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Ministers have outlined a package of measures agreed by the Executive that will come into effect at the end of the two week circuit breaker.

Shops, hairdressers, restaurants, places of worship and hotels are among the places that will be able to re-open from December 11.

Pubs selling drink only (wet pubs) will remain closed and an additional financial package will be put in place.



Covid-19 Executive Update



## Christmas bubbling graphic

The Executive has also agreed Christmas household bubbling arrangements from December 23-27.

Three households will be able to come together for this period in domestic settings, outdoor public spaces and places of worship. One of the households will be able to include their existing household bubble.

First Minister Arlene Foster said: "Through our collective efforts over recent weeks we gained enough space in the transmission of the virus to relax a significant number of restrictions, including the opening-up of non-essential retail, close contact services, sport and leisure activities and our places of worship at the end of next week.

"These decisions will give families, businesses and employees some much-needed certainty and comfort in the run-up to Christmas and beyond.

"This is a special time of the year and we want to support people to have a good Christmas, but also a safe one.

"Significant work has been completed with business sectors, faith groups, local government and police on new mitigation measures to reduce the risk of transmission.

"I urge everyone to be Covid-aware and to make careful and sensible decisions when out and about or mixing with others. We need to make sure we continue doing all we can to protect ourselves and our loved ones."

Deputy First Minister Michelle O'Neill said: "The Executive wants to give people as much notice as possible on what the situation will look like from next Friday when the current circuit breaker comes to an end.

"We have given detailed consideration to which restrictions need to be maintained, and what we can open up, in light of the scientific and medical advice.

"A package of measures that will see significant relaxations to the current restrictions has been agreed, with maximum mitigations in place to minimise risks to the greatest extent possible. An additional support package will be put in place for traditional drink-only pubs that unfortunately will not be able to reopen at this time.

"We appreciate how important Christmas time is for many families and the Executive has agreed arrangements that will allow families and friends to come together in a

limited way between 23 and 27 December.“It’s important for people to understand that with any increased contact comes increased risk. Everyone needs to think very carefully about the risks posed to them, and their loved ones, by coming together over the Christmas period, particularly to those who are vulnerable. Some may choose not to form a Christmas bubble but for those who do, we encourage them to keep their bubbles small and limit the numbers of people gathering, as much as possible.”

## Notes to editors:

1. Details on the Christmas bubbling arrangements can be found at:

[www.nidirect.gov.uk/coronavirus-christmas](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/coronavirus-christmas) (<http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/coronavirus-christmas>)

2. Executive decisions

The Executive has agreed that the following can open:

- Non-essential businesses, including retail and close contact services to include driving instructors.
- Pubs and private members’ clubs serving a main or substantive meal that has been prepared in their own kitchen; restaurants and cafes. Contact details must be taken from all customers. Mitigations, that were previously required, will stay in place. Food and drink can be purchased until 10.30pm but cannot be consumed on the premises after 11.00pm, and all persons must vacate the venue by 11.00pm.
- Hotels and guesthouses. Mitigations that were previously required will stay in place, including restrictions on food and drink.
- Gyms, swimming and diving pools can open for individual training, training with a personal trainer and non-aerobic classes of up to 15. Contact details must be taken.
- Outdoor events and gatherings, subject to a risk assessment if more than 15 attending and measures in place to limit risk of virus transmission with an upper limit of 500 on participants.
- Sports events, subject to a risk assessment if more than 15 people attending with measures in place to limit risk of virus transmission. An upper limit of 500 spectators is permitted. Inter-school competitive sporting events are not permitted.
- Outdoor exercise in groups of up to a maximum of 15.
- Places of worship.
- Outdoor and indoor visitor attractions, museums, galleries and libraries.

The following must remain closed:

- Wet pubs and private members' clubs not serving a main or substantial meal. Off sales are permitted up to 10.30pm. This applies to off sales, supermarkets and hospitality venues selling alcohol.
- Concert halls and theatres, except for rehearsals and recordings.
- Nightclubs.

The Executive also agreed that:

- Current arrangements for gatherings in domestic and private dwellings will remain the same as is currently in place, apart from the temporary arrangements over the Christmas period.
- Receptions for marriages and civil partnerships are permitted, with numbers subject to risk assessment determined by the place of worship, or venue. Mitigations that were previously required will stay in place.
- Wedding ceremonies and civil partnerships will continue and the number attending will be determined by the place of worship, or venue.
- Attendees and the organiser/operator of funerals must comply with funeral guidance issued by the Department of Health.
- No holidaying in groups outside of the domestic settings rules – this applies to venues, such as self-catering chalets, which can accommodate large numbers.

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