured since these allegations emerged that there was no party and that no Covid rules were

broken";⁴⁵ and that "I have been repeatedly assured that the rules were not broken".⁴⁶ We will examine the basis of his assertion that he had received "repeated assurances" that all rules had been complied with to discover why he sought to rely on purported assurances from others when he was there at gatherings in question. We will consider why he said he had been given repeated assurances when the evidence is that the assertion that all rules were followed was taken primarily from a line-to-take developed by the Director of Communications at No. 10, a special adviser appointed by Mr Johnson, as a response to a media enquiry about specific gatherings rather than having been a general assurance as to the fact that no guidance or rules were broken in No. 10.⁴⁷

45 HC Deb (2021–22) 705, [c 372](#)

[Boris Johnson] "I repeat that I have been repeatedly assured since these allegations emerged that there was no party and that no covid rules were broken. That is what I have been repeatedly assured. But I have asked the Cabinet Secretary to establish all the facts and to report back as soon as possible. It goes without saying that if those rules were broken, there will be disciplinary action for all those involved."

46 HC Deb (2021–22) 705, [c 372](#)

[Keir Starmer] "Last week, I asked the Prime Minister: was there "a Christmas party...in Downing Street for dozens of people on 18 December?". The Prime Minister and the Government spent the week telling the British public that there was no party and that all guidance was followed completely. Millions of people now think the Prime Minister was taking them for fools and that they were lied to; they are right, aren't they?"
Boris Johnson]: "I think the right hon. and learned Gentleman probably missed what I said at the beginning, but I apologise for the impression that has been given that staff in Downing Street take this less than seriously. I am sickened myself and furious about that, but I repeat what I have said to him: I have been repeatedly assured that the rules were not broken [...] I have asked the Cabinet Secretary to investigate exactly what happened, and I repeat that there will be consequences for those involved if the rules were broken."

47 Written evidence submission received 1 March 2023 [evidence not yet published but being disclosed to Mr Johnson].

See also, written evidence submission received 7 February 2023 [evidence not yet published but being disclosed to Mr Johnson]: "To the best of my recollection Mr Johnson's Director of Communications agreed the statement directly with Mr Johnson"

Engagements

Volume 705: debated on Wednesday 8 December 2021

The Prime Minister >

(Boris Johnson)

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May I begin by saying that I understand and share the anger up and down the country at seeing No. 10 staff seeming to make light of lockdown measures? I can understand how infuriating it must be to think that the people who have been setting the rules have not been following the rules, because I was also furious to see that clip. I apologise unreservedly for the offence that it has caused up and down the country, and I apologise for the impression that it gives.

I repeat that I have been repeatedly assured since these allegations emerged that there was no party and that no covid rules were broken. That is what I have been repeatedly assured. But I have asked the Cabinet Secretary to establish all the facts and to report back as soon as possible. It goes without saying that if those rules were broken, there will be disciplinary action for all those involved.

This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others, and in addition to my duties in this House I shall have further such meetings later today.

[...]

Keir Starmer >

(Holborn and St Pancras) (Lab)

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I heard what the Prime Minister said at the beginning of this session, but frankly it raises more questions than answers. Last week, I asked the Prime Minister: was there

“a Christmas party...in Downing Street for dozens of people on 18 December?”—[*Official Report*, 1 December 2021; Vol. 704, c. 909.]

The Prime Minister and the Government spent the week telling the British public that there was no party and that all guidance was followed completely. Millions of people now think the Prime Minister was taking them for fools and that they were lied to; they are right, aren't they?

The Prime Minister >

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I think the right hon. and learned Gentleman probably missed what I said at the beginning, but I apologise for the impression that has been given that staff in Downing Street take this less than seriously. I am sickened myself and furious about that, but I repeat what I have said to him: I have been repeatedly assured that the rules were not broken—[*Interruption.*]

[...]

An internal investigation into what happened? The situation is as clear as day. I thought last week was bad enough; surely the Prime Minister is not now going to start pretending that the first he knew about this was last night—surely.

We have all watched the video of the Prime Minister's staff, including his personal spokesperson. They knew there was a party, they knew it was against the rules, they knew they could not admit it and they thought it was funny. It is obvious what happened—Ant and Dec are ahead of the Prime Minister on this. The Prime Minister has been caught red-handed; why does he not end the investigation right now by just admitting it?

Because I have been repeatedly assured that no rules were broken. I understand public anxiety about this and I understand public indignation, but there is a risk of doing a grave injustice to people who were, frankly, obeying the rules. That is why the Cabinet Secretary will be conducting an investigation and that is why there will be the requisite disciplinary action if necessary.

b) Did you at any time give Mr Johnson any assurances that:

i. Covid rules were followed at all times in in No. 10, and specifically in relation to

gatherings covered in the Sue Gray report

11. No.

ii. Covid Guidance was adhered to at all times in No. 10, and specifically in relation to gatherings covered in the Sue Gray report

12. No.

iii. No parties were held in No. 10 during the period of Covid restrictions.

13. No.

c) Do you know whether anyone else gave Mr Johnson any such assurance of the kind described in part b), and if so who?

14. No.

6. Of “1. b)”: I did not at any time give Mr Johnson any assurances set out at i. to iii.
7. Of “1.c)”: I remember on one occasion whilst I was at a meeting with Mr Johnson with many other people in the Cabinet Room that Mr Johnson asked a question of the meeting “We did follow the rules at all times, didn’t we?” I recall more than one person in the room said “Yes, of course”. I am not certain who the people were who said yes, but I am certain they were civil servants, and it was more than one voice. I am about 90% sure one of them was Simon Case, the Cabinet Secretary. I am afraid I cannot recall the date of the meeting, but it was whilst these events were very much in the eye of the media. Whilst I am not sure of the date, I can say with absolute certainty that this happened. I recall thinking “Thank Goodness”. I was reassured. On balance, I think this would have been around the meetings on 1-8 December 2021, and not as late as January 2022. I am sorry I am not able to be more specific.

[...]

12. Of “1. h)”: I remember there being some discussion at one of the prep sessions about the 20 May 2020 event. I do not recall if the discussion was on 12 January 2021 or on a different date, but I do recall Mr Johnson being told by a civil servant that the event was “clearly work”. I am not able to say who advised Mr Johnson with these words, but I recall it was emphatic.
13. In relation to question 2, “is there anything else relevant to the inquiry you should add?” I would like to add that there was an occasion in Mr Johnson’s Parliamentary office in or about December 2021 when he was standing near

me by the seating/sofa area of his office when he shrugged his shoulders and appeared perplexed and said: “Why would they think I was at a party?” I said that I did not know. He appeared to be a bit exasperated. There were civil servants and others around at the time, but I do not remember who they were.

From my appointment as PPS on the 17th September 2021 onwards, I attended the 'Office Meeting', usually held at 9:00 a.m. in the Cabinet Room on most Parliamentary sitting days (i.e. usually Monday through to Thursday). The attendee list included the Prime Minister, his Chief of Staff and their deputies, the Cabinet Secretary, the Principal Private Secretary, the Director of Communications, the PM's Official Spokesman, the Political Secretary and other civil servants and advisers. It is probable that I attended on the three dates about which you specifically enquire - the 1st December 2021, the 8th December 2021 and the 12th January 2022. I also attended the weekly Prime Minister's Questions preparation session on a Wednesday when Parliament was sitting.

A standing agenda item – often the first item - of the office meeting was to review the main media headlines and news stories. I recall that in the daily Office Meeting, as newspapers initially published allegations of gatherings in No10, Mr Johnson was given assurances by multiple different 10 Downing Street staff present under question 2 (b) (iii) above. This was a daily meeting with a varying cast list of officials and advisors, and I do not recall whom said this or on which precise dates. The substance (though to be clear not the precise wording) of the assurances by Downing Street staff to Mr Johnson in response to the initial articles was *"Are they kidding? We were all working our socks off during Covid – no one had time for any parties!"*

[...]

b) Did you at any time give Mr Johnson any assurances that:

- i. Covid rules were followed at all times in No. 10, and specifically in relation to gatherings covered in the Sue Gray report
- ii. Covid Guidance was adhered to at all times in No. 10, and specifically in relation to gatherings covered in the Sue Gray report
- iii. No parties were held in No. 10 during the period of Covid restrictions.

c) Do you know whether anyone else gave Mr Johnson any such assurance of the kind described in part b), and if so who?

ANSWER: I recall that in the daily Office Meeting, as newspapers initially published allegations of events, Mr Johnson was given assurances by 10 Downing Street staff present under question 2 (b) (iii) above. This was a daily meeting with a varying cast list of officials and advisors, and I do not recall whom or the precise dates.

[...]

e) Evidence we have received from the Cabinet Office shows that you and other officials attended an “office meeting” and/or “PMQs prep” with Mr Johnson on the morning of 1 December 2021, on which date Mr Johnson told the House of Commons “all guidance was followed in No. 10”. Was there discussion in these meetings of the following points and, if so, what were the details of that discussion:

- i. Whether Covid rules were followed at all times in No. 10
- ii. Whether Covid Guidance was adhered to at all times in No. 10
- iii. Whether parties were held in No. 10 during the period of Covid restrictions
- iv. How Mr Johnson should respond to any questions relating to media reports of breaches of covid rules and guidance in No. 10?

ANSWER: I recall that in the daily Office Meeting, as newspapers initially published allegations of events, Mr Johnson was given assurances by multiple 10 Downing Street staff present under question 2 (b) (iii) above. This was a daily meeting with a varying cast list of officials and advisors, and I do not recall whom or the precise dates.

