



WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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

DATE **21 August 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 minimize 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 scientific and medical advice continues to show the level of coronavirus transmission in Wales remains low. However, the rise in cases we can see in other parts of the UK and further afield continues to remind us that the threat from the virus has not gone away. We are learning the lessons from those places, which indicates people meeting indoors remains a significant risk.

It is a priority for Welsh Government that schools in Wales should be able to open in September as planned. All the easements we make to restrictions have a cumulative effect on transmission rates and the headroom we have available. We will use the headroom we have to ensure children can resume their education next month.

In line with advice from the Chief Medical Officer for Wales and the scientific evidence of the risks from indoor settings, the conditions still do not permit me to ease the general restrictions on the ability of people to meet indoors. This is kept under continuous review and changes will be made when it is safe to do so.

This still means that we must not visit someone else's home indoors unless we are part of an extended household with them or providing care. It also means we can

only visit a business or premises indoors, such as a pub or restaurant, with members of our own household or extended household. It is, of course, possible to meet different people outdoors as long as social distancing is maintained.

I fully appreciate how difficult these continued restrictions can feel and the negative effects they might have on people's wellbeing. Therefore during this review period I am keen to provide relaxations to recognise the vital importance everyone places on being able to spend time with family and friends.

I can confirm that up to four households will be able to join together in an extended household from Saturday 22 August. This might take the form of two existing extended households joining together, or households not already part of one to join existing or new extended households.

Extended households have enabled families be reunited and helped those suffering from loneliness and isolation. They have also supported caring arrangements. I know families have had to make difficult choices however in deciding with whom they should form their extended household.

This change will benefit those previously not able to form an extended household as well as providing opportunities for people to meet with more friends and family. More people can visit each other indoors, go out and do things together, and stay overnight without social distancing.

Changes will also be brought forward to the Regulations to allow for some limited indoor celebrations following a wedding, civil partnership, or funeral for up to 30 people from 22 August. For now, these will be limited in scope, such as an organised meal in a hotel or restaurant, and must take place in a regulated setting. This will ensure that all reasonable measures are taken to limit the risks of infection and spread of coronavirus. We will learn the lessons from this relaxation to consider how they might be applied to other events in the future.

The risk from coronavirus is much lower outdoors, which has led to us easing restrictions more quickly in those areas. Our approach throughout this process has been to plan, where necessary pilot activity to learn lessons, and then ease restrictions further. Over the next few weeks we will pilot some limited outdoor events for up to 100 people.

We aim to do this through proposals that are in development for:

- Outdoor theatre events organised by Theatr Clwyd (over weekends beginning Friday 27 August);
- Small scale car rally at Trac Mon on Ynys Mon; and
- Welsh Triathlon's planned 'Return to Racing' competition at Pembrey Country Park.

To be clear, no other outdoor events of this sort will be allowed during the next three weeks. These pilots are being trialled to enable us to learn lessons, in the hope that more such events can be permitted in future.

Looking forward to the remainder of the three weeks of this review, we will use this time to look at how we can safely restart more activity indoors. This is important preparation for the autumn and winter when options to meet outdoors become less possible.

A number of people, including the Older People's Commissioner, have raised the growing concern about the impact restrictions on visiting care homes is having on people's emotional, mental and even physical health. I understand the distress this is causing.

The Welsh Government has been working closely with partners, to develop guidance that sets out the stringent considerations that care home providers should take in order safely to resume indoor visits. Everybody is concerned to ensure we prevent the spread of the virus amongst our most vulnerable citizens.

Our intention is to provide for indoor visits to recommence from Saturday 29 August subject to the strict controls set out in the guidance and conditions remaining favourable.

Subject to the completion of final preparatory work, casinos in Wales will also be able to reopen on Saturday 29 August.

Once again I am grateful to the people of Wales for their support as we collectively Keep Wales Safe.