



Covid-19

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

April 2021

Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic continues to evolve and now as all four UK nations enter slowly another post-lockdown 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 Scottish government advice 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 (<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/>

Research is a business activity, not a social activity. Research practitioners have a responsibility to protect participants and the reputation of the profession.

New Restrictions and Requirements

Scotland

The Protection Level restrictions are detailed on the Scottish Government site. At present all of mainland Scotland and some of the islands are at Level 4 and some of the islands are at Level 3.

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.
- Face-to-face data collection will only be undertaken when no other alternative methodology can be used.
- 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.
2. Research practitioners must wear a face covering in shops, on public transport and public transport premises such as railway and bus stations and airports, and in certain other indoor public places (when open) such as shops, restaurants/cafes including canteens (including in workplaces and when not seated), libraries and places of worship. In workplaces (other than an early learning or school setting), individuals are legally obliged to wear a face covering in communal areas indoors, unless exempt. Full details are available here:

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

3. 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.
4. 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 maintain good ventilation
 - Occupants in the vehicle should wear a face covering, unless exempt
 - Occupants in the vehicle should perform hand hygiene before entering the vehicle and again on leaving 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
 - If the vehicle is a research practitioners' responsibility, clean the door handles and other areas that people touch
5. 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	Restrictions	Mandatory implications for data collection	Other considerations – best practice and other potential implications
Level 0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At present all of mainland Scotland and some of the islands are at Level 4 and some of the islands are at Level 3. The Scottish Government is due to provide further information on what can and cannot be done at protection levels 0, 1 and 2 in the coming weeks. 	N/A at present.	N/A at present.
Level 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At present all of mainland Scotland and some of the islands are at Level 4 and some of the islands are at Level 3. The Scottish Government is due to provide further information on what can and cannot be done at protection levels 0, 1 and 2 in the coming weeks. 	N/A at present.	N/A at present.
Level 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At present all of mainland Scotland and some of the islands are at Level 4 and some of the islands are at Level 3. The Scottish Government is due to provide further information on what can and cannot be done at protection levels 0, 1 and 2 in the coming weeks. 	N/A at present.	N/A at present.

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<p>Level 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No in-home socialising • 6 people from 2 households outdoors and in public spaces • No alcohol at hospitality venues • Hospitality last entry 5pm and closed 6pm • Essential travel only to/from level 3 or 4 areas in Scotland and to/from rest of UK • Active travel where possible, essential use of public transport and avoid car sharing with people outside of household • Shops, close contract services (with protective measures), support services (online where possible), places of worship (restricted to 50), childcare (with measures), schools (with measures), universities (restricted blended), visitor attractions (with protective measures), public buildings (with protective measures) and services (but reduced) and accommodation (work related only an staying local) all open • Offices and call centres open for essential activities only; work from home the default • Other workplace open with protective measures in place; work from home the default • Level 3 shielding rule 	<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 wear a face covering in those areas where this is mandated when undertaking face-to-face data collection. 3. Research practitioners must continue to follow social distancing rules when undertaking face-to-face data collection. 4. Research practitioners must check whether additional restrictions apply in their area. 5. Research practitioners must follow the appropriate Scottish Government safe working guidance and the current MRS Covid-19 guidance which sets out all the relevant considerations when undertaking face-to-face data collection and consists of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MRS Guidance: Undertaking Safe Face-to-Face Data Collection 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 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> 2. Research practitioners when travelling for face-to-face data collection, should plan ahead to avoid busy public transport times and routes. 3. Research practitioners should consider the amount of travel required to undertake face-to-face data collection and introduce approaches which minimise the amount of travel required e.g. localise data collection to specific areas. 4. Research practitioners should not stay overnight anywhere except in their primary residences.

Protection level	Restrictions	Mandatory implications for data collection	Other considerations – best practice and other potential implications
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indoor individual exercise only (exceptions for under 18s) and outdoor sports and exercise permitted except contact sports • Leisure and entertainment closed • Weddings, funerals and wakes for up to 20 people • Events not permitted • Accommodation open for worked related use and local stays 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MRS Guidance: Undertaking Safe Face-to-Face Mystery Shopping • Guidance on Facilities Used for Face-to-Face Data Collection 	<p>Whilst overnight stays are allowed for business purposes, research practitioners should minimise such stays.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Research practitioners should not travel beyond their local area for face-to-face data collection purposes unless absolutely necessary for the purposes of the project. 6. Research practitioners should act with consideration with participants and be aware of heightened awareness linked with the new restrictions when approaching participants. 7. Research practitioners should take extra care with their working safely and infection hygiene arrangements including themselves and the materials and tools they use.
Level 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals must stay local - within your own council area except for essential reasons like going to work • Individuals can meet in groups of up to 4 people from 2 households outdoors • Individuals can only go into someone else's home for certain reasons such as to carry out essential work 	<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 wear a face covering in those areas where 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 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

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tradespeople can carry out only essential work and repairs in individual’s homes • Individuals should work from home wherever that is practicable • Places and business that can open at Level 4 include: non-mobile hairdressers and barbers by appointment only, essential shops and stores and places of worship • Places and business that must close at Level 4 include: hospitality venues like cafes, pubs and restaurants (except for delivery and takeaway), close contact services (except for non-mobile hairdressers and barbers), gyms and swimming pools, non-essential shops and stores (click and collect allowed), libraries (except for pre-booked computer access and click and collect), holiday accommodation (except for essential customers) and all indoor visitor attractions (outdoor areas can remain open) • The full list of information is available on the Scottish Government website 	<p>this is mandated when undertaking face-to-face data collection.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Research practitioners must continue to follow social distancing rules when undertaking face-to-face data collection. 4. Research practitioners must check whether additional restrictions apply in their area. 5. Research practitioners must consider the amount of travel required to undertake face-to-face data collection and introduce approaches which minimise the amount of travel required e.g. localise data collection to specific areas. 6. Research practitioners when travelling for data collection projects, must plan ahead or avoid busy public transport times and routes. 7. Research practitioners must follow any lockdown restrictions which apply to Northern Ireland, England and Wales if face-to-face data collection requires travel to any of these areas e.g. undertaking face-to-face data collection close to the borders. 8. Research practitioners must follow the appropriate Scottish Government safe working guidance and the current MRS Covid-19 	<p>the Scottish Government guidance on travelling safely</p> <p>Research practitioners can find out which parts of Scotland are in Levels 3 and 4 via the Scottish Government’s postcode checker.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Research practitioners should not stay overnight anywhere except in their primary residences. Whilst overnight stays are allowed for business purposes, research practitioners should minimise such stays. 3. Research practitioners should not travel beyond their local area for face-to-face data collection purposes unless absolutely necessary for the purposes of the project. 4. Research practitioners should act with consideration with participants and be aware of heightened awareness linked with the new restrictions when approaching participants. 5. Research practitioners should take extra care with their working safely and infection hygiene arrangements including

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