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Sixty seconds on . . . bubbles

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Is this a football reference?

No, it's got nothing to do with West Ham United or their favourite song.¹ The term actually refers to the latest step in the government's relaxation of the lockdown rules that have been in place during the covid-19 pandemic.

The Westminster bubble?

This one was definitely cooked up in Whitehall, with the PM Boris Johnson announcing that from 13 June people that live by themselves or single parents with children will be allowed to expand their household to include one other household of any size.

Bubble trouble?

The government thinks not, describing it as "targeted intervention" to help people who have been separated from family and friends during lockdown. In defined circumstances, it will allow grandparents to see their grandchildren, and couples living apart to see each other in homes (and overnight) without needing to stay two metres apart.

Are single people allowed to have sex again?

Ish. The rule change means that you can spend the night with someone you don't live with, but only if one of you lives alone and they're in an exclusive bubble.

They make it sound so romantic

It's certainly a bit more mechanical than the Dutch advice for people to find "lockdown sex buddies."² But given the general outlooks of the two nations, perhaps a message of "some sex, please (but only if you stick to the rules), we're British" was to be expected.

Can you switch bubbles?

No. The government has stressed that bubbles must be exclusive. This means you can't switch the household you're in a bubble with, connect with multiple households, or have multiple sexual partners.

What about trips to Durham?

Strangely, the government didn't specify. But it did say that if people stick to the rules, the change will help reduce loneliness and keep the rate of transmission down.

1 I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I%27m_Forever_Blowing_Bubbles

2 Caulfield C. Dutch government advises single people to find lockdown "sex buddies." 16 May 2020. <https://metro.co.uk/2020/05/16/dutch-government-advises-single-people-find-lockdown-sex-buddies-12712090>.

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