- (d) On 22 December 2021 you had the following exchange with the Cabinet Office investigation team relating to conversations you had with Mr Johnson. These conversations focussed on gatherings enquired about by the Daily Mirror on 30 November 2021, including gatherings on 27 November 2020 and 18 December 2020, and subsequent media reporting on gatherings on government premises during covid restrictions:

"Interviewer: Was that you who gave him [Mr Johnson] those repeated assurances?

"Jack Doyle: In discussion with colleagues yes, in a broader discussion – I spoke to the PO, Dan R who was in and out of no 10. I had a conv with the PM when this came up and the only thing I said to the PM was that I didn't regard this as a party and we didn't believe the rules had been broken and that's what we said at lobby – the rules is a judgement for others it was not an organised party.

"Interviewer: So to say this in Parliament is a big thing for the PM.

"JD: He had conversations with others as well.

"Interviewer: So I have heard you are brill at your job but you are too close to this – what did you tell him exactly?

"JD: So I said that we have had an enquiry from the mirror that it was about a series of events – the [REDACTED] thing, Dec 18 party and a quiz and another one I think and I said that we are saying that this wasn't a party and no rules were broken. He said what is our line?"

- (e) On 22 December 2021 you had the following exchange with the Cabinet Office investigation team relating to the same reports as covered in (c):

"Interviewer: If you hadn't been involved, you would have wanted to interrogate what had happened. Should you have said to him, I don't regard this as a party but we were in a small space. I had 20 to 30 people, I was giving out awards, people drinking and it went on late and went on to early hour of morning"

"JD: We had a very quick conversation."

"Interviewer: Nothing written down? What about the Lobby script?"

"JD: We went through it at PMQs for the following day. We had a de minimis line – the lobby line".

"Interviewer: But this is that he was repeatedly assured that no rules were broken. That was a week later when we had the PMQs"

"JD: Don't think I advised PM to say that – I mean that the socially distancing guidelines – to say they were followed completely, they are difficult things to say"

- (f) On 22 December 2021 you said to the Cabinet Office investigation team relating to the same reports as covered in (c) and (d) that “It could be better how we handled this query and that we could explain more straightforwardly what happened rather than allowing a false narrative about a wild disco and this was not a party in any meaningful sense and that is the basis on which I advised the PM now.”; that “I dare say we could have handled it differently. I don’t think we lied or misled [the press] though, I would say that. Probably in an ideal world you would have a higher duty of candour but not always easy to achieve as you are dealing with the people you work with.”; and that “You are trying to make decisions in an hour and a half. Not capable of investigating 4 events that the Mirror were alleging – it is not within our capacity to give and manage a bite sized assessment of 4 events when approached by the Mirror.”
- (g) Mr Johnson had the following exchanges with the Cabinet Office Investigation Team relating to media reports, initially in the Mirror on 30 November 2021, regarding the gathering on 18 December 2020, other gatherings in No. 10, and assurances provided to him about these events
- “Interviewer: When did you subsequently become aware, if you did, that there might be an issue with these events.
- “Mr Johnson: Not until quite recently when Jack [Doyle] came to tell me the media were asking about events on the 18th. I said “were the rules broken” because I thought this was the germane issue. His [Jack’s] view was that they hadn’t. I said in that case carry on.”

.....

“Mr Johnson: So yes I was given assurances and it was Jack to begin with, to be fair to Jack I asked whether there was anything in it with the Mirror, and was everything in the rules and Jack said yes. Then the following week I was sent out again with assurances which came up with the same formula, [REDACTED] and Jack came up with a form of words. After the Commons I rang Slacky that evening and he said it was all within rules. They must have thought it was in the rules, James Slack is a serious guy.”

Can you confirm the truth of Mr Johnson’s statements?

Signature:

The Committee should regard this statement as having been signed.

[...]

b) Did you at any time give Mr Johnson any assurances that:

- i. Covid rules were followed at all times in in No. 10, and specifically in relation to gatherings covered in the Sue Gray report

As per my evidence to the Sue Gray report, in relation to the events I attended I said I believed no rules were broken.

- ii. Covid Guidance was adhered to at all times in No. 10, and specifically in relation to gatherings covered in the Sue Gray report

No

- iii. No parties were held in No. 10 during the period of Covid restrictions.

I advised the Prime Minister that I did not consider the event of 18th December 2020 to be a party, as per my evidence to the Cabinet Office investigation.

Comment:

The Committee is right to draw a distinction between rules and *guidelines* in numbers (i) and (ii) above. Number 10 Downing Street is an old building with limited space. We made every effort to comply with Covid-19 *guidelines* to the greatest extent that we were able. Where this was not possible, we took measures to mitigate risks, such as installing Perspex screens between desks. It is difficult to say that *guidelines* of this nature were followed at all times, and it would not be possible for me to say that they were.

In contrast, it was my belief at the time I advised the Prime Minister that Covid-19 rules around social gatherings were not broken.

It appears that in the Cabinet Office investigation interview of 22nd December 2021, referred to at question 1(e) above, the two may have become conflated.

Conversations which took place between the Prime Minister and me, and assurances given, were firmly based on my experiences of the prevailing working environment which has been documented in my answers to the Cabinet Office investigation.

- c) Do you know whether anyone else gave Mr Johnson any such assurance of the kind described in part b), and if so who?

I believe he asked [REDACTED] and James Slack. The issue was also aired among a wider group in Number 10 Downing Street prior to PMQs on 1st and 8th December 2020, the attendees at which will be documented. I do not know of any other conversations he had.

- d) Are you aware of anyone having raised concerns directly with Mr Johnson at any time, that Covid Regulations or Guidance were not being followed in No. 10? If so, please provide details of who raised such concerns, when, and in what context.

No.

- e) Did you help to draft opening statements, 'lines to take', or other briefing material relating to media reports of breaches of covid rules and guidance in No. 10, for Mr Johnson's appearances in the House of Commons from December 2021 onwards?

Yes: the lines that were drafted for the Mirror became the basis of Mr Johnson's lines to take in PMQs on 1st December 2021.

As you will see from the messages between the Prime Minister and me, I also drafted the line for him to announce at PMQs on 8th December 2021 that there would be a civil service investigation into these matters.

- f) In relation to the statement included in 1. c), "JD: He had conversations with others as well", please could you provide us with the names of any of the other people you are aware that Mr Johnson spoke to in this context?

When the initial Mirror query came in Rosie and I worked on the line together. It was cleared by Dan Rosenfield and discussed with the Prime Minister.

- g) Evidence we have received from the Cabinet Office shows that you and others attended an “office meeting” with Mr Johnson on the morning of 1 December 2021, on which date Mr Johnson told the House of Commons “all guidance was followed in No. 10”. Was there discussion in this meeting of the following points and, if so, what were the details of that discussion:

- i. Whether Covid rules were followed at all times in No. 10

This was the line we had issued to the Mirror, and formed the basis of Mr Johnson’s script for PMQs on this point.

- ii. Whether Covid Guidance was adhered to at all times in No. 10

I do not believe we discussed this with Mr Johnson during the meeting.

- iii. Whether parties were held in No. 10 during the period of Covid restrictions

Part of the lobby script agreed between myself and Rosie was to deny that the events described in the Mirror article were ‘a party’.

- iv. How Mr Johnson should respond to any questions relating to media reports of breaches of covid rules and guidance in No. 10

The line issued to the Mirror became the basis of the proposed statement for the Prime Minister to deploy at PMQs.

- h) Evidence we have received from the Cabinet Office shows that you and others attended two “catch up” meetings with Mr Johnson on 8 December 2021, on which date Mr Johnson told the House he had “been repeatedly assured since these allegations emerged that there was no party and that no Covid rules were broken”, and that “the guidance was followed and the rules were followed at all times”. Was there discussion in this meeting of the following points and, if so, what were the details of that discussion:

- i. Whether Covid rules were followed at all times in No. 10

The line we discussed was about rules not having been broken at the specific events under discussion at the time and the event of 18th December 2020 not being a party.

- ii. Whether Covid Guidance was adhered to at all times in No. 10

I did not advise the PM to say this, no.

- iii. Whether parties were held in No. 10 during the period of Covid restrictions

The advice I gave the Prime Minister was that we did not believe the event of 18th December 2020 was a party.

- iv. How Mr Johnson should respond to any questions relating to media reports of breaches of covid rules and guidance in No. 10

Yes, as above.

- i) Are you aware of any other meeting where Mr Johnson was present where the points listed in parts g) and h) were discussed? If so, please give details of attendees and of the discussion.

Not that I can recall, no.

Extract of written evidence of James Slack, dated 7 February 2023

- (e) Mr Johnson had the following exchanges with the Cabinet Office Investigation Team relating to media reports, initially in the Mirror on 30 November 2021, regarding the gathering on 18 December 2020, other gatherings in No. 10, and assurances provided to him about these events “Mr Johnson: So yes I was given assurances and it was Jack [Doyle] to begin with, to be fair to Jack I asked whether there was anything in it with the Mirror, and was everything in the rules and Jack said yes. Then the following week I was sent out again with assurances which came up with the same formula, Rosie and Jack came up with a form of words. After the Commons I rang Slacky that evening and he said it was all within rules. They must have thought it was in the rules, James Slack is a serious guy.” Can you confirm the truth of Mr Johnson’s statement?

On e) I do not hold any notes or record of the call, or know the precise date it took place. I recall from memory that it was unscheduled and took place when I was at home at the end of my working day, which would have been around 9-10pm usually.

