



Covid-19

MRS Face-to-Face Data Collection Guidance Interpreting Scotland's Protection Level Restrictions and Requirements

23rd July 2021

Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic continues to evolve and now as all four UK nations ease restrictions it is essential that practitioners follow government guidance about social contact and social distancing.

The aim of this document is to provide an update on the current government advice from across the UK's four nations and to provide updated practical guidance for practitioners when undertaking face-to-face data collection with participants.

The current MRS guidance consists of:

[MRS Guidance: Undertaking Safe Face-to-Face Data Collection](#)
[MRS Guidance: Undertaking Safe Face-to-Face Mystery Shopping](#)
[Guidance on Facilities Used for Face-to-Face Data Collection](#)

At the time of writing England, Northern Ireland and Wales have also adopted specific measures. Research practitioners are required to give priority to local guidance i.e. where research practice takes place.

The Government guidance for the country in which you are undertaking data collection will apply and research practitioners must follow the relevant Government guidance:

- [England](#)
- [Northern Ireland](#)
- [Scotland](#)
- [Wales](#)

Context

MRS advice is based on our current understanding of the Scottish Government guidance and support on COVID-19 (see <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-protection-levels/>) which is subject to continuous development. MRS will update and publish accordingly, but it remains the responsibility of research practitioners to keep up to date.

It should be noted the MRS guidance does not replace government advice; it is meant to supplement the official sources with the addition of some research considerations. Remember to continue to check the up-to-date guidance on the Scottish Government website: <https://www.gov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19/>

New Restrictions and Requirements

Scotland

Scotland continues to operate a **Protection Levels** scheme (from Level 0 to Level 4). Each Level has a different set of rules on what individuals can and cannot do. Overall individuals should wear face coverings, avoid crowded places, clean hands and surfaces regularly and stay two metres away from other people.

The Scottish Government's guidance on travel and transport restrictions are detailed here: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-travel-and-transport/>

Table 1 summarises the Scottish restrictions which have direct implications for face-to-face data collection. This must be read in conjunction with the other MRS guidance:

- [MRS Guidance: Undertaking Safe Face-to-Face Data Collection](#)
- [MRS Guidance: Undertaking Safe Face-to-Face Mystery Shopping](#)
- [Guidance on Facilities Used for Face-to-Face Data Collection](#)

Principles of the Guidance

- Research is a business activity, not a social activity.
- Research practitioners have a responsibility to protect participants and the reputation of the profession.
- Research practitioners must undertake risk assessments of any proposed face-to-face data collection exercise before beginning the activity.
- When face-to-face data collection is undertaken it can only be undertaken in those locations that remain open as a result of Covid-19 restrictions and in locations allowed within the MRS guidance.
- In-home face-to-face data collection continues to be restricted to on the doorstep only.

Interpretation of Requirements

When requirements use the word "must" these are mandatory requirements and is a principle or practice that applies the MRS Code of Conduct, which Members and Company Partners are obliged to follow.

The requirements which use the phrase "should" describe implementation and denotes a recommended practice.

"May" or "can" refer to the ability to do something, the possibility of something, as well as granting permission.

General Requirements for Scotland

1. Scotland has extra protection level advice for people at higher risk from Covid-19. Research practitioners must follow the [protection level advice](#) for practitioners and participants in Scotland. Research practitioners must wear a face covering in:
 - shops, on public transport and health and social care settings, including staff, patients and visitors
 - public transport service and premises
 - workplaces (other than early learning or school settings)
 - any premises open to members of the public and used for the retail sale or hire of goods or services, such as shops, takeaway restaurants, pharmacies, estate agents, beauty parlours and shopping malls
 - hospitality premises such as bars, pubs and cafes and restaurants, and canteens (including workplace canteens)
 - banks, building societies, credit unions and post offices

- courts and tribunal buildings
- places of worship
- visitor attractions, indoor tourist, heritage or cultural sites such as museums and galleries, aquariums, indoor zoos or visitor farms,
- entertainment venues such as cinemas, indoor theatres, comedy clubs, concert halls, soft play centres, bingo halls, bowling alleys, amusement arcades, snooker and pool halls, and other leisure facilities, indoor funfairs and indoor skating rinks
- community centres
- crematoriums and funeral directors' premises
- libraries and public reading rooms
- storage and distribution facilities, including collection and drop-off points
- indoor fitness studios, gyms, swimming pools or other indoor leisure centres
- sports stadiums
- conference or exhibition centres

