

# Written Ministerial Statement

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## The Executive Office

### DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE ON COVID-19, 12 AUGUST 2021

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**Mr Givan (The First Minister) and Mrs O'Neill (The deputy First Minister):** The Executive today re-emphasized the importance of people getting fully vaccinated against Coronavirus and continuing to follow the public health advice.

A 1% increase in vaccine uptake will reduce the number of cases and hospital admissions by around 10%. This would have a significant impact in terms of saving lives, keeping our people well and reducing the pressure on our health service.

If we can get from 85% adults vaccinated to 90%, then the number of cases and hospital admissions would be reduced by around half.

The Executive also agreed to move on some major issues, including removal of the need to self-isolate for those who have received both vaccinations, and to permit the return of conferences and exhibitions and extend the numbers allowed at outdoor domestic settings.

From Monday 16 August people who are fully vaccinated will no longer need to self-isolate for 10 days if someone they have been in close contact with tests positive for COVID-19. Instead, they should get a PCR test on day two and day eight of the 10 day period. People who are not fully vaccinated will still need to self-isolate for the 10 days.

This policy change applies to close contacts only. Anyone who has symptoms, whether vaccinated or not, should immediately book a PCR test. Anyone who has had a positive PCR test should self-isolate for 10 days.

People are fully vaccinated if it is more than 14 days since they received the second dose of an approved COVID-19 vaccine.

Young people aged 5 to 17 who are not fully vaccinated and are identified as a close contact should self-isolate and book a PCR test. If the PCR test is positive they should isolate for ten days. If the PCR test result is negative they can end their self-isolation.

Should they develop symptoms after the negative PCR test they should self-isolate and take another PCR test. If the PCR test is positive, they must complete a full 10 days of self-isolation. If the PCR test is negative, they can stop isolating.

Children under the age of 5 who are close contacts will be encouraged but not required to take a PCR test. They will not be expected to self-isolate, unless a PCR test comes back positive or they develop symptoms.

Guidance will be developed regarding close contacts in school settings, to ensure children in the same year groups are treated the same.

**From 00:01 on Monday 16 August, the following changes will come into effect:**

#### **Domestic Settings Outdoors**

The restriction on the number of people who can gather outdoors at a domestic setting will be removed, including the ban on outdoor house parties.

**Raves**

The restriction on outdoor raves will be removed from the Regulations.

**Bubbles/linked households**

The provision for bubbles or linked households will be removed as it is no longer required.

**Social Distancing on public transport**

The requirement to maintain social distancing on public transport at all times will be lifted, to allow for a return to higher capacity on our transport links. No other amendments were made on the requirement to socially distance.

**Hospitality**

The limit of numbers permitted at tables will be removed. This will also apply to post marriage celebrations.

**FE Colleges, Universities and NSCs**

For the new academic year there will be a full return to face-to-face on-site delivery in FE Colleges, Universities and Non-Statutory Contractors including the removal of social distancing restrictions in classrooms.

**Conferences and exhibitions**

Conference centres can reopen allowing conferences and exhibitions to resume.

**Schools return**

The requirement for school bubbles will be removed for the beginning of the school year with mitigating measures remaining in place. The requirement to wear a face covering will remain in place for the first six weeks of the new term and remain under review. However, for subjects where social distancing is possible, such as drama in a large hall, face coverings are no longer required. Further guidance will be issued to schools by the Department of Education.

There will also be a full return to extra-curricular and support activities as well as youth services.

In all areas we encourage the use of Lateral Flow Testing, alongside all other mitigations, including maintaining social distancing, having good ventilation, washing hands and wearing face coverings.

We have taken on board the data as it stands and made relaxations that reflect the current situation here. We are keen to continue to make further relaxations when the data allows, particularly across hospitality and to permit live music and dancing in indoor venues. We have asked that the Executive Covid Taskforce work closely with the sector to get us to a safe place to do this in the coming weeks.

We continue to keep all other areas under review, such as the requirement to socially distance and the use of face coverings.