

# Socially Connected: Physically Protected

Guidance from the Falkland Islands Government, 5 May 2020

Updated 25 June to reflect changes to guidance around isolation for those identified as vulnerable, as part of a series of easing of restrictions. The general guidance around social interaction through bubbles remains in place. This document will be amended in future should the COVID-19 response change further.

## Steps to date

On 20 March 2020, the Falkland Islands Government began to introduce measures to protect the people of the Islands from COVID-19 when it appeared that there might be people who were ill in Stanley. On 26 March, the FIG asked people to change how they behaved and reduced the things that they could do, to lessen the risk of the virus moving through local communities.

We didn't have any testing kit on the islands, so we made a series of decisions to help keep people safe. We asked you to reduce the contact you had with other people and to help make sure any illnesses that were on the islands didn't spread, we closed schools, reduced non-essential activities and asked you to reduce the amount of contact you had with other people.

We have been able to test for COVID-19 by swabbing people with flu like symptoms and we have been able to get these processed in the UK by sending them via the Airbridge. However, this takes a number of days and if anyone did have COVID-19 it could be some time before it was confirmed.

This is now changing. We have benefited from swabs being sent on a now regular basis on the Airbridge to the UK and now the KEMH are setting up a new testing platform that allows us to swab and test people who are ill and to see what is causing it. Having this tool on the islands means that we can start to make some changes.

As the safety of our community is the priority, we want to make sure that whatever we do does not increase the risk of COVID-19 spreading around the islands so we have looked at other countries to see what is the best way to help us safely increase our contact with others. The best match to our circumstances we have found is the approach being used in New Zealand and so we have taken some of it and adapted it to the Falkland Islands.

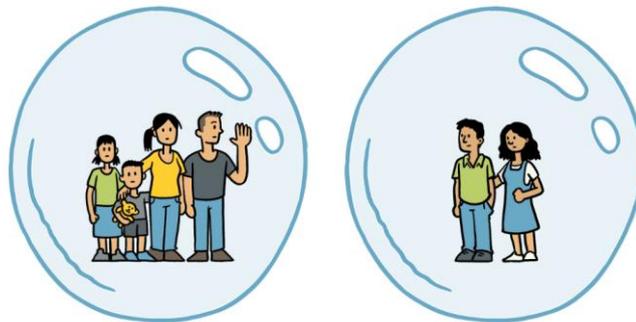
## Blowing your bubble

The main idea being used in New Zealand, which we have adapted, is the advice provided to help people get together as groups in what are being called "Bubbles." You may think this is an odd term, but we are using it to help people make decisions about who they meet with socially and how they mix.

As part of the changes we are making to our social distancing recommendations we are asking you to identify the people who are in your immediate bubble. In most cases, these people will be those who share your home. We are asking you to keep the number of people in your bubbles as small as possible so if COVID-19 arrives in the islands, the potential spread is contained. It will also make it easier for us to contact people who might have been exposed to the virus.

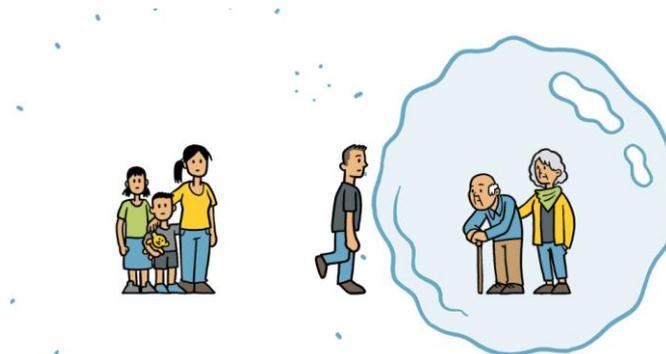
If older relatives are able to safely live on their own, then they should stay as their own bubble. If you live alone, and you have a nearby friend who lives alone, then the two of you can form a bubble and move between your two homes. If you have flatmates and your partner has flatmates, you can't form a bubble unless one of you moves in with the other.

Your bubble is like a protective shield to keep you safe from COVID-19.



