

# Written Ministerial Statement

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## Department of Health

### HEALTH PROTECTION REGULATIONS

*Published at 6.00 pm on Monday 14 February 2022.*

**Mr Swann (The Minister of Health):** I have recently conducted my regular review of the restrictions in place under health protection regulations. There are only a small number of restrictions left in place in those regulations, including requirements to wear face coverings in public places; for business owners to have measures in place to limit transmission of the virus; for the use of Covid certification at nightclubs and large unseated indoor events; and for limits on numbers meeting indoors in private homes.

In light of the current situation, and remembering the commitment that restrictions would only be in place as long as they are needed, I have decided that those remaining measures should no longer be set out in regulations. Instead, they should be placed in guidance to be followed by the public.

I shall therefore be making an order on Tuesday 15 February revoking the remaining restrictions and face-covering regulations. The relevant guidance will be updated.

This does not mean that COVID-19 has gone away or that we as a community are safe from its harm. It is vitally important that we continue to observe the sensible measures we have all learnt to protect ourselves and others: meeting outdoors where possible; good ventilation indoors; use of high-quality face coverings where appropriate in indoor settings; self-isolation when symptomatic or after a positive test; and uptake of vaccination including boosters. These measures form a baseline of good practice for the foreseeable future, and they will contribute to reducing the risk for the most vulnerable members of society.

It is important that our ability to make restrictions again in case of urgent need is retained. As previously communicated to Executive last year I intend seek to extend the powers granted to the Department by the Coronavirus Act 2020 by six months, in line with that legislation.

I sincerely hope that I do not have to use these powers, but I cannot assume that there will be no need to protect the public from a new variant in the future.

Even with these powers in place however, it would almost certainly be impossible to introduce new restrictions in the absence of an Executive.