



Coronavirus Wetherspoon pubs set out post-lockdown plans Free 231224

## Description



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**The JD Wetherspoon pub chain has outlined plans for reopening hundreds of pubs once lockdown restrictions are eased.**

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Staff will be provided with face masks and protective eyewear and the chain will run a reduced food menu.

Wetherspoon boss John Hutson said: "The safety of our staff and customers is paramount".

Most UK pubs have been closed since 20 March, although some have recently started to offer takeaway drinks.

Wetherspoon said that it planned to invest an initial £11m on the new measures to protect drinkers and its workers.

## Stopping Covid

Under the new rules, each pub will have about 10 hand sanitiser stations, including one at the entrance for customers to use.

Pub-goers will also be asked to use the firm's app to order and pay, or use contactless at the bar where possible, in a bid to stop the spread of Covid-19.

Bottles of ketchup and mayonnaise will also be replaced by individual sachets.

They will also be encouraged to sit outside in pub gardens, while some indoor seating areas will be separated by Perspex screens.

Bar staff will have their temperatures taken on-site and will be asked to sign a daily health assessment.

The firm said it is also planning to hire two new full-time employees per pub, charged with sanitising door handles and hand rails as well as ensuring that customers are sticking to social distancing measures.

The chain's 875 pubs across the UK and Ireland will not, however, reduce their trading hours.

Mr Hutson, the JD Wetherspoon boss, added that although the government has not yet confirmed any reopening date for pubs, "it is important that we are prepared for any announcement."

The government has said that pubs in England could reopen on 4 July at the earliest if the UK meets targets to suppress the virus.

Decisions on easing lockdown in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are the responsibility of each national government.

As a result of the closures, the Wetherspoon pub chain has been forced to furlough 99% of its 43,000

employees under the government's job retention scheme.

Under the scheme, the government pays 80% of salary for staff who are kept on by their employer, covering wages of up to £2,500 a month.

A spokesman for the Wetherspoon pub chain told the BBC that it is "topping" the amount up for workers who are paid more than the monthly cap.

They added that it hopes to bring about six people per pub out of furlough each fortnight before pubs open, or roughly 5,000 members of staff.

The British Beer & Pub Association previously called on the UK government to halve the two-metre social distancing rule.

It said many pubs would struggle under those guidelines, and pointed out that the World Health Organisation suggests a one metre distance instead., external

Some pubs in England are currently open but are only allowed to operate as takeaways.

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