



WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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

DATE **11 September 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 minimise 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 last few weeks have seen children and young people from across Wales return to school for the first time since the start of the pandemic. The clear scientific advice I have received is this welcome return means there is no capacity to make further significant easements to the restrictions at this time.

Alongside this, the public health and scientific advice is that we are seeing a rapid increase in the number of cases across the UK, including a rise in cases in Wales.

The Welsh Government's *Coronavirus Control Plan*, which was published last month, sets out our approach to monitoring cases and controlling localised outbreaks of coronavirus based on the principles of caution, proportionality and subsidiarity.

Preventing the spread of coronavirus is our overriding priority but any interventions we take must be proportionate, using local knowledge and expertise.

Following a significant and rapid increase in cases in the Caerphilly County Borough Council area, we worked with the local authority and other partners to introduce local restrictions on 8 September.

We are closely monitoring rates in a number of other areas in Wales and, working with partners, will consider the introduction of further appropriate measures if the situation requires, in line with the *Coronavirus Control Plan*.

Overall, there has been an increase in the number of cases across Wales, both in absolute terms and as a proportion of the number of people being tested. However, the wider picture is more complex as while some parts of the country have become coronavirus hotspots, others have seen just single-digit increases in cases.

The evidence clearly suggests that where we have seen increases, these have primarily resulted from social interactions within and between households and social groups not observing social distancing and current regulations and guidance.

Taking all of this into account, Ministers have decided to take a number of immediate steps to help control the spread of the virus.

From Monday 14 September, all residents in Wales over the age of 11, will be required to wear face coverings in indoor public spaces, such as shops. There will be exemptions and exceptions, which will be set out in guidance.

For the time being the requirement to wear a face covering will not extend to pubs and restaurants. However, we will carry out a rapid review of the evidence to determine whether the hospitality industry should be included.

From Monday 14 September, we will introduce a maximum limit of six on the number of people who can meet indoors at any one time. They must be from the same exclusive household group – or bubble – which can be made from four households joining together. Children under 11 will not be included in this rule of six.

This limit will apply to indoor settings, including pubs and restaurants. People should only to pubs and restaurants with members of their own household or extended household.

There will be exceptions and exemptions, including for a single household with more than six members. There are currently no changes to the rules for meeting outdoors but it is important that social distancing is maintained at all times.

This will not apply in Caerphilly County Borough Council while local restrictions are in place.

We will provide local authorities with new powers to be able to close premises on public health grounds from Monday 14 September. This will support rapid intervention as outbreaks occur and enable local authorities to take action to close off land or individual premises, and stop local gatherings or events.

I would remind all those responsible for premises open to the public that they can already be closed if reasonable measures to minimise exposure to coronavirus are not taken. I expect local authorities to make full use of existing and these new powers where necessary.

The risk of transmission of coronavirus is higher in indoor settings, which is why it is important that everyone follows the rules and guidelines to protect themselves, their loved ones to keep Wales safe.

As part of the formal 21-day review of existing restrictions, there is one very modest change to the restrictions, which we will be including – permanent skating rinks will be able to reopen from 3 October, subject to the conditions at the time.

Developments in the past week have provided further proof that the virus has not gone away and I have taken early action to curb the spread of the virus. Everyone now has a part to play in if we are to avoid further, tighter restrictions.

It is essential that we all continue to play our part to Keep Wales safe.