



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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Present

Coronavirus Restrictions Regulations

Present

- Rt. Hon. Mark Drakeford MS
- Rebecca Evans MS
- Vaughan Gething MS
- Lesley Griffiths MS
- Jane Hutt MS
- Julie James MS (part of meeting)
- Jeremy Miles MS
- Eluned Morgan MS
- Mick Antoniw MS

- Hannah Blythyn MS
- Julie Morgan MS
- Lynne Neagle MS
- Lee Waters MS

Apologies

- Dawn Bowden MS

Officials

- Shan Morgan, Permanent Secretary

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- Des Clifford, Director General First Minister's Office
- Will Whiteley, Deputy Director Cabinet Division
- Toby Mason, Head of Strategic Communications
- Jane Runeckles, Special Adviser
- Madeleine Brindley, Special Adviser
- Alex Bevan, Special Adviser
- Daniel Butler, Special Adviser
- Ian Butler, Special Adviser
- Kate Edmunds, Special Adviser
- Sara Faye, Special Adviser
- Clare Jenkins, Special Adviser
- Andrew Johnson, Special Adviser
- Mitch Theaker, Special Adviser
- Tom Woodward, Special Adviser
- Christopher W Morgan, Cabinet Secretariat (minutes)
- Damian Roche, Cabinet Secretariat
- Tracey Burke, Director General, Education and Public Services
- Andrew Goodall, Director General, Health
- Andrew Slade, Director General ESNR
- Reg Kilpatrick, Director General, COVID-19 Crisis Coordination
- Frank Atherton, CMO
- Rob Orford, Chief Scientific Adviser for Health
- Fliss Bennee, Co-Chair TAC
- Helen Lentle, Director Legal Services
- Dylan Hughes, First Legislative Counsel
- Phil Elkin, Deputy Director Legal Services
- Tom Smithson, Deputy Director Restart
- Ifan Evans, Director, Technology and Innovation Health
- Jason Thomas, Director, Culture Sport and Tourism
- Gemma Nye, CMO's office

Item 1: Interim Review of Coronavirus Restrictions Regulations – 16th June 2021

CAB(21-22)10

1.1 The First Minister introduced the paper, which asked Cabinet to consider whether to make any amendments to the Coronavirus restriction regulations in light of the latest evidence and advice on the Delta variant and the evolving public health situation.

1.2 Ministers were reminded that the restrictions relating to COVID-19 were for the purpose of preventing, protecting against, controlling or providing a public health response to the incidence, spread of infection or contamination. There must be a threat to public health and the restrictions had to be proportionate in what they were intending to achieve. There was a requirement that the Welsh Government should review these restrictions every 3 weeks.

1.3 Cabinet had previously agreed to move to Alert Level 1 in 2 stages, given the level of uncertainty with the Delta variant. The first stage of lifting of restrictions had taken place on the 7th June, with the second due to commence from 21st June. However, it had been agreed that an interim review should take place this week.

1.4 Cases of COVID -19 had been rising exponentially in Wales in the last 2 weeks and the expectation was that this would continue. The resurgence of cases was most marked in younger age groups, a reflection of transmission among those who were least likely to have had the benefit of vaccination and who experienced higher levels of social mixing. Older age cohorts were not exempt from infection but rates were lower and there was likely to be some protective effect from the vaccination programme.

1.5 The number of patients in hospital with COVID-19 was currently low but the extent to which vaccination had weakened the link between community transmission and serious illness was not yet clear.

1.6 Given these continued uncertainties, the CMO had indicated that delaying

further the lifting of restrictions for a short period would enable a greater proportion of adults to take up the offer of a second dose of the vaccine, which would provide significantly more protection to the population. It would allow for a better understanding of the dynamics of transmission and harms in England and Scotland, which were between 1 and 2 weeks ahead of Wales in the current wave of viral resurgence.

1.7 There was a need to communicate to the public that they should continue personal protective behaviours during the summer and into the autumn. In addition, isolation and testing for anyone who developed symptoms, regular hand hygiene, the use of face coverings in crowded indoor settings, and social distancing all still had important roles in mitigating the risk of transmission. In addition, the importance of environmental mitigations, such as ventilation, would contribute to social and work settings being 'COVID-19 secure'.

1.8 The consensus from TAG was to recommend a similar delay of one review cycle before further relaxations were made.

1.9 Therefore, Cabinet agreed to pause the full move to Alert Level 1 until at least the next review, which was due to take place by 15th July.

1.10 There were a number of other outstanding issues that Ministers would need to consider. Firstly, whether to allow the reopening of the only operational commercial ice rink in Wales. Cabinet concluded that it would be sending the wrong signal if the rink was allowed to re-open to the public at a time when the restrictions on gathering indoors remained in place.

1.11 In terms of weddings, related receptions and wakes, it was agreed that the number of guests should be determined by the size of the venue and the ability to apply social distancing and other rules.

1.12 The paper outlined a series of options in relation to the re-opening of residential outdoor education centres. Ministers favoured the option to explore amending the regulations to permit classroom bubbles, but no other groups, with a suggestion that it should be limited to primary school children. It was agreed that there was a need to engage with the sector to ascertain what was financially viable.

1.13 Ministers agreed to amend the regulations to provide an exception for small 'grass roots' entertainment, such as comedy and music venues to operate in Alert Level 2 and lower from 21st June.

1.14 The revised guidance for hospital visiting was noted by ministers.

1.15 Cabinet agreed that officials should proceed in-line with the decisions taken by ministers.

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