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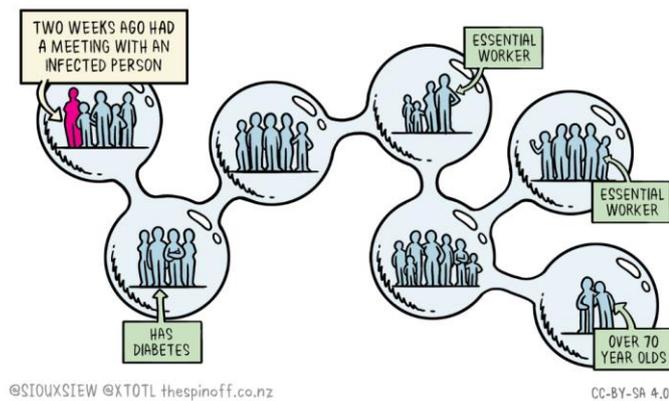
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If people do become ill with the virus, limiting the contact between different bubbles will help to stop the spread. What is also important is that your whole bubble must isolate if one of you becomes unwell with COVID-19 like symptoms – and of course, contact KEMH on 28000.

Everyone inside your bubble, including children, will need to know what to do when mixing with others such as your friends. This will include

- Staying two metres away, where possible, from anyone outside your bubble
- Washing or sanitizing your hands regularly especially when you go into a new place, after you have touched something or after you have sneezed or coughed
- Only meeting up with a small number of people outside your household bubble. The graphic below shows what could happen if too many bubbles are connecting.



If you need support from people as part of your everyday life, these people are not part of your bubble, but they can still care for you once they have washed and dried their hands. Some may also need to use personal protective equipment.

### Connecting your bubble

To help people make decisions about what these changes mean and how it affects what they do, we are asking people to take a gradual approach to connecting their home bubbles with those of other people.

## New changes

What does this mean for me?

1. Your household can meet up and socialise with up to 2 other households at any one time (three households in total). On a different occasion, your bubble could interact with two different bubbles.
2. When you do get together you will still need to stay physically distant from each other, but you will be able to catch up and keep socially connected
3. When people visit your home, they will need to wash and dry their hands before they touch anything and only come to visit you if you and they are well. You need to do the same thing if you go into their home. This keeps your extended bubble protected.
4. People who provide essential services can enter your bubble if you decide they can keep you safe. These people might provide health services, therapy, or they might provide other essential services, such as plumbers, electricians, or food deliveries. You can let people know that if they come into your home they will need to wash and dry their hands and keep two metres away from you where possible.
5. We strongly recommend you keep a social diary. This will help should there be any COVID-19 cases as you will be able to tell us who you have been spending time with.
6. KEMH will let you know if you should not meet up with people from outside your household. **As of 19 June, however, the restrictions on social interactions by people considered most vulnerable has been lifted. High-risk individuals should feel confident to finally be able to enjoy meeting friends and family without concern. If anyone feels anxious, overwhelmed or apprehensive about the easing of the restrictions, please contact the KEMH for help, guidance and support.**

**What does this mean for me at work?**

1. Schools and nurseries will be re-opening for all our children and young people. The staff teams have been working hard to make sure that the building is clean and safe.
2. The new changes mean that we are now recommending that all businesses (unless otherwise specifically advised not to by the Government in its most current guidance) can re-open. We have used information from New Zealand to help us develop guidance to help owners and managers keep you safe at work. This is available elsewhere.

3. As of 19 June, everyone is able to go back to their usual place of work. If you have any concerns, please discuss them with your employer.
4. If you are sick with COVID-19 like symptoms, you must stay home. Contact KEMH on 28000 to seek further advice. Do not go to the hospital. Don't forget, your household, or "bubble", must also isolate with you while you are being tested for COVID-19.

### **What won't be changing**

1. **As of June 19, the closing of play parks has been lifted.**
2. For the time being, there will still be restrictions on extreme sports and sports where there is lots of physical contact and social distancing isn't practical or there's a risk of a bad injury. We are working with the clubs to develop ways to help you stay connected with your teams and keep active

### **If you have questions**

As we are introducing a new way of interacting, we expect you to have questions. If you need further help in deciding whether to expand your bubble, or how to keep yourself safe, call KEMH to discuss other solutions.