

COVID-19: ADVICE TO ORGANISERS ON MASS EVENTS

Summary

To protect the capacity of our public services, the Scottish Government advises that organisers should cancel or postpone all mass events of 500 people or more – indoors or outdoors.

This approach should be maintained until such time as further advice is issued.

There is no impact from this advice on other routine activities such as school, travel, shopping and work.

Introduction

1. The impact of the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic is already being felt, but will increase in its severity over the next few weeks. Urgent action is now required to protect the capacity of our public services during this time.
2. The First Minister announced on 12 March 2020 that, from 16 March, mass events should not take place, in light of their potential impact on public services. This note provides further advice on this issue.
3. Under current powers the Scottish Government is only able to provide advice, and cannot instruct organisers to cancel events. However, we hope that organisers will follow this advice, to support our public services in responding to COVID-19. It may be that in future instructions are issued for events to be cancelled.

Why we are issuing this advice

4. The purpose of this advice is to relieve pressure on public services, including emergency services, during a time when they will be under extreme pressure as a result of the COVID-19 epidemic.
5. We expect all organisations and bodies in Scotland to operate responsibly in this unprecedented situation, and to take appropriate action in response to this advice.
6. This advice is not expected to have a significant impact on the spread of COVID-19, and this is not its purpose. Individuals should continue to observe the medical advice available at NHS Inform.

Advice to organisers

7. **The advice of the Scottish Government is that mass events should not take place, with effect from Monday 16 March 2020. The definition of a mass event, for this purpose, is any event expected to involve more than 500 attendees.**

8. This advice applies to mass events across all sectors – including sporting events, cultural events, and religious gatherings.

Sporting events

9. While this advice applies to a range of sectors, we recognise that these measures will have a specific impact on sports events – and in particular on sports like football and rugby, given the large attendances at many games, and the large number of people who participate.

10. On 13 March 2020, all domestic professional and grassroots football under the jurisdiction of the Scottish FA was suspended until further notice. The SRU will implement similar restrictions from 15 March 2020 in relation to professional and grassroots rugby. The Scottish Government supports these steps.

11. There will clearly be implications across all organised sport in Scotland. The impact of the advice above is that large-scale events should not take place across a range of sports. Sports may also wish to consider the viability of holding grassroots and club activity, in light of the increased spread of the virus and the impact that may have on both participants, staff and volunteers. Sports may wish to carefully consider cancelling sessions specifically aimed at older adults given the increased risk posed to those individuals.

12. Sports Governing Bodies, Clubs, supporters and event organisers will want to give careful consideration as to whether they travel to any scheduled overseas competitions. Restrictions on mass gatherings and travel more generally have been implemented in many countries across the globe, resulting in many cancellations of sporting competitions. For those who may still be planning on travelling to sporting events overseas, the FCO's travel advice should be followed. Where participants in sporting events would be coming from countries on the FCO list, or with their own travel restrictions, we would advise against the event going ahead.

13. Further measures may be taken as the situation develops. The Scottish Government are continuing to liaise with all sports bodies, in the interest of the health and safety of participants, coaches, support staff and volunteers.

Other settings

14. This advice does not apply to public transport, educational settings, workplaces, shopping centres or public spaces.

Travel to and from Scotland

15. This advice does not impact on travel to or from Scotland.

Further guidance

16. Further advice for the public is available through [NHS Inform](#). The Scottish Government is also putting out the latest information and advice through social media channels, and on the Scottish Government [website](#).

17. People can reduce the risk of acquiring and spreading respiratory infections by practising good hygiene, such as:

- avoiding direct hand contact with your eyes, nose and mouth
- maintaining good hand hygiene
- washing hands with soap and water or alcohol hand sanitiser, after coughing or sneezing, after going to the toilet, and prior to eating and drinking
- avoiding direct contact with people that have a respiratory illness and not using their personal items such as their mobile phone
- covering their nose and mouth with disposable tissues when coughing or sneezing and disposing of them in the nearest waste bin after use .

18. The Scottish Government has set up a helpline for Scottish businesses and event organisers to provide them with tailored advice on Coronavirus. The helpline, 0300 303 0660, operates from 08.30 till 17.30 Monday to Friday, and online at <https://findbusinesssupport.gov.scot/>.

Revisions to this advice

19. This advice remains in force until amended. It will be maintained and revised in light of events.

20. The Scottish Government will continue to work closely with the UK Government, other devolved administrations, expert advisers and our Resilience partners on this, and all other aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT
15 MARCH 2020

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What kind of events does this announcement cover?

The Scottish Government advises that, with effect from 16 March 2020, mass events should not take place.

The definition of a mass event for the purpose of this advice is any event with more than 500 attendees.

We expect all organisations and bodies in Scotland to operate responsibly in this unprecedented situation, and to take appropriate action in response to this advice.

What about smaller events?

Where an event involves relatively small numbers, but is likely to have a potential impact on emergency services, organisers should consider it on its merits, alongside current health advice.

How does this relate to the clinical advice?

The current clinical advice is that cancelling events will not significantly delay the spread of the virus.

This advice on the cancellation of mass events is being made on the basis of protecting our services' capacity to deliver essential services.

Why is this being done in Scotland and not in the rest of UK?

The Scottish Government is working closely and in collaboration with the UK Government in our work to contain and manage the Covid-19 outbreak.

Decisions about the resilience of public services in Scotland are a matter for the Scottish Government. We are taking this view to protect Scottish services ability to protect us.

What does this mean for other large gatherings e.g. public transport, educational settings, workplaces, shopping centres and public spaces?

There is no change to the clinical and scientific advice.

What does this mean for Scotland as a tourist destination?

This pandemic affects us all. As a responsible Government, we need to do everything in our power to free up resources to tackle this outbreak.

Visitors are welcome and no doubt will understand that we are doing everything we can to keep them and the people of Scotland safe.

Are events being cancelled entirely, or just postponed?

This will be for organisers to consider on a case by case basis.

What about the cost impact on organisers of cancellations?

This is a matter for individual organisers and insurers. Event organisers with concerns about the immediate impact on their business may find it helpful to contact the Covid-19 [business helpline](#).

Will attendees be able to get refunds for cancelled events?

This is a matter for event organisers.

What does this mean for major events later in the year? Will COP26 be affected?

There is currently no impact on COP26. The work to plan and deliver this event is continuing as planned.