To the best of my recollection, the account given by Mr Johnson is correct. It is also consistent with the conversation I had with the Cabinet Office inquiry team, which would have taken place at roughly the same point in time that I spoke to Mr Johnson, ie early-mid December 2021.

[...]

- b) To the best of my recollection, I had one discussion only with Mr Johnson relating to gatherings in No10, which is the telephone conversation referenced above.

This discussion concerned the gathering on December 18, 2020, only, and in the terms described by Mr Johnson ie my belief that Covid rules were followed at the event. I do not recall any discussion of any other events.

Messages between No. 10 official and Jack Doyle, dated 30 November 2021

[30/11/2021, 2:52:17 pm] Jack Doyle: Pippa sending an email about drinks in No10 last Xmas. [REDACTED] leaving do and 'Xmas drinks party'. She has dates.

[30/11/2021, 4:13:16 pm] Jack Doyle: Can you pull together our best possible defence on this one. I don't know what we say about the flat

[30/11/2021, 4:13:47 pm] [REDACTED]: Don't we just do a generic line and not get into whether there was a drinks thing or not

[30/11/2021, 4:14:16 pm] [REDACTED]: 'Covid rules have been followed at all times' or something

[30/11/2021, 4:14:18 pm] Jack Doyle: I think we have to say something as robust as we can manage but see what you think

[30/11/2021, 8:17:21 pm] Jack Doyle: Key thing is there were never any rules against workplace drinking so we can say with confidence no rules were broken. Ignore the 'Xmas quiz' bullshit - who cares. Just be robust and they'll get bored.

Notes or evidence of inquiries following Mirror article, dated 30 November 2021

From: [REDACTED] > on behalf of [REDACTED]

Sent on: Tuesday, November 30, 2021 5:15 PM

To: Pippa Crerar [REDACTED]; Jack Doyle [REDACTED]

Subject: RE: Daily Mirror story - request for comment [OFFICIAL]

Hi Pippa,

Please see a spokesperson quote below. Thanks on speaking to CCHQ, and I would speak to [REDACTED] on the 13 November question.

"Covid rules have been followed at all times."

viii. Was Mr Johnson consulted on, or informed about, this statement?

- I do not know definitively. I have no record of how the line was agreed. To the best of my recollection Mr Johnson's Director of Communications agreed the statement directly with Mr Johnson (and potentially others). I was not involved in those conversations to the best of my recollection.
- For context – my recollection was that the main focus was on the queries relating to the No 10 flat and Mrs Johnson, which would not be an issue for the Civil Service to comment on. It was for that reason that I believe I and my Civil Service team were not closely involved in drafting or issuing the line.

iv. How Mr Johnson should respond to any questions relating to media reports of breaches of Covid rules and guidance in No. 10?

I do not recall specific discussions around the above points in those meetings. It is likely the general subject would have been discussed in the 'Office Meeting'. For context, this was the Prime Minister's regular morning meeting, with a wide cast list of attendees, and as part of that meeting he would have received a rundown of what was in the media. I do not recall specific discussions about the above topics but given the prominence of the news story at the time it is likely to have been mentioned. If there was a substantive discussion then a minute would have been taken by the then Principal Private Secretary (Martin Reynolds).

[...]

Nor do I recall any specific discussions about the above in 'PMQs prep'. I did not lead on preparing the Prime Minister for PMQs, and so would be regularly in and out of meetings as I dealt with other issues. This process was led by the Prime Minister's Research and Briefing team. As with any news story with such prominence, the Prime Minister's 'line' for the House of Commons would have followed the line already issued to the media. Therefore, in this case, he repeated the existing media line which had been issued. There were other prominent issues around this time too, which would also have featured in discussion, for example, on how the Government proposed to respond to the emergence of the Omicron variant.

[...]

2. Is there anything else relevant to our inquiry you should add?

I have tried to set out context around how prime ministers prepare for PMQs which I hope will help the Committee in the course of its work.

In this case, the fact a media line was formulated and issued before anything was said in the House of Commons is important to understanding why the Prime Minister came to say what he said. Taking lines which had been issued to the media and including them in the Prime Minister's PMQs pack would be standard practice across all issues. I was not involved in any discussions around the response to that initial media enquiry and I was not involved in formulating that line. Nor do I recall contributing to any discussion on what the Prime Minister would say in the House of Commons.

Extract of messages between Dan Rosenfield and Jack Doyle, dated 8 January 2022

[25/01/2022, 6:54:30 am] Jack Doyle: Have we had any legal advice on the birthday one?

[25/01/2022, 6:54:43 am] Jack Doyle: Just so we're ready for what comes next

[25/01/2022, 6:54:46 am] Dan Rosenfield: No

[25/01/2022, 6:54:55 am] Dan Rosenfield: Will sort

[25/01/2022, 6:55:06 am] Jack Doyle: Haven't heard any explanation of how it's in the rules

Extract of Messages between No. 10 official and Jack Doyle, 25 January 2022

[25/01/2022, 8:04:46 am] [REDACTED]: I'm trying to do some Q&A, it's not going well

[25/01/2022, 8:05:12 am] Jack Doyle: I'm struggling to come up with a way this one is in the rules in my head

[25/01/2022, 8:05:20 am] Jack Doyle: Pm was eating his lunch of course

[25/01/2022, 8:06:47 am] [REDACTED]: I meant for the police bit but yeah as ridiculous as the cake thing is it is difficult

[25/01/2022, 8:06:56 am] [REDACTED]: 'Reasonably necessary for work purposes'

[25/01/2022, 8:07:40 am] Jack Doyle: Not sure that one works does it. Also blows another great gaping hole in the PM's account doesn't it?

Extract of messages between No. 10 official and Jack Doyle, dated 28 April 2021

[28/04/2021, 4:47:12 pm] [REDACTED] One thing - do you think there's merit in pushing Slacky's leaving thing? Martin's worried about leaks of PM having a piss up and to be fair I don't think it's unwarranted. Shout if you think I'm being paranoid.

...

[07/12/2021, 7:03:04 am] Jack Doyle: That times briefing is going to feel to the team like spad briefing against. Can you reassure them?

[07/12/2021, 7:03:22 am] Jack Doyle: Secret Santa and WhatsApp groups. Not good.

[07/12/2021, 7:04:26 am] [REDACTED]: Yes. Some are already a bit spooked. I'll going to speak to them today. At least Times doesn't reference press office (and thanks if that was down to your intervention).

Easter Recess: Government Update

Volume 712: debated on Tuesday 19 April 2022

I will come to Ukraine in a moment, since I have just left a virtual meeting with President Biden, President Macron, Chancellor Scholz and eight other world leaders, but let me begin in all humility by saying that on 12 April, I received a fixed penalty notice relating to an event in Downing Street on 19 June 2020. I paid the fine immediately and I offered the British people a full apology, and I take this opportunity, on the first available sitting day, to repeat my wholehearted apology to the House. As soon as I received the notice, I acknowledged the hurt and the anger, and I said that people had a right to expect better of their Prime Minister, and I repeat that again in the House now.

Let me also say—not by way of mitigation or excuse, but purely because it explains my previous words in this House—that it did not occur to me, then or subsequently, that a gathering in the Cabinet Room just before a vital meeting on covid strategy could amount to a breach of the rules. I repeat: that was my mistake and I apologise for it unreservedly. I respect the outcome of the police's investigation, which is still under way. I can only say that I will respect their decision making and always take the appropriate steps. As the House will know, I have already taken significant steps to change the way things work in No. 10.

It is precisely because I know that so many people are angry and disappointed that I feel an even greater sense of obligation to deliver on the priorities of the British people and to respond in the best traditions of our country to Putin's barbaric onslaught against Ukraine. Our Ukrainian friends are fighting for the life of their nation, and they achieved the greatest feat of arms of the 21st century by repelling the Russian assault on Kyiv. The whole House will share my admiration for their heroism and courage.

Extract of written evidence of No. 10 official, dated 7 February 2023

The initial public statement ("Covid rules have been followed at all times.") was obviously later found not to be correct, and this remains a matter of sincere sadness and regret. I do not believe it was the intention of anyone in No 10 to mislead or give incorrect information in response to the enquiry.

I would like to emphasise that the enquiry came more than a year after the relevant events occurred in a building with several hundred occupants, and therefore if anyone was concerned that rules were not followed it would make sense that this would have been raised at the time. The absence of any earlier suggestion may have assumed too much significance when considering the appropriate response to the initial enquiry in such a short timeframe with so many other enquiries to consider and respond to. With the benefit of hindsight more people should have spent more time looking into the facts at the initial point at which these allegations were made, but I must repeat that I honestly do not believe that anyone intentionally sought to provide misleading information.

