



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

TITLE **Review of Lockdown Measures and The Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (Wales) Regulations 2020**

DATE **3 July 2020**

BY **Mark Drakeford MS, First Minister**

The Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (Wales) Regulations 2020 ('the Regulations') place a series of restrictions on gatherings, the movement of people, and the operation of businesses, including closures. They also impose requirements on businesses that are open to take reasonable measures to ensure physical distancing between people. They are designed to help protect people from the spread of severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2).

Under regulation 3(2), Welsh Ministers are required to review the need for the requirements and restrictions in the regulations, and their proportionality, every 21 days. The fourth review was completed on 18 June and the next formal review will be carried out by 9 July.

On 19 June, I committed to review the requirement to stay local with the intention of removing this restriction on 6 July if conditions allowed.

The number of confirmed new cases of COVID-19 have continued to decrease since the peak in April. Over the week to 22 June, there were on average 16 new confirmed cases per million people in Wales each day. In addition, testing capacity and the average number of daily tests continues to increase.

We have, however, seen a recent increase over the last week in cases in Wales as a result of clusters of infection in North Wales and in Merthyr Tydfil. This emphasises that the risk has not gone away. These new cases have been identified quickly and we believe them to have been contained. Outside these clusters we continue to see numbers of cases decline across Wales. We will continue to monitor these situations closely as we come to the next formal review on 9 July.

I am grateful to local communities, local authorities, outdoor visitor attractions, the RNLI and others who have used the two weeks since 18 June to prepare public spaces for the removal of the 'stay local' restriction in keeping with the Welsh Government's Safer Public Places Guidance published on 17 June. This will help ensure those places are ready to receive visitors more safely than if we had lifted the restrictions without notice.

I am acutely aware of the impact that not being able to travel to see family and friends if they live outside of the local area will have had on people's well-being. I am very grateful to the people of Wales for their continued observance of this restriction and their understanding of our deliberate, careful and evidence-based approach to the easing of lockdown. Our primary objective continues to be to Keep Wales Safe.

I am very pleased to report that the overall conditions now allow me to confirm the lifting of the 'stay local' restrictions from Monday 6 July.

This will allow outdoor attractions to open where they can maintain social distancing and can operate safely. Indoor attractions must remain closed and this will be reviewed again next week. Consequential amendments to the Regulations will be brought forward in this area to avoid confusion.

Alongside this easement, and also from 6 July, people from two separate households will be able to join together to form one extended household. This is an exclusive arrangement between those two households only, which will allow that extended household to interact as if they all lived as a single household. This will enable families and friends to reunite, have physical contact, and stay at each other's homes. We are doing this primarily to address the significant issues associated with well-being and mental health of people who have suffered from loneliness and isolation, as well as providing much needed support for working parents and others with informal childcare and wider care and support needs.

To help control the spread of coronavirus, only two households can come together to form one exclusive extended household at this time. Once a household decides which other household it wants to join with, this arrangement will be fixed for the foreseeable future. Where any member of that extended household develops COVID-19 symptoms, all members of the extended household will need to self-isolate even if they do not live together.

In some cases, especially in larger families or in shared houses, this may mean making some difficult choices. If extended households focus on those with the greatest need for care and support I hope those that are not included, such as some members of extended families, can understand and recognise the importance of prioritising those individuals with the greatest need of support. Unfortunately, because the virus is still with us, we all have to face these choices together. In considering these choices I am urging people to:

- Think about who needs support and would benefit most from joining an extended household. Some households may need more help than others or have greater needs.
- Think about the risks. People who are vulnerable or shielding can benefit most from these arrangements, but the additional risks need to be understood and mitigated (e.g. keeping extended households as small as possible).
- Think about the consequences. If anyone in the extended household becomes ill, everyone will have to isolate for 14 days. For some people this will have a greater impact than for others, and needs to be thought about carefully.

Thanks to the efforts everyone has made over the last few months, we have seen the number of new cases of coronavirus decline – but it has not gone away. The last week has seen some disappointing scenes where people have participated in anti-social behaviour and have left significant amounts of litter behind. We do not want to see these hard-fought freedoms for all put at risk by the irresponsible behaviour of the few.

We need everyone to take personal responsibility to maintain social distancing and to respect both the environment and local guidance when they take advantage of the lockdown easements and travel across Wales and the UK.

Once again, I would like to thank everyone for their continued efforts in tackling this virus. Together we can Keep Wales Safe.