The morning after Boris Johnson announced the easing of covid-19 lockdown restrictions in England, London commuters once again packed into tube trains after being urged to return to work if they were unable to work from home.

The government advised anyone who has to take public transport to wear face masks, keep their distance from fellow travellers, and try to avoid rush hour. But pictures posted on media and social network sites of trains and stations across the country showed that many people were unable to follow the guidance.

Transport for London is introducing hand sanitiser points at its stations and will steadily increase the number of trains and buses in service, but Mike Brown, London’s transport commissioner, has conceded that 2 m social distancing “may not always be possible.”

This lack of ability to ensure the virus is not spread between people is among the concerns of Chaand Nagpaul, BMA council chair, who said the first phase of easing the lockdown in England had come too soon. “It is imperative that we do not risk people mixing with each other without the ability to rigidly adhere to social distancing.”