Extract of WhatsApp messages between Mr Johnson and Jack Doyle, dated 7 and 8 December 2023

07/12/21 [19:52] Jack Doyle: *I'm sure you've seen it's actually a video - [REDACTED] laughing along as the party is discussed. Mail fronting up and others I expect.*

07/12/21 [20:50] Jack Doyle: *I'm afraid 'it was already on Twitter' doesn't work. It wasn't. [REDACTED] just riffed it*

07/12/21 [21:13] Jack Doyle: *I think you can say 'I've been assured there was no party and no rules were broken. The officials and advisers in No10 are hugely hard working public servants but I have asked the cabinet Secretary to look into this and establish the facts.*

08/12/21 [08:53] Jack Doyle: *Think you need to have a swing at the footage. I had never seen that footage until last night. I understand the anger it's caused. The British public have made incredible sacrifices in complying with restrictions. And they want reassurance the Government itself is following these rules. I sought and was given reassurance no rules were broken and that no party took place. But given this tape and the level of concern I have expressed I have asked the cabinet Secretary to look into this and establish the facts. [He will report back by Xmas]*

08/12/21 [11:40] *I think if you say 'punishments' you raise the stakes for what happens next. Disciplinary action probably does the job*

Investigation

Paragraph 31 of Committee's Fourth [Report](#)

31. On 15 December 2021, Mr Johnson told the House: "A report is being delivered to me by the Cabinet Secretary into exactly what went on".⁴⁸ On 12 January 2022, Mr Johnson said to the House in relation to the gathering of 20 May 2020: "All I ask is that Sue Gray be allowed to complete her inquiry into that day and several others, so that the full facts can be established";⁴⁹ he also repeatedly urged Members to "wait" for the inquiry to be concluded in response to Members' questions about what had happened

and the implications for his position as Prime Minister.⁵⁰ He further urged Members to wait for the inquiry's conclusion in similar terms on 19 January.⁵¹ He did not reveal to the House what he knew when he answered direct questions about his knowledge, instead saying that he would have to wait for the outcome of the Second Permanent Secretary's investigation. The Committee will want to hear from Mr Johnson why, instead of correcting the record at the earliest opportunity, he declined to answer questions that were within his direct knowledge, instead telling the House to await the report of the Second Permanent Secretary.

48 HC Deb (2021–22) 705 [cc1050–1051](#)

[Keir Starmer] "Can the Prime Minister not see that he has no hope of regaining the moral authority to deliver that difficult message if he cannot be straight with the British public about the rule breaking in Downing Street last Christmas?"

[Boris Johnson] "I have repeatedly answered that question before. As the right hon. and learned Gentleman knows, a report is being delivered to me by the Cabinet Secretary into exactly what went on."

N.B. on 17 December 2021 the Cabinet Secretary, Simon Case, recused himself from leading the investigation into alleged gatherings on government premises during Covid restrictions. The investigation was subsequently led by the Second Permanent Secretary at the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Sue Gray.

49 HC Deb (2021–22) 706 [cc562–563](#)

[Boris Johnson] "[...] No. 10 is a big department, with the garden as an extension of the office, which has been in constant use because of the role of fresh air in stopping the virus. When I went into that garden just after 6 o'clock on 20 May 2020, to thank groups of staff before going back into my office 25 minutes later to continue working, I believed implicitly that this was a work event, but with hindsight, I should have sent everyone back inside. I should have found some other way to thank them, and I should have recognised that even if it could be said technically to fall within the guidance, there would be millions and millions of people who simply would not see it that way [...]. All I ask is that Sue Gray be allowed to complete her inquiry into that day and several others, so that the full facts can be established. I will of course come back to this House and make a statement."

50 See for example:

HC Deb (2021–22) 706 [c564](#)

[Keir Starmer] "[...] The Prime Minister pretended that he had been assured there were no parties—how that fits with his defence now, I do not know. Then the video landed, blowing the Prime Minister's first defence out of the water. So then he pretended that he was sickened and furious about the parties. Now it turns out he was at the parties all along. Can the Prime Minister not see why the British public think he is lying through his teeth?"

[Boris Johnson] "[...] As I have said to the House, I believe that the events in question were within the guidance and were within the rules, and that was certainly the assumption on which I operated, but can I say to him that he should wait—he should wait—before he jumps to conclusions, and a lawyer should respect the inquiry? I hope that he will wait until the facts are established and brought to this House."

HC Deb (2021–22) 706 [cc572–573](#)

[Chris Bryant] "The Prime Minister did not spot that he was at a social event. That is the excuse, isn't it? Come off it [...] Would it not be absolutely despicable if, in the search for a scapegoat, some junior member of staff ended up losing their job while he kept his?"

[Boris Johnson] "[...] I really think, with all humility, I must ask him to wait for the result of the inquiry, when he will have abundant opportunity to question me again and to make his party political points again."

Paragraph 32(d) of Committee's Fourth [Report](#)

- d) It may have been misled when Mr Johnson gave the impression that there needed to be an investigation by the Second Permanent Secretary to establish whether the rules and guidance had been broken before he could answer questions to the House. While repeatedly making that statement to the House he appears to have had personal knowledge that he did not reveal.

Engagements

Volume 705: debated on Wednesday 15 December 2021

[...]

Keir Starmer >

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I think that is a no: the Prime Minister has not come up with a good answer. For weeks, he has claimed that no rules were broken. He claims that he did not know what was happening in his own house last Christmas. I do not believe him, his MPs do not believe him and nor do the British public. He is taking the public for fools and it is becoming dangerous, because from today, anyone who tests positive for coronavirus faces a second Christmas in isolation. It will be heartbreaking for families across the country.

The message from the Government has to be “We know that following the rules won’t be easy this Christmas, but it is necessary.” Can the Prime Minister not see that he has no hope of regaining the moral authority to deliver that difficult message if he cannot be straight with the British public about the rule breaking in Downing Street last Christmas?

The Prime Minister >

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I have repeatedly answered that question before. As the right hon. and learned Gentleman knows, a report is being delivered to me by the Cabinet Secretary into exactly what went on. The right hon. and learned Gentleman might explain why there are pictures of him quaffing beer—we have not heard him do so.

I think that what the British public want us all to do, frankly, is focus on the matter in hand and continue to deliver the vaccine roll-out in the way that we are doing. I think that it is an absolutely fantastic thing that people are now coming forward in the way that they are: 45% of people over 18 have now had a vaccine. I thank our amazing staff, I thank the NHS, I thank all the GPs—

Engagements

Volume 706: debated on Wednesday 12 January 2022

The Prime Minister >

(Boris Johnson)

Mr Speaker, I want to apologise. I know that millions of people across this country have made extraordinary sacrifices over the last 18 months. I know the anguish that they have been through, unable to mourn their relatives and unable to live their lives as they want or to do the things they love. I know the rage they feel with me and with the Government I lead when they think that in Downing Street itself the rules are not being properly followed by the people who make the rules.

Though I cannot anticipate the conclusions of the current inquiry, I have learned enough to know that there were things that we simply did not get right, and I must take responsibility. No. 10 is a big department, with the garden as an extension of the office, which has been in constant use because of the role of fresh air in stopping the virus. When I went into that garden just after 6 o'clock on 20 May 2020, to thank groups of staff before going back into my office 25 minutes later to continue working, I believed implicitly that this was a work event, but with hindsight, I should have sent everyone back inside. I should have found some other way to thank them, and I should have recognised that even if it could be said technically to fall within the guidance, there would be millions and millions of people who simply would not see it that way—people who suffered terribly, people who were forbidden from meeting loved ones at all, inside or outside—and to them, and to this House, I offer my heartfelt apologies. All I ask is that Sue Gray be allowed to complete her inquiry into that day and several others, so that the full facts can be established. I will of course come back to this House and make a statement.

[...]

Keir Starmer >

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This just isn't working, Prime Minister. Everyone can see what happened. It started with reports of boozy parties in Downing Street during lockdown. The Prime Minister pretended that he had been assured there were no parties—how that fits with his defence now, I do not know. Then the video landed, blowing the Prime Minister's first defence out of the water. So then he pretended that he was sickened and furious about the parties. Now it turns out he was at the parties all along. Can the Prime Minister not see why the British public think he is lying through his teeth?

Hon. Members

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Withdraw!

Mr Speaker >

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Order. It was what the public think, not what the Member is saying. *[Interruption.]* I certainly do not need any help from round here. If somebody wants to help me, they can help somewhere else.

The Prime Minister >

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It is up to the right hon. and learned Gentleman to choose how he conducts himself in this place, and he is wrong—*[Interruption.]* He is wrong. I say to him that he is wrong in what he has said—*[Interruption.]* What he said is wrong in several key respects, but that does not detract from the basic point that I want to make today, which is that I accept that we should have done things differently on that evening. As I have said to the House, I believe that the events in question were within the guidance and were within the rules, and that was certainly the assumption on which I operated, but can I say to him that he should wait—he should wait—before he jumps to conclusions, and a lawyer should respect the inquiry? I hope that he will wait until the facts are established and brought to this House.

Engagements

Volume 707: debated on Wednesday 19 January 2022

[...]

Keir Starmer >

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Thank you, Mr Speaker. Not only did the Prime Minister write the rules, but some of his staff say they did warn him about attending the party on 20 May 2020. I have heard the Prime Minister's very carefully crafted response to that accusation; it almost sounds like a lawyer wrote it, so I will be equally careful with my question. When did the Prime Minister first become aware that any of his staff had concerns about the 20 May party?

The Prime Minister >

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I am grateful to the right hon. and learned Gentleman for repeating the question that he has already asked. We have answered that: it is for the inquiry to come forward with an explanation of what happened, and I am afraid that he simply must wait. He asks about my staff and what they were doing and what they have told me. I can tell him that they have taken decisions throughout this pandemic—that he has opposed—to open up in July, as I have said, to mount the fastest vaccine roll-out in Europe and to double the speed of the booster roll-out, with the result that we have the most open economy in Europe, and we have more people in employment and more employees on the payroll now than there were before the pandemic began. That is what my staff have been working on in Downing Street, and I am proud of them.

[...]

