



FALKLAND ISLANDS GOVERNMENT

Clarification on social distancing and bubbles

1 July 2020

Whilst we are confident that the recent outbreak of COVID-19 that we saw in the Islands in April this year has been closed down, this doesn't mean that we should become complacent. COVID-19 remains a disease that is still spreading quickly around the world. In real terms our risk of COVID remains – even with strict quarantine measures in place, there is still a chance that the virus could get into the Islands again. It is for this reason that advice remains around the social distancing and bubble recommendations.

The advice given is guidance, it is not a rule and you will not be in trouble if you breach the distances or bubble concept – this is just advice for the safest way to live your life through the COVID pandemic. In the event we experience an outbreak in the Islands, this advice would be reviewed and guidance adjusted accordingly.

Social distancing – why bother?

Coronavirus spreads when virus particles get into the body through the eyes, nose or mouth. One route is via contaminated surfaces, but the more common route of infection appears to be tiny virus-bearing droplets that are released into the air by coughs and sneezes, and to a lesser extent when people talk or shout. The aim of physical distancing is to be far enough away from an infected person to avoid the airborne droplets.

Social distancing rules differ between countries, but in simple terms the further away from someone you are, the less likely you will be to catch anything from them. Health officials in the UK recommend people keep at least 2 meters from each other. At that distance, they believe the risk of infection during face-to-face conversation reduces to an acceptable level. The risk of transmission falls as physical distance between people increases, so relaxing the distancing rules, particularly for indoor settings, might risk an increase in infection rates.

Is distance everything?

No. The way a person is exposed to the virus and how long for is important too. Whilst the science behind this is complex, in a nutshell just remember that to be as safe as possible we need to keep our distance, and if you do feel a cough or a sneeze coming on, turn away from the person you are talking to and cough/sneeze into your elbow, not your hands! Social distancing along with regular and thorough handwashing is the best way to keep yourself safe.

And the three-bubble limit?

In line with the advice around social distancing, to be as safe as possible it is important to keep your groups small. Your personal 'bubble' is whoever lives in your household with you, and with these people you generally don't need to socially distance. Our best advice currently is that you should keep your gatherings small (three bubbles). If there is COVID-19 in the community, it will be contained more easily if people mix with smaller groups, and should there be an outbreak it will help make contact tracing much easier.

Again, this is not a hard and fast rule, it is a personal choice. The distancing and bubble advice is simply there as a way to help people stay safe in this uncertain times we live in.

Do I need to do anything if I see others not following the guidance?

No. This is guidance and is best advice – **this is not the law**. If you see people doing their own thing, that is completely their business. Everyone makes their own choices in life and takes their own risks. Some smoke, some drink too much, some people never exercise. Some people will choose not to follow this advice and given our current status with the virus this is fine and it is personal choice.