Full details are available here: <http://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-public-use-of-face-coverings/#Face%20coverings%20at%20work>

2. Scotland has [additional restrictions about travelling](#) around Scotland which research practitioners must follow. Travel for work, where it cannot be done from home (which would include face-to-face data collection), is included within the limited exceptions not to travel into or out of Level 3 and Level 4 local authority areas, or to or from other parts of the UK. Travel is allowed between Scotland and England, Wales, Northern Ireland, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.
3. Scotland has [further requirements on vehicle sharing](#) which research practitioners must follow. Research practitioners should avoid sharing a vehicle with people who are not members of their household or extended household as much as possible. If research practitioners have no other option, they should:
 - Limit the number of people sharing a vehicle to as few as possible, ideally no more than 2
 - Use the biggest vehicle for car sharing purposes
 - Occupants should sit as far apart as possible, ideally passengers should sit in the back seat diagonally opposite the driver
 - Windows in the vehicle should be opened as far as possible (taking into account weather conditions) to improve ventilation
 - Occupants in the vehicle, including the driver, should wear a face covering, unless exempt and provided it does not compromise driver safety in anyway
 - Occupants in the vehicle should perform hand hygiene before entering the vehicle and again on leaving the vehicle
 - Occupants should avoid eating in the vehicle
 - Passengers should minimise touching surfaces in the vehicle
 - Music and radios should be kept to low volumes to prevent the need for raised voices
 - Journey times should be kept to the minimum feasible and individuals should not linger in vehicles before or after a journey
 - If a vehicle is a research practitioners' responsibility, clean the door handles, electronic buttons, seat belts and other areas that people touch
4. If research practitioners regularly share transport (e.g. field interviewers who work in pairs) they should try and share with the same people each time.

Table 1: Scotland Restrictions – extract of those rules relevant to face-to-face data collection – as per 12th April 2021

Protection level	Summary of Restrictions – see here for full details	Mandatory implications for data collection	Other considerations – best practice and other potential implications
Level 0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum 10 people from up to 4 households may socialise indoors in a public place • Maximum of 8 people from up to 4 households may socialise in a private dwelling. • Maximum of 15 people from up to 15 households can socialise outdoors. • Unrestricted travel to all Levels 0-2 areas; must not enter a Level 3 or 4 area unless for a permitted reason • Active travel where possible. • Avoid car sharing with people outside extended household wherever possible. • Face coverings compulsory on public transport. • Local licensing laws apply indoors (10/4) or outdoors (15/15) socialising rules apply. • Restaurants, shops, close contact services, sport and exercise, tourist accommodation, leisure and entertainment, visitor attractions are open. Adult entertainment and nightclubs are closed. • Sports stadia and events 400 capacity indoors, 2,000 outdoor seated and 1,000 free standing. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Research practitioners can continue to undertake face-to-face data collection except in those locations that remain closed as a result of Covid-19 restrictions and those locations that are currently restricted within the MRS guidance (i.e. on the doorstep rather than in-home). 2. Research practitioners must follow the appropriate Scottish Government safe working guidance and the current MRS Covid-19 guidance which consists of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MRS Guidance: Undertaking Safe Face to Face Data Collection • MRS Guidance: Undertaking Safe Face to Face Mystery Shopping • Guidance on Facilities Used for Face to Face Data Collection 3. Research practitioners must follow the appropriate additional Protection Level advice for People on the Scottish Shielding List: https://www.gov.scot/publications/covid-shielding/pages/levels-advice/ 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Research practitioners who live in a Level 0, 1, or 2 area in Scotland, or are considering travel to Scotland from anywhere else, should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • minimise unnecessary journeys between areas in different levels • avoid any unnecessary travel to places in Level 3 or Level 4 areas; if practitioners have to travel for essential purposes, follow the Scottish Government guidance on travelling safely <p>Research practitioners can find out which parts of Scotland are in Levels 3 and 4 via the Scottish Government's postcode checker.</p>

