

Written Ministerial Statement

The content of this written ministerial statement is as received at the time from the Ministers. It has not been subject to the official reporting (Hansard) process.

Executive Office

DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE ON COVID-19, 18 DECEMBER 2020

Published on Friday 18 December 2020.

Mrs Foster (The First Minister) and Mrs O'Neill (The deputy First Minister): The Executive has today agreed to introduce a package of restrictions from December 26 to slow the spread of Coronavirus in the community and protect the health service. The measures, agreed by the Executive, will come into operation from 00:01 on the 26 December and will run for six weeks, with a review after four weeks. The measures are as follows:

- Closure of all retail, except essential retail. Homeware stores and garden centres are no longer classified as essential. However, dog groomers and fuel suppliers have been added to the essential listing. All car washes will be closed, including those for contracted services.

- Retail and services permitted to remain open include:
 - Food retailers, supermarkets, convenience stores, corner shops, newsagents
 - Off licences and licensed shops selling alcohol (including breweries)
 - Pharmacies (including non-dispensing pharmacies) and chemists
 - Building supplies businesses and hardware stores
 - Petrol stations
 - Pet shops, agricultural supplies shops, livestock markets, veterinary surgeons
 - Motor vehicle repair, MOT services, Bicycle shops, taxi or vehicle hire businesses

- Banks, building societies, credit unions, short-term loan providers and cash points, savings clubs and undertakings which by way of business operate currency exchange offices, transmit money (or any representation of money) by any means, or cash cheques which are made payable to customers, and

Post Offices,

- Funeral directors
 - Laundrettes and dry cleaners
 - Dental services, opticians, audiology services, chiropody, chiropractors, osteopaths, and other medical or health services, including services relating to mental health
 - Car parks and public toilets
 - Storage and distribution facilities for delivery and drop off,
 - Professional services including solicitors.
- Click and Collect will not be permitted for those non-essential businesses required to close
 - Those businesses permitted to open must limit numbers permitted entry at any one time, in order to ensure social distancing can be maintained by those inside
 - There will be an expanded use of Covid Marshals in the retail sector
 - Off licences will remain open, with an 8pm closing. This time of closure applies to all sales of alcohol;
 - Closure of close contact services, and driving instruction (not motorcycles), except: close contact for Film and TV production; those ancillary to medical, health and social care services; and sports massage therapy. Those permitted to open must operate an appointments only system and must record contact details of all customers. Face coverings must be worn when permitted to open, as per exemptions above.

- Closure of all hospitality (except for accommodation for essential travel). Takeaway and delivery (5am-11pm), and food and drink in motorway services, airports and harbour terminals will remain open. Use of outdoor seating is not permitted, either on the premises or adjacent to them.

- Sectors such as manufacturing and construction can continue to operate.

- Indoor sport is only permitted for elite athletes or for P.E. in, or for, schools.

- Spectators are not permitted

- Outdoor gatherings are restricted to 15 people. Gatherings for the purposes of exercise or sport are only permitted for elite athletes, physical education in or for schools, or if participants are members of the same household.

- Indoor gatherings are limited to a maximum of 15 people.

- All educational activities, beyond school or higher/further education, must be delivered by distance learning unless face to face delivery is essential

- No household gatherings of more than one household, other than current arrangements for linked households (bubbles), with current exceptions for caring, maintenance, house moves, etc. and a transition period to cover the Christmas bubbling arrangements until the 27 December; garden/outdoor gatherings remain at six people from two households;

- Places of worship are open for communal services (up to risk assessment numbers), individual worship, weddings, civil partnerships and funerals. Up to eight people will be permitted to make a recording of a service for transmission. Masks are mandatory and those present should not mingle inside beyond their own household or bubble.

- Weddings are restricted to 25 people and cannot take place in a private dwelling, with an exemption if one party is terminally ill. All those attending must have contact details recorded by the organiser. More than 15 people requires a risk assessment. Receptions are not permitted. Venues otherwise closed may open to host a wedding or civil partnership.

- Funerals are restricted to 25, including children and the celebrant. Contact details of all attending must be retained.

- Schools and childcare to remain open;

- Closure of :
 - Nightclubs
 - Conference halls and conference facilities, including those in hotels
 - Theatres and Concert Halls except for the purposes of rehearsals
 - a range of visitor attractions including funfairs, inflatable parks, amusements arcades, skating rinks, bingo halls, museums and galleries, cinemas
 - museums & galleries
 - campsites and caravan parks for touring caravans including motorhomes, except in an emergency
 - swimming and diving pools
 - indoor sports and exercise facilities, including soft play areas, leisure centres, gyms, equestrian centres, venues relating to motor sport and activity centres
 - outdoor sports and exercise facilities including activity centres, equestrian centres, marinas and venues relating to motor sport and water sport
 - indoor visitor attractions
 - outdoor visitor attractions, with the exception of play areas, public parks, forest and country parks, and outdoor areas of stately homes, historic homes, castles and properties operated by the National Trust;

- Restrictions on libraries – orders cannot be made in person and access is only allowed for the purposes of collecting an order.

In addition we are putting in place a set of stricter measures for the period of 26 December to 2 January.

These are:

1. between 8pm and 6am the following morning:
 - a. retail able to remain open during the restrictions must close between these hours
 - b. no indoor or outdoor gatherings of any kind including at sporting venues will be permitted,
 - c. outdoor exercise will be permitted only with members of your own household
 - d. no household mixing will be permitted in private gardens, or indoors in any setting, except for emergencies or the provision of health or care services.

These measures do not apply to Christmas household bubbles that are in place up to 27th December. _____

2. No sporting events at any level and either indoors or outdoors will be held during this period.