



COVID AND FESTIVALS

Key facts document

General points

- Large-scale events are currently allowed to take place across the country with no restrictions. There are no legal requirements for testing or Covid certification but the vast majority of festivals are going above and beyond, using the NHS Covid pass for entry, with a recent test or proof of double vaccination being required.
- In addition, there has been a huge amount of work by the industry over the last 12 months building best practice guidance to ensure festivals are mitigating the risks as much as possible – for fans and staff.
- The live music industry is running its own campaigns encouraging fans to take a test before and after attendance at events, even if they have been double vaccinated. We would encourage other sectors that bring people together, such as pubs, restaurants, sports events and other nightlife settings, to do likewise.
- This process is identifying many asymptomatic people who would otherwise been at risk of passing on the virus – at all large festivals many people have been caught by the pre-event process and isolated as a result.
- The industry has also worked with Government to support efforts to promote vaccination, particularly to younger age groups. This has involved social media and e-mail campaigns, as well as the provision of vaccination points at some events.
- Given the high prevalence of Covid in the community currently, this encouragement to take additional tests will lead to new Covid cases being discovered.
- Given the generally high vaccination rate, the NHS Covid Pass is primarily being used to indicate that an individual has had two vaccinations. This does not have any bearing on whether that individual has Covid at that time of the event, hence the encouragement for fans to take a test in addition.
- PHE Test and Trace data sets come with the following proviso: “Cases reported through NHS Test and Trace cannot be directly attributed to a specific event.” While clearly it is likely there will be some transmission at large events, transmission may occur in many different places around the time of event (transport, pubs/restaurants, private houses before or after the event). This is particularly true for non-residential events where people leave and return, often having been to numerous other venues in between.
- Media reports of a ‘new strain’ of the Delta variant emerging following a recent festival are completely baseless. Dr Susan Hopkins, COVID-19 Strategic Response Director at PHE said: “There is no evidence to date that the surge in cases linked to festivals relates to a new variant or strain, but this will be continually monitored. We are consistently reviewing all sequencing data to monitor and assess the emergence of new variants and do this for any surge in cases.”

Events Research Programme

The Government recently published interim results on its Events Research Programme. The two music festivals in the latest ERP wave actually happened following the lifting of all restrictions in Stage 4 of the Government's roadmap – at a time when the prevalence of Covid in the community was very high. Despite that, the research found that events could run safely.

- “Recently published data, drawn from a range of the 37 trial events that have formed the Government's Events Research Programme over a four-month period, has shown that case numbers were largely in line with or below community infection rates for the duration of the programme.” – Government press release
- “We've shown that we can reintroduce mass sports and cultural events safely, but it is important that people remain cautious when mixing in very crowded settings. So that we can keep the football season, theatres and gigs safe with full crowds this winter, I urge sport, music and culture fans to get the vaccine as this is the safest way, we can get big events firing on all cylinders once more.” – Oliver Dowden MP, Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.
- Many events in the ERP had attendees with a younger age profile and this is particularly the case for music festivals. For example, during Latitude Festival and Tramlines Festival, while national prevalence was estimated at 1 in 65 people, the prevalence for a 21-year-old was estimated from ONS Coronavirus Infection Survey at 1 in 35. Testing following the events indicated a prevalence at the shows similar to, and certainly no higher than, the level in the general community.