Protection level	Summary of Restrictions – see here for full details	Mandatory implications for data collection	Other considerations – best practice and other potential implications
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work from home remains the default with phased and limited return to workplaces. 		
Level 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximum 8 people from up to 3 households may socialise indoors in a public place. Maximum of 6 people from up to 3 households may socialise in a private dwelling. Maximum of 12 people from up to 12 households can socialise outdoors. Unrestricted travel to all Levels 0-2 areas; must not enter a Level 3 or 4 area unless for a permitted reason. Active travel where possible. Avoid car sharing with people outside extended household wherever possible. Face coverings compulsory on public transport. Outdoors: local licensing laws apply Indoors: Closed 23:00 indoors (8/3) or outdoors (12/12) socialising rules apply. Restaurants, shops, close contact services, sport and exercise, tourist accommodation, leisure and entertainment, visitor attractions are open. Adult entertainment and nightclubs are closed. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Research practitioners can continue to undertake face-to-face data collection except in those locations that remain closed as a result of Covid-19 restrictions and those locations that are currently restricted within the MRS guidance (i.e. on the doorstep rather than in-home). Research practitioners must follow the appropriate Scottish Government safe working guidance and the current MRS Covid-19 guidance which consists of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MRS Guidance: Undertaking Safe Face to Face Data Collection MRS Guidance: Undertaking Safe Face to Face Mystery Shopping Guidance on Facilities Used for Face to Face Data Collection Research practitioners must follow the appropriate additional Protection Level advice for People on the Scottish Shielding List: https://www.gov.scot/publications/covid-shielding/pages/levels-advice/ 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Research practitioners who live in a Level 0, 1, or 2 area in Scotland, or are considering travel to Scotland from anywhere else, should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> minimise unnecessary journeys between areas in different levels avoid any unnecessary travel to places in Level 3 or Level 4 areas; if practitioners have to travel for essential purposes, follow the Scottish Government guidance on travelling safely <p>Research practitioners can find out which parts of Scotland are in Levels 3 and 4 via the Scottish Government's postcode checker.</p>

Protection level	Summary of Restrictions – see here for full details	Mandatory implications for data collection	Other considerations – best practice and other potential implications
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sports stadia and events 200 capacity indoors, 1,000 outdoor seated and 500 free standing. Work from home where possible. 		
Level 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximum 6 people from up to 3 households may socialise indoors in a public place. Maximum of 6 people from up to 3 households may socialise in a private dwelling. Maximum of 8 people from up to 8 households may socialise outdoors. Unrestricted travel to all Levels 0-2 areas; must not enter a Level 3 or 4 area unless for a permitted reason. Active travel where possible. Avoid car sharing with people outside extended household wherever possible. Face coverings compulsory on public transport. Outdoors: local licensing laws apply Indoors: alcohol permitted, 2 hour slots – closed 22:30 indoors (6/3) or outdoors (8/8) socialising rules apply. Restaurants, shops, close contact services, sport and exercise, tourist accommodation, leisure and entertainment, visitor attractions are open. Adult entertainment, soft play and nightclubs are closed. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Research practitioners can continue to undertake face-to-face data collection except in those locations that remain closed as a result of Covid-19 restrictions and those locations that are currently restricted within the MRS guidance (i.e. on the doorstep rather than in-home). Research practitioners must follow the appropriate Scottish Government safe working guidance and the current MRS Covid-19 guidance which consists of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MRS Guidance: Undertaking Safe Face to Face Data Collection MRS Guidance: Undertaking Safe Face to Face Mystery Shopping Guidance on Facilities Used for Face to Face Data Collection Research practitioners must follow the appropriate additional Protection Level advice for People on the Scottish Shielding List: https://www.gov.scot/publications/covid-shielding/pages/levels-advice/ 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Research practitioners who live in a Level 0, 1, or 2 area in Scotland, or are considering travel to Scotland from anywhere else, should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> minimise unnecessary journeys between areas in different levels avoid any unnecessary travel to places in Level 3 or Level 4 areas; if practitioners have to travel for essential purposes, follow the Scottish Government guidance on travelling safely <p>Research practitioners can find out which parts of Scotland are in Levels 3 and 4 via the Scottish Government's postcode checker.</p> Research practitioners should act with consideration with participants and be aware of heightened awareness linked with the new restrictions when approaching participants.