Chris Bryant >

(Rhondda) (Lab)

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Q14. The Prime Minister did not spot that he was at a social event. That is the excuse, isn't it? Come off it. How stupid does he think the British people are? The worst of it is that he has already managed to completely destroy Allegra Stratton's career and tarnished the reputation of Lord Geidt, and now he is making a fool of every single MP who cheered him earlier and everyone who goes on the radio and television to defend this shower of shenanigans. Would it not be absolutely despicable if, in the search for a scapegoat, some junior member of staff ended up losing their job while he kept his? (904971)

The Prime Minister >

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I am grateful, as ever, to the hon. Gentleman—I think a former member of the Conservative party, as I understand it—for his party political advice. I do not agree with him. I have come to this House to make amends, to explain what happened on 20 May and to apologise. I really think, with all humility, I must ask him to wait for the result of the inquiry, when he will have abundant opportunity to question me again and to make his party political points again. Until then, I am going to ignore his advice.

Correction

Paragraph 33 of Committee's Fourth [Report](#)

33. It appears that Mr Johnson did not correct the statements that he repeatedly made and did not use the well-established procedures of the House to correct something that is wrong at the earliest opportunity.

- On 19 April 2022 Mr Johnson acknowledged to the House that rules had not been followed at his birthday gathering on 19 June 2020 for which Mr Johnson and others received fixed penalty notices.⁵⁷
- On 25 May 2022 he made a statement after the Second Permanent Secretary's report had been published. That statement maintained that the gatherings which Mr Johnson attended had not been found to be outside of the rules at the time he attended them. His purported correction did not set out his own knowledge of the gatherings.⁵⁸

57 HC Deb (2021–22) 712, [c 48](#)

[Boris Johnson] "Let me also say—not by way of mitigation or excuse, but purely because it explains my previous words in this House—that it did not occur to me, then or subsequently, that a gathering in the Cabinet Room just before a vital meeting on covid strategy could amount to a breach of the rules. I repeat: that was my mistake and I apologise for it unreservedly."

58 HC Deb (2022–23) 715, [cc295–296](#)

[Boris Johnson] "Those staff working in Downing Street were permitted to continue attending their office for the purpose of work, and the exemption under the regulations applied to their work because of the nature of their jobs, reporting directly to the Prime Minister [...] The exemption under which those staff were present in Downing Street includes circumstances where officials and advisers were leaving the Government, and it was appropriate to recognise them and to thank them for the work that they have done. Let me come to that, Mr Speaker. I briefly attended such gatherings to thank them for their service—which I believe is one of the essential duties of leadership, and is particularly important when people need to feel that their contributions have been appreciated—and to keep morale as high as possible. I am trying to explain the reasons why I was there, Mr Speaker. It is clear from what Sue Gray has had to say that some of these gatherings then went on far longer than was necessary. They were clearly in breach of the rules, and they fell foul of the rules. I have to tell the House, because the House will need to know this—again, this is not to mitigate or to extenuate—that I had no knowledge of subsequent proceedings, because I simply was not there, and I have been as surprised and disappointed as anyone else in this House as the revelations have unfolded [...] I am happy to set on the record now that when I came to this House and said in all sincerity that the rules and guidance had been followed at all times, it was what I believed to be true. It was certainly the case when I was present at gatherings to wish staff farewell—the House will note that my attendance at these moments, brief as it was, has not been found to be outside the rules—but clearly this was not the case for some of those gatherings after I had left, and at other gatherings when I was not even in the building. So I would like to correct the record—to take this opportunity, not in any sense to absolve myself of responsibility, which I take and have always taken, but simply to explain why I spoke as I did in this House."

Sue Gray Report

Volume 715: debated on Wednesday 25 May 2022

The Prime Minister >

(Boris Johnson)

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With permission, I will make a statement, Mr Speaker. I am grateful to Sue Gray for her report today, and I want to thank her for the work that she has done. I also thank the Metropolitan police for completing its investigation.

I want to begin today by renewing my apology to the House and to the whole country for the short lunchtime gathering on 19 June 2020 in the Cabinet Room, during which I stood at my place at the Cabinet table and for which I received a fixed penalty notice. I also want to say, above all, that I take full responsibility for everything that took place on my watch. Sue Gray's report has emphasised that it is up to the political leadership in No. 10 to take ultimate responsibility, and, of course, I do. But since these investigations have now come to an end, this is my first opportunity to set out some of the context, and to explain both my understanding of what happened and what I have previously said to the House.

It is important to set out that over a period of about 600 days, gatherings on a total of eight dates have been found to be in breach of the regulations in a building that is 5,300 metres square across five floors, excluding the flats—*[Interruption.]* Mr Speaker, I do think this is important, because it is the first chance I have had to set out the context. Hundreds of staff are entitled to work there, and the Cabinet Office, which has thousands of officials, is now the biggest that it has been at any point in its 100-year history. That is, in itself, one of the reasons why the Government are now looking for change and reform.

Those staff working in Downing Street were permitted to continue attending their office for the purpose of work, and the exemption under the regulations applied to their work because of the nature of their jobs, reporting directly to the Prime Minister. These people were working extremely long hours, doing their best to give this country the ability to fight the pandemic during—*[Interruption.]* Mr Speaker, I appreciate that this is no mitigation, but it is important to set out the context.

Mr Speaker >

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Order. I appeal to the House: I expect the statement to be heard, and I want everybody to hear it. I want the same respect to be shown to the Leader of the Opposition afterwards. Please: this is a very important statement. The country wants to hear it as well.

Mr Speaker, I am trying to set out the context, not to mitigate or to absolve myself in any way.

The exemption under which those staff were present in Downing Street includes circumstances where officials and advisers were leaving the Government, and it was appropriate to recognise them and to thank them for the work that they have done. *[Interruption.]* Let me come to that, Mr Speaker. I briefly attended such gatherings to thank them for their service—which I believe is one of the essential duties of leadership, and is particularly important when people need to feel that their contributions have been appreciated—and to keep morale as high as possible. *[Interruption.]* I am trying to explain the reasons why I was there, Mr Speaker.

It is clear from what Sue Gray has had to say that some of these gatherings then went on far longer than was necessary. They were clearly in breach of the rules, and they fell foul of the rules. I have to tell the House, because the House will need to know this—again, this is not to mitigate or to extenuate—that I had no knowledge of subsequent proceedings, because I simply was not there, and I have been as surprised and disappointed as anyone else in this House as the revelations have unfolded. Frankly, I have been appalled by some of the behaviour, particularly in the treatment of the security and the cleaning staff. I would like to apologise to those members of staff, and I expect anyone who behaved in that way to apologise to them as well.

I am happy to set on the record now that when I came to this House and said in all sincerity that the rules and guidance had been followed at all times, it was what I believed to be true. It was certainly the case when I was present at gatherings to wish staff farewell—the House will note that my attendance at these moments, brief as it was, has not been found to be outside the rules—but clearly this was not the case for some of those gatherings after I had left, and at other gatherings when I was not even in the building. So I would like to correct the record—to take this opportunity, not in any sense to absolve myself of responsibility, which I take and have always taken, but simply to explain why I spoke as I did in this House.

In response to her interim report, Sue Gray acknowledges that very significant changes have already been enacted. She writes:

“I am pleased progress is being made in addressing the issues I raised.”

Section 3

Extract of Operation Hillman – final Met statement, dated 19 May 2022

Operation Hillman – final Met statement

The Met has today announced the investigation into alleged breaches of Covid regulations at Downing Street and Whitehall, under Operation Hillman, is complete.

In total, detectives have made 126 referrals for fixed penalty notices (FPNs) to the ACRO Criminal Records Office for breaches of Covid-19 regulations.

These referrals relate to events on the following eight dates:

- 20 May 2020
- 18 June 2020
- 19 June 2020
- 13 November 2020
- 17 December 2020
- 18 December 2020
- 14 January 2021
- 16 April 2021

Of the referrals, all resulted or will do so in a FPN being issued.

In total, this refers to 83 individuals. The breakdown of recipients is 53 FPNs were issued to 35 men and 73 FPNs to 48 women. A total of 28 people received between two and five referrals.

We will not be releasing or confirming the identity of anyone involved in this investigation or providing further details of our findings, in line with the approach we've taken throughout the pandemic.

Extract of written evidence of No. 10 official, dated 7 February 2023

The former Prime Minister often saw and joined these gatherings, either he was invited by SPADs or spotted them whilst walking up to his flat, the route he took down the corridor looks straight into the press room and vestibule so it's impossible not to see. He had the opportunity to shut them down, but joined in, made speeches, had a drink with staff. He could have taken the issue up with Martin Reynolds, his Principal Private Secretary, to shut them down. He could see what was happening and allowed the culture to continue.

Everyone obviously huddled around. You have to remember that during this whole pandemic, No. 10 has not adhered to the rules because we've just been working. We're our own bubble because we don't see anyone outside of work. We're very much our own bubble."

Sir Mark Rowley QPM
Commissioner
Metropolitan Police Service

24 February 2023

In confidence

Dear Sir Mark,

As you will be aware, the House of Commons Committee of Privileges is conducting an ongoing inquiry into the matter referred to us by the House on 21 April 2022, which concerns the conduct of Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP.

We wish to seek clarification on the specific gatherings for which fixed penalty notices (FPNs) were issued on certain dates, as outlined in the Findings of the Second Permanent Secretary's Investigation into Alleged Gatherings on Government Premises During Covid Restrictions (the Sue Gray report), published on 25 May 2022. I wish to stress that our Committee is not seeking information about any specific individual who may have received an FPN.

