



WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

TITLE **Review of the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (No. 2) (Wales) Regulations 2020**

DATE **31 July 2020**

BY **Mark Drakeford MS, First Minister**

The Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (No. 2) (Wales) Regulations 2020 place a series of restrictions on gatherings, the movement of people, and the operation of businesses, including closures. They require businesses, which are open to take reasonable measures to minimise the risk of exposure to coronavirus. They are designed to protect people from the spread of severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2).

Welsh Ministers are required to review the need for the requirements and restrictions and their proportionality every 21 days. The most recent review – the sixth – took place this week.

The scientific and medical advice shows that, overall, levels of coronavirus transmission in Wales are low. We are closely monitoring an outbreak in Wrexham, centred on the Maelor Hospital, which appears to be under control.

The UK's Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) and the Welsh Government's Technical Advisory Cell (TAC) has advised that every change made to relax the lockdown measures – the coronavirus regulations – has a cumulative effect. We are therefore taking a step-by-step approach towards unlocking these measures; closely monitoring the impact of each change; learning from the changes we make and moving forward carefully.

In the last three-week review cycle, we made a number of changes to open up our leisure, retail, tourism and hospitality sectors. After monitoring the impact of these changes and reviewing the wider evidence and indicators about the transmission of the virus in Wales and around the world, we have concluded there is headroom to make some further changes over the coming three-week cycle.

These will once again be phased in over the three weeks and will focus on re-opening parts of the indoor economy, which have so far remained closed and on providing families and friends with more opportunity to meet each other outdoors.

We will also use this cycle to explore the options for enabling more people to meet indoors, if conditions allow.

In the first week, from 3 August, pubs, bars, restaurants and cafes will be able to re-open indoors, as will indoor bowling alleys, auction houses and bingo halls.

We will relax the restrictions on meeting outdoors to enable up to 30 people to meet outdoors. But it is very important that people maintain social distancing at all times.

A consequence of these changes is that premises licensed to carry out marriages and civil ceremonies will be able to re-open. Small, socially-distanced receptions will be allowed outdoors but indoor receptions will not be allowed at this time, until the rules on gatherings indoors are re-visited.

As the scientific evidence shows the risk of transmission is lower in children, we will update the guidance to relax the position on children under 11 maintaining a 2m distance from each other and from adults. However it is very important that older children and young adults continue to maintain social distancing as the level of risk is different in these age groups.

In the second week, if conditions allow, from 10 August, swimming pools, indoor fitness studios, gyms, spas and leisure centres and children's indoor play areas will be able to re-open.

For the third week, we are exploring whether we can make changes to the rules about people meeting indoors. This is one of the most difficult areas from a public health perspective because of the increased risk of transmission. We have seen the resurgence of the virus in places across the world linked to the re-opening of indoor spaces and gatherings of people indoors – in Melbourne and in the southern US states, for example.

The current rules on indoor gatherings will remain in place for the time being. If the scientific evidence and advice from the Chief Medical Officer for Wales supports a relaxation of the rules, we will aim to bring changes into force on 15 August. If we are able to change the rules on gatherings indoors, this will include options to allow small social events, such as wedding receptions to take place.

At present, the rules only allow people to meet indoors with others from the same household or extended household. This means that, from Monday, people will only be able to visit indoor areas of restaurants, pubs, for example with members of their

own household or extended household.

We are moving into the green phase in our traffic light system and as we do, guidance is increasingly important in setting out all the measures and steps we need to take to protect us from coronavirus.

It is vitally important we all follow these new ways of working and behaving and that people and businesses comply with the guidance to help reduce the spread of the virus and to protect people, ensuring we can go on lifting restrictions in the future.

For the small minority who are not following the guidance, we will take action and use the legal powers that we, and others, have.

We will sharpen powers to intervene and manage enforcement wherever necessary and we will act on intelligence reported to the Wales TUC and its affiliated unions.

Coronavirus has not gone away – we all have a shared and ongoing responsibility to keep Wales safe.