

Written Ministerial Statement

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The Executive Office

DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE ON COVID-19, 17 JUNE 2021

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The First Minister and deputy First Minister: The Executive received an update today on the progression of the Covid-19 epidemic and, in particular the continued advancement of the Delta variant which has become more prevalent in the last seven days.

This increase in the Delta variant, and the speed at which it is spreading across the community is very worrying.

Evidence from other jurisdictions, where the variant is already dominant also gives us cause for significant concern.

In light of this, the clear advice from our medical and scientific experts is to delay any further relaxations to allow further monitoring of the situation.

We are therefore regrettably not in a position to ratify the indicative dates provided for future relaxations. We will continue to monitor the situation very closely and look at all emerging data. The Executive has agreed a new indicative date of 5 July, to be reviewed on 1 July.

We know this will be very disappointing for all those impacted, particularly across the arts and culture sectors. We did not take this decision lightly and are acting collectively in the best interests of our population. This is similar to decisions that have been taken in England and Scotland to delay further relaxations to restrictions given concerns around the Delta variant.

We ask that everyone comes forward to receive their vaccine as soon as possible and please keep both appointments. We also urge employers to facilitate workers getting their vaccines. If we all work together, we will get to a point where we can continue on our pathway out of restrictions.

The decisions are outlined below:

From 5 July, subject to ratification on 1 July, to:

Theatres and Concert Halls

Reopening of seated theatres and concert halls and other such venues. Tickets must be purchased in advance of the performance. Audiences for indoor events must have allocated seating and remain seated and social distancing of 1m will be required.

Exhibitions and Conferences

Return of conferences and exhibitions in line with regulations.

Home and community

Permit indoor gatherings in a domestic setting of ten people from no more than two households. If one household has ten members, the maximum is increased to 15 from no more than two households. (Does not include children 12 and under).

Permit outdoor gatherings in a domestic setting of 15 people from an unlimited number of households. (Does not include children 12 and under).

Remove the linked households/bubble provision.

Outdoor gatherings

Permit outdoor gatherings to the maximum allowed as per risk assessment for venue across all sectors. Over 30 people must be an organised gathering and would require a risk assessment.

Close contact services

Enable close contact services to open without appointments but with remaining mitigations.

Live music

In licensed and unlicensed premises which provide or sell food and drink (whether or not including intoxicating liquor) for consumption on the premises, permit live music at background or ambient levels; the volume must be such to enable visitors to conduct conversation at normal loudness of speech. No dancing permitted.

At outdoor events permit live music and dancing, without restriction to background or ambient levels.

Permit live music, without restriction to background or ambient levels for rehearsal, recording or performance purposes in concert venues, theatres and other indoor venues which, for the duration of the rehearsal, recording or performance are set aside for that purpose. No dancing for audience but permitted as part of performance.

Permit live music, without restriction to background or ambient levels for “other indoor venues” - can include a space within larger premises – for example a function room or conference suite within a hotel. In such circumstances access to the venue must be effectively controlled and managed and the venue must be sufficiently isolated from the rest of the premises to ensure that the volume of the music in the venue does not breach ambient or background levels in other parts of the premises. No dancing for audience but permitted as part of performance.

Entry to performances for audiences will be by ticket only. Tickets must be purchased in advance of the performance. Audiences for indoor events must have allocated seating and must remain seated (unless using facilities).

Social distancing at a minimum of 1 metre will be required for live music related activity in indoor seated venues and will be advised for all outdoor events.

Messaging will be developed around the travel to and from such events to inform the public of the safer options.

Education and young people

A restart of overnight residentials for youth services and uniformed organisations as part of the continued phased reopening of youth services to facilitate delivery of the summer youth programme as part of the continued phased reopening of youth services.

Please continue to follow the public health advice, wash your hands, wear face coverings, socially distance, meet outdoors where possible and use good ventilation when meeting indoors. Make safer decisions for yourselves and each other.