



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

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## **WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT**

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**TITLE**        **Alert level four restrictions**

**DATE**        **19 December 2020**

**BY**            **First Minister Mark Drakeford MS**

Today, I met the First Ministers of Scotland and Northern Ireland, and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to discuss the very latest information about a new strain of coronavirus.

We now know that this new strain is significantly more infectious and spreads more quickly than the original one.

The Prime Minister this afternoon set out the pattern of transmission in London and the South East of England, which has been linked to this new variant of coronavirus.

This is remarkably consistent with the rapid acceleration of transmission in Wales and the high rates of cases we have seen in recent weeks. The latest evidence suggests this new strain is present throughout Wales.

Throughout the public health emergency, we have had to respond quickly to the rapid changes, which have been so typical of coronavirus. Today this new information has required an immediate response.

This afternoon, the Cabinet met to discuss this worrying new development in the pandemic and to hear the latest advice from our senior medical and scientific advisers, including the impact on our NHS.

The situation is incredibly serious. We have therefore reached the difficult decision to bring forward the alert level four restrictions for Wales, in line with the action being taken in London and the South East of England.

These new restrictions will come into effect from midnight tonight instead of during the Christmas period.

This will mean non-essential retail, close contact services, gyms and leisure centres, hospitality and accommodation will close at the end of trading today.

Stay-at-home restrictions will also come into effect from midnight.

For people currently staying in holiday accommodation in Wales, they should make arrangements to leave and return home at the earliest opportunity.

Unfortunately, we must also look again at the arrangements for Christmas – we cannot expose people to the risk of this new, more virulent strain of coronavirus.

We will therefore change the current rules, which allow two households to come together to form a Christmas bubble over a five-day period, so that they will apply on Christmas Day only.

Throughout the alert level four period, a single person household will be able to join with one other household.

While we all want to avoid further disruption to businesses and plans for Christmas, our overriding duty is to protect lives here in Wales.

Yesterday, we announced a further £110m to support businesses affected by the alert level four restrictions. This is in addition to the £340m Restrictions Business Fund and targeted hospitality fund. We will do all we can to make sure this support is available as quickly as possible to those businesses which need it.

And if there is further funding available to Wales – as a result of decisions made by the UK Government to support businesses in London and the South East during the lockdown period – we will pass it on.

This new strain of the virus is another dreadful surprise in this long-running pandemic.

We now have a pandemic within a pandemic, a crisis within a crisis.

It is another challenge we must overcome. But one we will overcome together.

We will continue to protect ourselves and our loved ones and together, we will keep Wales safe.