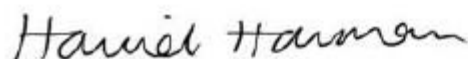
The specific points of clarification we are seeking are as follows:

1. The Sue Gray report states that FPNs were issued for breaches of Covid regulations on 13 November 2020. The report details two gatherings that took place on this date:
 - a. A gathering in the No. 10 Downing Street flat
 - b. A gathering in No. 10 Downing Street on the departure of a special adviser.
2. The Sue Gray report states that FPNs were issued for breaches of Covid regulations on 17 December 2020. The report details three gatherings on this date:
 - a. A gathering in the Cabinet Office, 70 Whitehall, to hold an online Christmas quiz for the Cabinet Secretary's private office
 - b. A gathering in the Cabinet Office, 70 Whitehall, on the departure of a senior Cabinet Office official and a No 10 official
 - c. A gathering in No. 10 Downing Street on the departure of two No. 10 officials.

For both of these dates please could you inform us which of the listed gatherings FPNs were issued in relation to?

The Committee would be grateful to receive your reply by 1 March.

Yours sincerely,



13 March 2023

Dear Chair,

I write further to my letter dated 1 March, provided in response to your request for clarification regarding two dates of interest to the Committee's Inquiry. As outlined in that letter, the information published by the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) following the conclusion of Operation Hillman was carefully considered, in line with our approach for FPNs during the pandemic, to avoid identifying individuals who were subject to that investigation and/or received Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) as a result of their participation in gatherings under investigation. Where multiple gatherings occurred on the same date, the decision was taken to identify only the date on which gatherings occurred for which FPNs were issued, rather than identifying which of the gatherings on that date resulted in the issue of FPNs. That has remained the MPS position, as articulated in my earlier letter to you.

In my letter I offered to provide further information if it would assist the inquiry. Having helpfully been provided with further detail as to the reason for the Committee's request for clarification and how this information will be used and retained by the Committee, as well as reviewing the information currently in the public domain (primarily the published findings of the Second Permanent Secretary's Investigation), I have reviewed this decision and write to provide the information requested.

I can confirm that, of the five gatherings identified in your letter, FPNs were issued to participants of two of those gatherings. Using the numbering in your letter, the gatherings for which one or more participants received FPNs were:

- 1.b. A gathering in No. 10 Downing Street on the departure of a special adviser on 13 November 2020; and
- 2.c. A gathering in No. 10 Downing Street on the departure of two No. 10 officials on 17 December 2020.

As discussed with Saira Salimi and Sir Ernest Ryder, the decision to issue an FPN to a participant of a gathering took account of a number of factors, which included the nature of the gathering at the time that individual was present (which may have changed throughout the duration of the gathering).

I hope this information is of assistance to your inquiry, but please do come back to me if I can assist further.

Yours sincerely,



Louisa Rolfe OBE
Assistant Commissioner

Evidence to be relied upon by Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP

List provided to the Committee on 20 March 2023

Document Description	Date	Excerpt
Correspondence with Metropolitan Police	24 February 2023 & 13 March 2023	• Full letter from the Committee to Metropolitan Police dated 24 February 2023 on page 90 • Full letter from the Metropolitan Police to the Committee dated 13 March 2023 on page 91
Written evidence of Martin Reynolds	7 February 2023	"21. The gathering started at around 6pm. I took the PM down to circulate with staff. He did not usually attend staff gatherings (including weekly office meetings) but would do so on occasion to thank them for their work. After a period when he had been so ill, his presence was an important symbol and morale booster. He stayed for less than half an hour, returning to his office (with me) for his weekly audience phone call with the queen at 6.30pm"
Written evidence of [No. 10 official]	7 February 2023	"9. You ask me to confirm whether the following statement is true: <i>On 20 January 2022 Dominic Cummings told the Cabinet Office investigation team relating to the gathering on 20 May 2020 that "my memory is that [No. 10 official], who was highly organised and competent – also questioned the wisdom of the drinks & wd definitely have urged MR [Martin Reynolds] to check with PM (Mr Johnson) on whether to go ahead if concerns were raised, which they were."</i> 10. This statement is from Dominic Cummings and I was not aware of it until receiving your letter. I'm afraid that given this was almost three years ago, although it is possible I did, I do not recall whether I questioned the gathering nor whether I urged Martin Reynolds to check with the PM. From Sue Gray's report, I am aware I was copied into an email where the comms risks were raised but I do not recall what happened after this email was sent. I therefore cannot say with any certainty whether this statement is true."
Mr Johnson's official diary	30 November 2021	1403-1415 Prep ahead of Monthly NHS DU Stocktake + [No. 10 official], Dan Rosenfield, [No. 10 official], [No. 10 official]and [No. 10 official] 1415-1451 Monthly NHS DU Stocktake + SoS/DHSC, [DHSC official], [DHSC official], (Chief Medical Officer),

		[No. 10 official], [No. 10 official], [No. 10 official], [No. 10 official], Simon Case, [No. 10 official], [No. 10 official], [No. 10 official], Dan Rosenfield, [No. 10 official], [No. 10 official], [No. 10 official], [No. 10 official], [No. 10 official], [No. 10 official], Jack Doyle, [No. 10 official], CST and [HMT official] 1506-1530 Prep ahead of Press Conference + Dan Rosenfield, Martin Reynolds, [No. 10 official], [No. 10 official], [No. 10 official], [No. 10 official], [No. 10 official], Jack Doyle and [No. 10 official] 1532-1547 SoS/DHSC and [No. 10 official] join prep 1600-1643 Press Conference with SoS/DHSC and (Chief Executive, NHS England) (No9) 1645-1700 Video recording for Universal Credit + [No. 10 official] and [No. 10 official] 1700 UK Food & Drink pre-brief + [No. 10 official] and [No. 10 official] 1707-1800 UK Food & Drink Street Market Opening remarks at front door Walk around and chat with stallholders 1800-1805 With Jack Doyle 1805-1810 In office alone 1810-1845 MP Engagement Drinks 1846-1917 PMQs prep + [No. 10 official], [No. 10 official], [No. 10 official], [No. 10 official] and [No. 10 official] 1917-1934 In outer office 1934 To Flat
Written evidence of Martin Reynolds	7 February 2023	"I and others involved in organising and attending the gatherings believed that they were in line with the regulations in force at the time. I believe these decisions were taken in good faith and were reasonable on a common-sense reading of the relevant regulations." "41. [...] I also believe all senior staff in Downing Street, both political advisers and civil servants, and key

		Cabinet Office officials, from the Cabinet Secretary and Permanent Secretary – Covid down, assumed the events were lawful too. They spoke at, attended or were aware of some, or all, of the gatherings. The attendees included some of those responsible for the regulations. I believe in-house lawyers were copied into some invitations"
(23 Letters sent by Committee on 24 January 2023) James Slack Written evidence of James Slack	24 January 2023 7 February 2023	"(b) On 10 December 2021 you had the following exchange with the Cabinet Office investigation team relating to the gathering on 18 December 2020 and regular meetings held in the Press Office on Fridays "Interviewer: When you saw the meeting in the diary on the day, did you give any consideration, given we were in tier 3, to any other measures?" "James Slack: No I didn't. I honestly don't think that anyone who was in that room was breaking any rules. They were with their colleagues who they sat with all day every day for 12 hours. Were there additional elements to that? Yes. That was a reflection of the specific circumstances of the end of the year. Everyone in the office knew that they were public servants and wouldn't have done it if they thought they were breaking the rules.""
Written evidence of [No. 10 official]	7 February 2023	"e) Evidence we have received from the Cabinet Office shows that, at 17:15 on 30 November 2021, you sent a statement from a No. 10 spokesperson to the Daily Mirror stating "Covid rules have been followed at all times". ii. What was the basis for the assertion that Covid rules were followed at all times in No. 10? It was the genuine belief at that time that covid rules had been followed at all times and that on the date set out in the enquiry nothing had happened that was outside the rules. As explained above, I recall the period when the enquiry was received being a particularly busy period at work, including the emergence of a new covid variant, and there were numerous issues being focused on. On any given day, I

		and others in the media team would receive dozens of enquiries from numerous journalists on a range of issues requiring a response within a short timeframe to meet journalists' deadlines. We had a very short period within which to respond to the enquiry, which was just one of the huge number of other issues we were dealing with at the time. While with the benefit of hindsight I know that more people should have spent more time looking into the facts on this afternoon, it was the genuine belief at that time that covid rules had been followed at all times."
Messages from Mr Johnson	19 January 2023	"10/12/21 [08:07] Boris Johnson: <i>Is there a way we could get the truth about this party out there. Dan suggests you do a note on what actually happened that we can use to brief</i>
Messages from Mr Johnson	19 January 2023	"07/12/21 [22:06] Boris Johnson: <i>Have talked to slackie</i> "
(23 Letters sent by Committee on 24 January 2023) James Slack		"(e) Mr Johnson had the following exchanges with the Cabinet Office Investigation Team relating to media reports, initially in the Mirror on 30 November 2021, regarding the gathering on 18 December 2020, other gatherings in No. 10, and assurances provided to him about these events "Mr Johnson: So yes I was given assurances and it was Jack [Doyle] to begin with, to be fair to Jack I asked whether there was anything in it with the Mirror, and was everything in the rules and Jack said yes. Then the following week I was sent out again with assurances which came up with the same formula, [No. 10 official] and Jack came up with a form of words. After the Commons I rang Slacky that evening and he said it was all within rules. They must have thought it was in the rules, James Slack is a serious guy." Can you confirm the truth of Mr Johnson's statement?"
Written evidence of James Slack	7 February 2023	"On e) I do not hold any notes or record of the call, or know the precise date it took place. I recall from memory that it was unscheduled and took place when I was at home at the end of my working day, which would have been around 9-10pm usually.

		following those rules, because I was also furious to see that clip. Mr Speaker, I apologise for the offence it has caused up and down the country, and for the impression it gives. I have been repeatedly assured since these allegations emerged that there was no party and that no Covid rules were broken. But I have asked the Cabinet Secretary to establish all the facts and report back as soon as possible. Mr Speaker, it goes without saying that if those rules were broken, there will be disciplinary action for those involved. Mr Speaker, this morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall have further such meetings later today."
Notes of evidence of inquiries following Mirror article		"From: [No. 10 official] Sent: 08 December 2021 11:19 To: [No. 10 official] <>; Jack Doyle; [No. 10 official] <[No. 10 official]>; Martin Reynolds <>; [No. 10 official] <> Subject: RE: Lobby script Updated with the draft PMQs script. Grateful for comments. Thanks DS INVESTIGATION 20211208 RESPONSE: # As the Prime Minister has set out, he has asked the Cabinet Office to establish the facts around these reports. {Need to be clear this is the 18 dec gathering} # That work will get underway very shortly, but you'll appreciate I won't comment further while this process is ongoing.

