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## WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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

**DATE**            **19 February 2021**

**BY**                **Mark Drakeford MS, First Minister of Wales**

The Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (No. 5) (Wales) Regulations 2020 provide for a system of alert levels in Wales, as set out in the Welsh Government's updated *Coronavirus Control Plan: alert levels for Wales*. They require a review of restrictions is undertaken every three weeks.

The most recent review was completed on 18 February and concluded the whole of Wales should remain at Alert Level 4. This means everyone must stay at home and work from home wherever possible. All non-essential retail, hospitality venues, licensed premises and leisure facilities must remain closed.

Since the last review, cases of coronavirus continue to fall across Wales and the pressure on our NHS is easing. The number of people testing positive still remains high and there are still too many people seriously ill and in hospital. We can all be proud of excellent progress of the vaccination programme in Wales, but there is still a considerable way to go. We must not let the virus re-establish itself by relaxing restrictions too soon.

Since we published *Coronavirus Control Plan: alert levels for Wales* we have seen the emergence of new variants, which may have increased risk of severe disease, the rate of infection or potentially limit the effectiveness of current vaccines. This means we need to be cautious in how we come out of lockdown and today I am also publishing a further update to the *Coronavirus Control Plan*<sup>1</sup> to set out how we are responding to these new challenges.

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<sup>1</sup> The update to the Coronavirus Control Plan is available at: <https://gov.wales/coronavirus-control-plan-alert-levels-wales-coming-out-lockdown>

At the last review of the restrictions, I emphasised that education remained our top priority. I indicated that if there were continued improvements we wanted to see foundation phase pupils and those sitting priority vocational qualifications to return in a phased and flexible way from 22 February. We will bring forward changes to the regulations to put this into effect.

If we continue to see improvements my intention will be for the remainder of primary learners, as well as learners in Years 11 and 13 in secondary schools and those sitting equivalent qualifications in colleges, to return from 15 March in a flexible way enable some flexibility around other learners. My intention will be to also enable flexibility around other learners such as Year 12 and those in Year 10 who may also have been entered for qualifications this summer.

We will also bring forward amendments to the regulations to allow a maximum of four people from two different households to exercise together, although they should make every effort to maintain social distancing. People must still start and finish exercise from their home unless a person needs to travel for reasons of disability or health reasons. This means that, for now, if people are meeting they will need to live nearby each other as travel for exercise is generally not allowed.

Finally, the elite sport designation in the regulations will be amended to recognise people who make a living from sport and designations made by sporting bodies in other parts of the UK.