



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

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## WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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**TITLE** Introduction of the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restriction) (No.5) (Wales) Regulations 2020

**DATE** 18 December 2020

**BY** Mark Drakeford MS, First Minister

The Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (No. 4) (Wales) Regulations 2020 place a series of restrictions on gatherings, the movement of people, and the operation of businesses. They are designed to protect people from the spread of severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). Those regulations required a review by 17 December, which has led to the replacement of the regulations with the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (No. 5) (Wales) Regulations 2020.

The Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (No. 5) (Wales) Regulations 2020 provide for the introduction of a new system of alert levels in Wales, as set out in the Welsh Government's updated *Coronavirus Control Plan*. These new regulations will be made today and will come into effect on 21 December.

The alert level approach is designed to provide a predictable framework of measures within each level of restrictions. These are set out in the new regulations. The plan also sets out the indicators, which will be considered when deciding on escalating or de-escalating between those levels.

These regulations will – at all alert levels – impose restrictions on gatherings and the movement of people as well as on the operation of businesses, including closures, to help reduce and control the spread of the virus and protect people's health.

Alert levels will initially be applied at an all-Wales level, but with flexibility to adopt different approaches. Experience tells us national measures are more effective, simpler and better understood by the public. However, should there be clear and reliable evidence of sustained regional variations, then the regulations provide restrictions can be provided at a regional or local level.

Despite strengthening national measures over recent weeks, the number of cases of coronavirus across Wales are continuing to rise every day. The number of people in hospital with coronavirus symptoms has reached record levels at more than 2,200 – equivalent to five general hospitals. One in five tests carried out are positive for the virus.

This week, I met the First Ministers of Scotland and Northern Ireland and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster from the UK Government to discuss the common arrangements over the five-day Christmas period, between 23 and 27 December (22 and 28 December for those travelling to and from Northern Ireland). In the few weeks since we agreed these arrangements, the situation has deteriorated significantly as coronavirus has gripped the UK once again.

As a result, here in Wales the regulations will make clear only two households (with the option of including an additional single-person household) can form an exclusive Christmas bubble during this five-day Christmas period. This is more restrictive than the three household arrangements we had initially hoped to have but it reflects the seriousness of the situation in Wales. The fewer people we mix with in our homes, the less chance we have of catching or spreading the virus over the festive period.

The regulations will therefore provide that Wales will move to alert level four – the highest level – at 6pm on Christmas Day. This means all hospitality, non-essential retail, close contact services and all leisure and fitness centres must close.

Tighter restrictions on travel, household mixing, requirements to stay-at-home, and holiday accommodation will apply from 28 December, after the five-day Christmas period.

We have already made £340m available to support hospitality, leisure and tourism businesses affected by restrictions into the New Year. A further £110m of support will be available to help businesses affected by the new restrictions.

The regulations require the restrictions must be reviewed regularly to ensure they are proportionate, necessary and effective. Reviews will take place every three weeks, with the first taking place by 7 January.

The Chief Medical Officer for Wales has provided targeted advice for people who were previously shielding about mixing over Christmas.

The *Coronavirus Control Plan: Alert Levels in Wales* is available at:  
<https://gov.wales/coronavirus-control-plan-alert-levels-wales>

I take no pleasure in introducing these tighter restrictions over this important time of year. I know they will cause many people to have to change their plans. The priority

of the Welsh Government however remains to protect the NHS and save lives. We must all continue to Keep Wales Safe this Christmas and into the New Year.