		# You otherwise have our previous statement. [This was: "There was no Christmas party. Covid rules have been followed at all times."] PM words: <i>Mr Speaker, may I begin by saying I understand the anger at seeing Number 10 staff seeming to make light of lockdown measures, and I can understand how infuriating it must be to think that the people who have been setting the rules have not been following those rules, because I was also furious to see that clip.</i> <i>Mr Speaker, I apologise for the offence it has caused up and down the country, and for the impression it gives.</i> <i>I have been repeatedly assured since these allegations emerged that there was no party and that no Covid rules or guidance were broken. But I have asked the Cabinet Secretary to establish all the facts and report back as soon as possible.</i> <i>Mr Speaker, this morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others.</i> <i>In addition to my duties in this House, I shall have further such meetings later today.</i> Q&A: When will this happen? As I said, very shortly to establish the facts. Why do they need to do that? It was in No10? Just be honest? Look, you have the previous statements, but in light of the reports and concerns raised, the Cabinet Office has been asked to establish the facts around these. When will it complete? I can't provide that, but as soon as possible.
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		As I said, work will begin very shortly to establish the facts, in line with the usual, robust processes. Will staff be interviewed? The Cabinet Office will be able to speak to staff and access any information they need to establish the facts. You wouldn't expect me to comment beyond that on this process, which you are probably also familiar with. And SpAds too? Yes Will either of you be interviewed? Again, the Cabinet Office will be able to speak to staff and access any information they need to establish the facts. You'll appreciate I wouldn't comment further on that process. But we can presume [No. 10 official] and [No. 10 official] will be asked about it? Look, I wouldn't comment on the details of this fact-finding and individuals. Which incidents will be covered by this? As the PM said, he's asked the Cabinet Secretary to establish all the facts and report back as soon as possible. Namely, the reports surrounding staff gatherings in No10 on 18 Dec and the Department for Education."
Written evidence of Andrew Griffith MP	7 February 2023	Please extend excerpt to include: "Based upon everything that I personally saw or heard [between 17 September 2021 to 3 February 2022] in that period as the Prime Ministers' PPS, it is my honest belief that Mr Johnson did not deliberately or negligently mislead the House..."

Further content to Martin Reynolds written submission	7 February 2023	"General 3. [...] I believe that at the time the story broke in November 2020 there was a collective belief in the Cabinet Office and Downing Street that we had operated within the rules during lockdown and that any events which took place had been legitimate, work-related gatherings." "Reassurances to Mr Johnson 1.[...] I believe reassurances were provided by some of the senior communications team staff who were present at the event, including Jack Doyle." "6. [...] This is obviously a statement of the then Prime Minister's belief but I would have seen no reason to challenge it since I also believed – and still believe that the event of 20 May was a work event."
Written evidence of Simon Case	7 February 2023	"[3.] The first time I was personally drawn into such matters was on the evening of 7 December 2021. I recall that a short discussion took place that evening in the Prime Minister's office, in response to the Prime Minister being told of the existence of a video recording of a mock press conference by Allegra Stratton, which appeared to support concerns about compliance with Covid regulations. This was a narrow conversation, concerning whether the Prime Minister should open an investigation and that, if so, he would like me to lead it. 4. In a short follow-up meeting during the morning of 8 December 2021, the then Prime Minister informed me that he intended to announce the investigation in the House later that day."
Written evidence of [No. 10 official]	7 February 2023	"My recollection is that on the afternoon when the enquiry was received, a statement was drafted which was the consequence of brief discussion regarding the specific date in this enquiry. I do not recall precisely who was involved in this discussion or the precise content of it, but it was based upon the genuine understanding and honest belief at that time that covid rules had been followed at all times and that on the date set out in the enquiry, which, it is important to note, was a year prior to the enquiry being received, nothing had happened that was outside the rules. I do not recall the precise sign off process of this statement,

		but my recollection and understanding is that the Director of Communications discussed the enquiry and the statement with Mr Johnson before it was sent.” “My recollection is that the public line, which was initially just one sentence, reflected the honest belief that covid rules had been followed at all times, and was therefore used for the following week until a video emerged which cast doubt on this assumption, at which point Mr Johnson immediately took action and decided to set up an independent investigation to ascertain the facts and find out exactly what had happened on the particular dates raised.”
Written evidence of [No. 10 official]	7 February 2023	“(g) i. <u>Evidence we have received from the Cabinet Office shows that you and other officials attended an “catch-up” meeting with Mr Johnson on the morning of 8 December 2021, on which date Mr Johnson told the House of Commons he had “been repeatedly assured since these allegations emerged that there was no party and that no Covid rules were broken”, and that the “guidance was followed and the rules were followed at all times”. Was there discussion in this meeting of the following and, if so, what were the details of that discussion:</u> As explained above, my recollection is that the public line, which was initially just one sentence, reflected the honest belief that covid rules had been followed at all time. This was, however, the date when a video emerged which cast doubt on this assumption, at which point Mr Johnson immediately took action and decided to set up an independent investigation to ascertain the facts and find out exactly what had happened on the particular dates raised.”
Messages between Dan Rosenfield and Jack Doyle	01 December 2021	“[07/12/2021, 10:15:14 pm] Jack Doyle: Top of PMQs: I think you can say I’ve been assured there was no party and no rules were broken. The officials and advisers in No10 are hugely hard working public servants but I have asked the cabinet Secretary to look into this and establish the facts.” [07/12/2021, 10:15:17pm] Dan Rosenfield: Okay. Good.”
Written evidence of [No. 10 official]	7 February 2023	“(f) i. <u>Evidence we have received from the Cabinet Office shows that you and other officials attended an “office</u>

		<u>meeting” with mr Johnson on the morning of 1 December 2021, on which date Mr Johnson told the House of Commons “all guidance was followed in No. 10”. Was there discussion in this meeting of the following points and, if so, what were the details of that discussion:]</u> As explained above, my recollection is that the public line, which was initially just one sentence, reflected the honest belief that covid rules had been followed at all times”
Written evidence of Martin Reynolds	7 February 2023	“I was involved in a few work-related gatherings in Downing Street during this extended period which I believed at the time were an essential part of maintaining morale. All senior personnel in the Cabinet Office and Downing Street working on the Covid response, both on the political and Civil Service aides, were aware of and/or attended those same work-related events. I believe that they too considered the events to have been consistent with the legal rules that applied at the time.”
Written evidence of [No. 10 official]	7 February 2023	“10. As of late November and early December 2021, my recollection is of reports on this subject relating only to a small number of alleged gatherings within the Press Office of No10. I should say that at this time I was not working on the assumption that there had been a series of gatherings in No10 and Cabinet Office that would come to be seen as in contravention of the Covid regulations that pertained at the relevant times. My sense is that other colleagues were operating under a similar understanding.”
Written evidence of [No. 10 official]	7 February 2023	“3. You ask me to confirm whether the following statement is true: <i>On 13 January 2022 you said to the Cabinet Office investigation team relating to the gathering on 20 May 2020 that: “the PM had given permission for all staff members to use the garden as an extension of the office. I had a vague recollection of that being why a message went out more broadly rather than just by word of mouth.”; that “I can’t think of any specific but there were definitely a number of occasions where we needed to talk about something or have a 1 – 1 catch up and we did that in the garden and there might have been some crisps that were brought out and eaten and – I don’t really drink that much – but sometimes a glass of wine.; that “I remember times when he [Mr Johnson] will have walked around to small groups of people and said thank you.; and that “I’m not saying that invites to 100 people happened all the times. 30 people in the garden having drinks did happen frequently.”</i>

