

# **PARTYGATE: POLICE ISSUE FIRST BATCH OF FINES AGAINST DOWNING STREET STAFF FOR BREACHING LOCKDOWN RULES**

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There are likely to be more fines issued against government personnel in the coming weeks, as well as increased public demand to see them imposed on figures higher up on the food-chain rather than on low-level staff.

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In November of last year, the *Mirror* broke an [exclusive story](#) about Downing Street staff, including Boris Johnson himself, violating the same COVID rules which they had enforced upon everyone else. Today, the Metropolitan Police are investigating twelve potentially illegal parties and social gatherings held at No. 10 over the course of the pandemic. This is separate from the internal probe being led by Sue Gray, a senior civil servant, who when finished will release her findings to the public.

With regard to the police investigation, 20 fines have so far been [issued](#) to government staff for holding a party mid-April, on the eve of Prince Phillip's funeral. One day later, Her Majesty the Queen was [pictured](#) mourning her late husband, alone in St. George's Chapel, because of the coronavirus rules that Downing Street personnel had been flouting the night before.

Johnson was not present at this gathering and has not yet been dealt any penalty. However, the gathering on April 16th—a leaving party for No. 10's former director of communications, James Slack—still took place within Downing Street, the Prime Minister's home and place of work. So far, however, only lower-ranking personnel, such as [former government ethics chief Helen MacNamara](#), are publicly known to have been hit with such fines.

In April 2021, working from home was the official guidance and socialising indoors with members of other households was strictly forbidden. This latest batch of fines against those who behaved like they were exempt from the laws they enforced on ordinary citizens is a welcome development. But there are likely to be more fines issued against government personnel in the coming weeks, as well as increased public demand that they be imposed on figures higher up on the food-chain rather than on low-level staff.

Indeed, Mr. Johnson is thought to have attended at least three of the gatherings under investigation by police. The BBC has an [excellent breakdown](#) of all the parties which are alleged to have taken place within the corridors of power, and the legal rules in force at the time.

[According to Yahoo News](#), police departments throughout England and Wales have issued more than 100,000 fines against ordinary citizens for breaches of the government's own lockdown rules since May 2020. A [graph](#) released by the National Police Chiefs' Council shows that most of these were imposed during the lockdown of January 2021—the precise month in which Johnson attended a [‘prosecco-fuelled’ leaving event](#) in No. 10.

As the police investigation continues, further fines seem all but inevitable. Whether they will go right to the very top is another matter.