# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE** | **Review of Lockdown and The Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (Wales) Regulations 2020** |
| **DATE** | **8 May 2020** |
| **BY** | **Mark Drakeford MS, First Minister** |

The Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (Wales) Regulations 2020 (‘the Regulations’), impose restrictions on gatherings, the movement of people, and the operation of businesses, including closures, in Wales. They impose requirements on businesses that are open to take reasonable measures to ensure physical distancing between people. This has been done to help protect everyone from the spread of severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2).

Under regulation 3(2) Welsh Ministers are required to review the need for the requirements and restrictions in the Regulations every 21 days. The second review was due by 7 May.

We carried out this second review using the latest evidence from the UK Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) and the advice of the Chief Medical Officer for Wales. While we have passed the first peak of infection and rates continue to fall, it is still too early for significant lifting of requirements or restrictions.

This means that schools will not be opening up over the next three weeks beyond what is already permissible under the Regulations.

The reproduction rate of the virus continues to fall. It is below the rate of 1 above which we would see exponential growth. Our NHS has coped well and is continuing to build capacity. Plans are in place to build-up our test, track and trace capability, and to ensure the continued availability of PPE. These conditions, taken together, will allow us to continue to take incremental steps over the coming weeks and months to ease restrictions when it is safe to do so.

The improving situation and latest evidence on transmission of the virus has meant we have been able to consider some minor adjustments to the Regulations to come into force on Monday. SAGE advises that the risk of infection is diminished outdoors, but physical distancing of 2m must be maintained and groups must not congregate. Given the significant health and wellbeing benefits of exercise, we are bringing forward amendments to the Regulations to allow for exercise more than once a day.

We will work with our partners across Wales to plan for additional activity that can take place outdoors if conditions continue to improve. Garden centres can open provided they adhere to the physical distancing duty.

People who can work from home should continue to do so. We will continue to work closely with our partners in the public sector, trade unions, businesses, the third sector and others, to support businesses and employees who cannot work from home to carry out their work safely.

Amendments will be brought forward to the Regulations to allow people to leave their home to access some specified public services; starting with Household Waste and Recycling Centres and libraries. The timing of these changes will need to be agreed with local authorities and service operators, so that there is time to put in place guidance and protocols.

To increase democratic oversight, we will amend the Regulations to remove the Welsh Ministers’ power to terminate requirements or restrictions by direction. This means that all changes to the principal Regulations must be brought before the Senedd.

We keep the Regulations under continuous review so that we can respond to the latest evidence on transmission of the virus, effectiveness of the requirements and restrictions, and levels of compliance, as soon as needed.

Our preference remains a four-nation response to coming out of lock-down, and we remain in consultation with all parts of the UK. Our duty is to the people of Wales, and our decisions will be based on the evidence and specific circumstances of Wales.