		4. I thought it would be helpful to set out some context. During Covid those of us who were unable to work from home due to the nature of our roles supporting the PM were encouraged by senior colleagues (in particular Dominic Cummings who was acting on advice from the Chief Medical Officer) to have meetings in the garden in order to reduce the risk of covid transmission. I do not recall anything being communicated in writing on this, I think it was verbal encouragement and us following the lead of senior colleagues who would often meet outside. Throughout the working day there would be small groups of staff having work meetings dotted around the large garden and separate terrace at a number of small tables which could total approximately 30 people. Our working days often finished late (around 10pm), it was not unusual to still be meeting in the garden late into the evening during that spring and summer. Often these meetings would be over dinner time so there would sometimes be food and occasionally some staff had a glass of wine or beer. The PM would also use the garden as it was his garden and he would occasionally come to speak to a small group of staff having meetings either to generally ask how things were going or to ask a specific work related question.”
SG 20 – BJ interview notes – Conversation with PM	Undated	“I would encourage people into the garden for the pandemic. I felt it would be wrong to stop people going into the garden. It is democratic and conducive to staff wellbeing – where to go to draw the line? When you are in the garden and in a meeting it was ok to have a bottle of wine accompanied by alcohol in moderation. Certainly not against the rules as I understand them.”
Written evidence of [No. 10 official]	7 February 2023	“6. You ask me to confirm whether the following statement is true: <i>On 13 December 2021 you said to the Cabinet Office investigation team relating to the gathering on 27 November 2020 that “I also sent [No. 10 official] a message at 18:19 to say “we are coming now”. I am fairly certain that was when I came down with the PM.”; and that “I would normally be the person who would say to the PM “you need to come and say goodbye to [No. 10 official]”.</i> 7. On the 27th November 2020 it was [No. 10 officials]’s final day working as a Special Adviser at No10. I asked her where she would be in 20 minutes (as she was about to leave after saying goodbye to a couple of people on her final) and she informed me she thought she would be in the press room and that I should let the few other private secretaries who were in the office on that day know (in

		case they also wanted to say goodbye). Just before I sent the message at 18:19, I think I let the PM know that [No. 10 official] was about to leave and that he should go and say goodbye to her, then we went to the Press Office (where others were working). The PM then said a few words of farewell to [No. 10 official] which resulted in a small gathering of up to 20 people (most of whom were the ones working in this area) while he was speaking. [No. 10 official] and I departed the building at the same time a short time later at 18:57. 8. I did not at this time believe this was against the Covid regulations and I believe nor did the MET Police as they assessed that this gathering did not meet the threshold for criminal investigation.”
Written evidence of [No. 10 official]	7 February 2023	“On 13 December 2021 you said to the Cabinet Office investigation team relating to the gathering on 27 November 2020 that “I know from the media reporting and having thought about it afterwards that was the day that [No. 10 official] left. She came over to the press office to, I think, say goodbye to people. The PM popped by and there was a ‘thank you for your work’ and then we all dispersed. 6. I confirm the truth of this statement, which aligns with my recollection of 13th December 2021.”
Written evidence of [No. 10 official]	7 February 2023	“Following the Mirror’s initial query I do recall individuals variously expressing the view that a number of people were working on the evening of 18 December 2020, that the consumption of alcohol was not banned in the guidelines or that the guidelines were not definitive.”
(23 Letters sent by Committee on 24 January 2023) James Slack Written evidence of James Slack	24 January 2023 7 February 2023	“(a) On 10 December 2021 you said to the Cabinet Office investigation team relating to 18 December 2020 that “it would have been a normal working day. We would have had in the full press team because obviously the office had been made covid secure with screens and so on. The full press team would have been working unless they were on leave or ill or anything else.”; and that “we had a meeting at the end of every week where we’d go through what we’d done well, what we’d done less well. This was a standard practice and there will have been a note in the diary every week to reflect that. The distinction with this one is that it is suggested there was cheese and wine.” (b) On 10 December 2021 you had the following exchange with the Cabinet Office investigation team relating to the

		gathering on 18 December 2020 and regular meetings held in the Press Office on Fridays. “Interviewer: when you saw the meeting in the diary on the day, did you give any consideration, given we were in tier 3, to any other measures?” James Slack: No I didn’t. I honestly don’t think that anyone who was in that room was breaking any rules. They were with their colleagues who they sat with all day every day for 12 hours. Were there additional elements to that? Yes. That was a reflection of the specific circumstances of the end of the year. Everyone in the office knew that they were public servants and wouldn’t have done it if they thought they were breaking the rules.” (c) On 10 December 2021 you said to the Cabinet Office investigation team relating to maintaining social distancing in the Press Office “As best as we could is the honest answer. I couldn’t say to you that everyone was always socially distanced. We did lateral flow testing regularly and hand sanitizer was everywhere. (d) Relating to 18 December 2020, in the minutes of a follow up call you had with the Cabinet Office investigation team on 22 December 2021, they say that you told them “Nobody thought that they were doing anything wrong and JS maintains that they did not break regulations. No one thought they were going to a party or to an illicit event. It was not planned. There were meetings on a Friday on a regular basis – it was a long term arrangement.” “I can confirm that, to the best of my recollection, a) b) and c) are an accurate summary of the oral conversation I had with the Cabinet Office inquiry team in December 2021. On d) for context, I understand the line ‘it was not planned’ to be directly connected to the preceding sentence. ie I am stating that it was not planned for any event to take place which would be in breach of the rules. As you note, I had already stated to the inquiry that it was in the press office diary for a planned end of year meeting to take place, which would have food and drink.”
Written evidence of James Slack	7 February 2023	“To the best of my recollection, there was no interaction between anybody else who attended the Covid O, which was in the Cabinet room, and the Press Office, which you

		will note is in a different part of the building ie No 12 Downing Street rather than No10."
Workplace Guidance	19 May 2020	"This document is to help employers, employees and the self-employed in the UK understand how to work safely during the COVID-19 pandemic, keeping as many people as possible 2 metres apart from those they do not live with. We hope it gives you freedom within a practical framework to think about what you need to do to continue, or restart, operations during the COVID-19 pandemic."
Workplace Guidance	19 May 2020	""This document sets out guidance on how to work safely. It gives practical considerations of how this can be applied in the Workplace. Each business will need to translate this into the specific actions it needs to take, depending on the nature of the business, including the size and type of business, how it is organised, operated, managed and regulated."
Workplace Guidance	19 May 2020	"Businesses and workplaces should make every reasonable effort to enable working from home as a first option. Where working from home is not possible, workplaces should make every reasonable effort to comply with the social distancing guidelines set out by the government (keeping people 2m apart wherever possible)."
Workplace Guidance	15 June 2020	"This document is to help employers, employees and the self-employed in the UK understand how to work safely during the COVID-19 pandemic, keeping as many people as possible 2 metres apart from those they do not live with. We hope it gives you freedom within a practical framework to think about what you need to do to continue, or restart, operations during the COVID-19 pandemic."
Workplace Guidance	15 June 2020	"This document sets out guidance on how to work safely. It gives practical considerations of how this can be applied in the workplace."

		Each business will need to translate this into the specific actions it needs to take, depending on the nature of the business, including the size and type of business, how it is organised, operated, managed and regulated.”
Workplace Guidance	15 June 2020	“Businesses and workplaces should make every reasonable effort to enable working from home as a first option. Where working from home is not possible, workplaces should make every reasonable effort to comply with the social distancing guidelines set out by the government (keeping people 2m apart wherever possible).”
Workplace Guidance	5 November 2020	“This document is to help employers, employees and the self-employed in the UK understand how to work safely during this pandemic, ensuring as many people as possible comply with social distancing guidelines (2m apart, or 1m with risk mitigation where 2m is not viable, is acceptable). We hope it gives you freedom within a practical framework to think about what you need to do to continue, or restart, operations during the COVID-19 pandemic.”
Workplace Guidance	5 November 2020	“This document sets out guidance on how to open workplaces safely while minimising the risk of spreading COVID-19. It gives practical considerations of how this can be applied in the workplace. Each business will need to translate this into the specific actions it needs to take, depending on the nature of the business, including the size and type of business, how it is organised, operated, managed and regulated.”
Workplace Guidance	5 November 2020	“Businesses and workplaces should make every reasonable effort to ensure their employees can work safely. When in the workplace, everyone should make every reasonable effort to comply with the social distancing guidelines set out by the government (2m, or 1m with risk mitigation where 2m is not viable).”

Workplace Guidance	26 November 2020	<u>Section 'How to use this guidance'</u> "This document sets out guidance on how to open workplaces safely while minimising the risk of spreading COVID-19. It gives practical considerations of how this can be applied in the workplace."
Workplace Guidance	26 November 2020	<u>Section 1.1 Managing risk</u> "Businesses and workplaces should make every reasonable effort to ensure their employees can work safely. When in the workplace, everyone should make every reasonable effort to comply with the social distancing guidelines set out by the government (2m, or 1m with risk mitigation where 2m is not viable)."
Workplace Guidance	14 December 2020	<u>Section 'How to use this guidance'</u> "This document sets out guidance on how to open workplaces safely while minimising the risk of spreading COVID-19. It gives practical considerations of how this can be applied in the workplace. Each business will need to translate this into the specific actions it needs to take, depending on the nature of the business, including the size and type of business, how it is organised, operated, managed and regulated."
Workplace Guidance	14 December 2020	<u>Section 1.1 Managing risk</u> "Businesses and workplaces should make every reasonable effort to ensure their employees can work safely. When in the workplace, everyone should make every reasonable effort to comply with the social distancing guidelines set out by the government (2m, or 1m with risk mitigation where 2m is not viable)."
Workplace Guidance	7 January 2021	<u>Section 'How to use this guidance'</u> "This document sets out guidance on how to open workplaces safely while minimising the risk of spreading COVID-19. It gives practical considerations of how this can be applied in the workplace.

		Each business will need to translate this into the specific actions it needs to take, depending on the nature of the business, including the size and type of business, how it is organised, operated, managed and regulated.”
Workplace Guidance	7 January 2021	<u>Section 1.1 Managing risk</u> “Businesses and workplaces should make every reasonable effort to ensure their employees can work safely. When in the workplace, everyone should make every reasonable effort to comply with the social distancing guidelines set out by the government (2m, or 1m with risk mitigation where 2m is not viable).”