



WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

TITLE	Review of the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restriction) (No.5) (Wales) Regulations 2020
DATE	12 March 2021
BY	Mark Drakeford MS, First Minister

The Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (No. 5) (Wales) Regulations 2020 require a review of the coronavirus restrictions is undertaken every three weeks. The most recent review was completed on 11 March.

Cases of coronavirus in our communities continue to fall, pressure on our NHS is steadily easing and our vaccine programme continues to go from strength to strength. Thanks to the efforts of everyone in Wales during the stay-at-home period, we are in a position to make cautious, step-by-step changes to the current restrictions.

We have been clear that our top priority is to enable as many children and students can return to face-to-face learning as possible. Building on the return of Foundation Phase learners and some vocational students in February, from Monday, all primary pupils and those in qualifications years will return.

Schools will have the flexibility to bring learners in years 10 and 12 back, to support them to progress to the next stage of their learning and more learners will also return to colleges. There will also be flexibility for in-school check-ins for all other pupils.

All learners will return to on-site learning after the Easter holiday on 12 April. Schools, colleges and other learning providers should plan on that basis.

Following the review of the coronavirus regulations, I can also announce, that from Saturday 13 March:

- The overarching stay-at-home restriction will be replaced with a new, interim stay local rule in Wales. This will mean people can leave their homes and travel within their local area – usually within five miles – but this will be flexible, particularly for people who live in rural areas and for those whose nearest shops and public services are further away.

- No more than four people from two different households will be able to meet in their local area outdoors, including in gardens. Children under 11 and carers do not count towards this limit. There must be no indoors mixing and social distancing should be followed.
- Outdoor sports facilities can reopen, including tennis courts, golf courses and bowling greens. A maximum of four people from two households can take part in activities using local sports facilities.
- Indoor care home visits can resume for one designated visitor, with the permission of the care home. Some care home providers will need a little time to put the necessary arrangements in place to support indoor visits as safely as possible.

From Monday 15 March:

- Hairdressers and barbers can reopen by appointment only to cut hair. Subject to the public health position, remaining favourable, all close contact services will be able to open from 12 April.

From Monday 22 March:

- The first steps towards reopening non-essential retail will begin. Restrictions on the sale of non-essential items will be lifted for those shops, which are currently open. Garden centres can also reopen. Subject to the public health position remaining favourable, all shops will be able to open from 12 April –as they are likely to be in England.

During the third week of the review period, we will take stock of the latest evidence before confirming changes for the Easter holidays. If public health conditions continue to be favourable, from 27 March:

- The stay local restrictions will be lifted to allow people to travel within Wales.
- Self-contained holiday accommodation will re-open to allow one household to stay overnight.
- Organised children's activities outdoors will restart.
- Libraries will reopen.

A number of other changes are being made, including:

- The need for Ministers to specifically authorise individual elite sporting events will be removed.
- Theatres and concert halls can be used for the purposes of rehearsals by professional performers, irrespective of whether they are linked to a broadcast.
- The expiry date of these regulations will be amended to 31 May 2021.

The review this week concluded the criteria for postponing the Senedd election have not been met. Full preparations for 6 May will therefore continue. Guidance for election campaigning will be published on Friday and elements will be reflected in the regulations. The move to 'stay local' will mean leafletting will be able to resume on a local basis, but regulations will still prohibit door-to-door canvassing.

The public health situation has undoubtedly improved over the last few months, thanks to the support of everyone across Wales, but coronavirus has not gone away.

This package of measures marks the first significant step towards unlocking the alert level four restrictions we have lived with since mid-December. We need to work together and do everything we can to keep cases of coronavirus low as we begin to restore personal freedoms and enable people to mix once again.

Government cannot do that alone. We need the help of everyone in Wales to keep coronavirus under control.