



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

TITLE **Review of the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (Wales) Regulations 2020**

DATE **10 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, which are open to take reasonable measures to ensure physical distancing between people. They are designed to 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 fifth review of these regulations was carried out this week.

The scientific and medical advice shows a coronavirus is continuing to decline in Wales. The number of new confirmed cases has fallen, following a recent increases linked to the two outbreaks at meat and food processing plants in Wrexham and Anglesey and an incident in Merthyr Tydfil.

Our Test Trace and Protect system is working well and – it has played a critical role in our response to the coronavirus pandemic since its launch and will be vital as we continue to ease restrictions.

As I have previously set out, the UK Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) and the Welsh Government's Technical Advisory Cell (TAC) advise that each and every change to the lockdown measures has a cumulative effect. They should therefore be introduced in a phased fashion and carefully monitored. We have already made a number of significant changes to the restrictions in Wales over recent review cycles, including in the last week to lift the stay local requirement and to introduce extended households.

We will continue with our step-by-step approach to enable public services to resume more essential services – all pupils currently have the opportunity to return to school to check in and catch up ahead of the summer holiday, for example.

We will also use some of our existing headroom to enable the NHS to provide more essential care and treatment – cancer screening services have resumed; dental and optometry services have moved into the amber phase and health boards now have quarter two plans. We are rolling out video consultation technology, which helped thousands of people to access primary and secondary care at the height of the pandemic, to dental practices, optometrists, and community pharmacies so people can access healthcare in a timely and safe way.

Having reviewed all the evidence and the indicators, the conditions support making further step-by-step easements to the lockdown restrictions across a number of areas.

We will once again take a week-by-week approach to the further lifting of restrictions in Wales.

In the first week, self-contained accommodation without shared facilities will reopen from Saturday 11 July.

From Monday 13 July the following sectors and businesses will be able to open, subject to following guidance about coronavirus-safe ways to operate:

- Hairdressing salons and barbershops, including mobile hairdressers.
- Pubs, bars, restaurants and cafes outdoors.
- Outdoor cinemas.
- Indoor visitor attractions, with the exception of a small number of underground visitor attractions, which must remain closed for the time being because of the higher risks associated with those environments. The Welsh Government will continue to work with these attractions towards safe re-opening.
- Places of worship. Faith leaders can begin to gradually resume services when they are ready to do so safely.

We are making changes to the regulations to allow larger gatherings outdoors of up to 30 people where these are organised and supervised by a responsible person. This will allow sports and leisure activities, such as fitness and dance classes, to take place outdoors, as well as collective worship. This will include charities, businesses, and sports clubs and a risk assessment will need to be carried out.

In the second week, from 20 July, we will remove the current restrictions on playgrounds and outdoor gyms. These will reopen gradually over the following weeks as and when safety checks and other measures are put in place. We will also publish guidance to support community centres to restart more public services at the discretion of local authorities. This will enable them to operate in a coronavirus-safe way.

This should have positive impacts by expanding valuable public services in the community, including supporting safeguarding efforts to respond to the many problems that sadly may have been hidden or exacerbated during lockdown. One such vital service is that delivered by voluntary and local authority youth work services. We are working closely with young people and the sector to develop specific guidance to support their wider re-opening and this will follow shortly thereafter. Re-opening community centres will also help local authorities provide summer holiday play schemes and childcare.

In the third week, we will look again at the latest health advice and evidence and consider the following areas for reopening from 27 July. A final decision will depend on the health conditions at the time and the necessary preparations being in place:

- Close contact services, including nail and beauty salons and businesses providing tanning services, massages, body piercings, tattooing, electrolysis or acupuncture
- All remaining tourist accommodation, which has been closed because of the additional risks of shared facilities, such as camping sites. Opening would be from 25 July in this case.
- Indoor cinemas, museums, galleries and archive services.
- Fully reopening the housing market to allow viewings in occupied properties.

The next formal review of the regulation is due by 30 July. We are already having detailed discussions with industry about how indoor hospitality can operate in a coronavirus-safe way. We are considering this for reopening from 3 August, subject to the conditions and measures in place.

In advance of the next review we will also work with local authorities and other operators to understand how gyms, leisure centres, fitness studios and swimming pools can make mitigations for a future opening. I have asked for some specific work to be carried out about swimming pools and coronavirus.

We have also reviewed the evidence about the 2m requirement, which is set out in our regulations.

The advice we have received from the Chief Medical Officer for Wales is that the evidence for 2m social distancing is clear in respect of the immediate health impacts: maintaining a 2m distance provides more protection than 1m – approximately two to five times the protective value in the absence of any other measures to protect a person.

There are, however, a number of measures which can be put in place to reduce the risk of coronavirus being transmitted in those places where maintaining a 2m distance is not always practical, such as on public transport or where a business is not viable with 2m distancing.

We will publish guidance next week what these additional measures are so that in those exceptional circumstances where 2m distancing cannot be maintained, we are clear what is expected of people. This guidance must be adhered to and will be referenced in the regulations.

I am very grateful to stakeholders and representative groups from across Wales and the many different sectors, which have worked with the Welsh Government over recent months and weeks to prepare for these significant easements, including helping to develop guidance.

I am similarly grateful to the people of Wales for their continued efforts and support in tackling this pandemic. Together, we will continue to keep Wales safe.