Protection level	Summary of Restrictions – see here for full details	Mandatory implications for data collection	Other considerations – best practice and other potential implications
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sports stadia and events 100 capacity indoors, 500 outdoor seated and 250 free standing. Work from home where possible. 		<p>3. Research practitioners should take extra care with their working safely and infection hygiene arrangements including themselves and the materials and tools they use.</p>
Level 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No in-home socialising 6 people from 2 households may socialise indoors in a public place. Maximum of 6 people from up to 6 households may socialise outdoors. No travel to or from a Level 3 area except for a permitted reason. Active travel where possible. Avoid car sharing with people outside extended household wherever possible. Face coverings compulsory on public transport. Due to limited capacity if using public transport plan ahead. Outdoors: alcohol permitted – local licensing laws apply indoors: alcohol not permitted – closed 20:00 Indoors (6/2) or outdoors (6/6) socialising rules apply. Restaurants, shops, close contact services, sport and exercise, tourist accommodation, visitor attractions are open. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Research practitioners must only undertake face-to-face data collection when no alternative methodology is suitable. In all other respects research practitioners must follow the MRS Covid-19 guidance which consists of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MRS Guidance: Undertaking Safe Face to Face Data Collection MRS Guidance: Undertaking Safe Face to Face Mystery Shopping Guidance on Facilities Used for Face to Face Data Collection Research practitioners must follow the appropriate Scottish Government safe working guidance. Research practitioners must follow the appropriate additional Protection Level advice for People on the Scottish Shielding List: 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Research practitioners who live in a Level 3 local authority area should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> avoid any unnecessary travel out of the area if research practitioners have to travel for essential purposes, follow the Scottish Government guidance on travelling safely <p>Research practitioners can find out which parts of Scotland are in Levels 3 and 4 via the Scottish Government’s postcode checker.</p> Research practitioners should act with consideration with participants and be aware of heightened awareness linked with the protection level restrictions when approaching participants. Research practitioners should take extra care with their working

Protection level	Summary of Restrictions – see here for full details	Mandatory implications for data collection	Other considerations – best practice and other potential implications
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stadia and public events (except drive-in), leisure and entertainment, adult entertainment, soft play and nightclubs are closed. Work from home where possible. 	https://www.gov.scot/publications/covid-shielding/pages/levels-advice/	<p>safely and infection hygiene arrangements including themselves and the materials and tools they use.</p>
Level 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No in-home socialising. Maximum 4 people from up to 2 households may socialise indoors in a public place. Maximum 4 people from up to 2 households No travel to or from a Level 4 area except for a permitted reason. Active travel where possible. Avoid car sharing with people outside extended household wherever possible. Face coverings compulsory on public transport. No use of public transport, except for essential purposes. Essential retail open. Hospitality closed except food to go/takeaway. Hotel accommodation only open to essential stays e.g. work related. Close contact services open by appointment only. Outdoor visitor attractions open. Leisure and entertainment, stadia and events closed. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Research practitioners must only undertake essential face-to-face data collection. In all other respects research practitioners must follow the MRS Covid-19 guidance which consists of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MRS Guidance: Undertaking Safe Face to Face Data Collection MRS Guidance: Undertaking Safe Face to Face Mystery Shopping Guidance on Facilities Used for Face to Face Data Collection Research practitioners must follow the appropriate Scottish Government safe working guidance. Research practitioners must follow the appropriate additional Protection Level advice for People on the Scottish Shielding List: https://www.gov.scot/publications/covid-shielding/pages/levels-advice/ 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Research practitioners who live in a Level 4 local authority area should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> avoid any unnecessary travel out of the area also keep journeys within the area to an absolute minimum if you have to travel for essential purposes, follow the Scottish Government guidance on travelling safely <p>Research practitioners can find out which parts of Scotland are in Levels 3 and 4 via the Scottish Government's postcode checker.</p> Research practitioners should act with consideration with participants and be aware of heightened awareness linked with the protection levels when approaching participants. Research practitioners should take extra care with their working safely and infection hygiene arrangements including

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			themselves and the materials and tools they use.

