

Name Redacted

From: DOJ Minister
Sent: 21 October 2021 13:50
To: May, Peter; DOJ SpAd2; Name Redacted; Logan, Tim; DOJ Assembly Section
Cc: McCourt, Steven
Subject: RE: URGENT: Response to executive paper: Face Coverings in Hospitality Settings

Categories: Exec Mtg

The reason I see their advice as contradictory, is that they have essentially helped shape the policy direction set - and argued in defence of it on occasion - yet continue to be ambiguous as to whether they believe it is wise to continue on that path in their written advice.

That leaves those of us who rely on that advice very exposed.

Naomi

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From: May, Peter <peter.may@justice-ni.gov.uk>
Date: Thursday, 21 Oct 2021, 10:44 am
To: DOJ SpAd2 <DoJ-SpAd2@justice-ni.gov.uk>; Name Redacted <Name Redacted@justice-ni.gov.uk>; Logan, Tim <Tim.Logan@justice-ni.gov.uk>; DOJ Assembly Section <DOJ.AssemblySection@justice-ni.gov.uk>; DOJ Minister <DOJ.Minister@justice-ni.gov.uk>
Cc: McCourt, Steven <Steven.McCourt@justice-ni.gov.uk>
Subject: RE: URGENT: Response to executive paper: Face Coverings in Hospitality Settings

NR

Just a few thoughts that it would be worth bearing in mind in terms of this response.

First, on the Halloween date, this is the date previously agreed. I am told by TEO that the PSNI asked that it come in at noon and not midnight to avoid difficulties or lack of clarity at the point of drinking up etc.

The proposals on hospitality are tricky. Allowing people to stand does make it harder to draw the line but we would still want to have a requirement to wear face coverings when moving about.

I agree that it is unrealistic to expect enforcement the moment someone has put their knife and fork together which is what this could be taken to mean. But in the area of face coverings we have always been more in the first three Es space rather than the 4th - so if this is agreed there needs to be a common sense understanding of what that means in practice. The arrangements agreed here are, as I understand it, the same as Scotland and ROI.

On Naomi's subsequent note re CMO/CSA advice, I am not clear it is contradictory with the paper - though as usual it seeks to put too great a burden onto enforcement which is problematic. The further relaxation in hospitality will mean that the proportion at any point wearing face coverings will be lower - and greater focus will therefore be needed on other mitigating measures such as ventilation. CMO/CSA are flagging the risk with the policy direction set.

Peter

From: DOJ SpAd2
Sent: 21 October 2021 09:56
To: Name Redacted <Name Redacted@justice-ni.gov.uk>; Logan, Tim <Tim.Logan@justice-ni.gov.uk>; DOJ Assembly Section <DOJ.AssemblySection@justice-ni.gov.uk>; DOJ Minister <DOJ.Minister@justice-ni.gov.uk>; May, Peter <peter.may@justice-ni.gov.uk>
Subject: URGENT: Response to executive paper: Face Coverings in Hospitality Settings
Importance: High

Hey everyone

Please instruct officials to issue a response to exec colleagues on the paper on face coverings in hospitality settings to detail that we are concerned that given the extent of covid transmission in the community; the risk posed by new variants; and the high risk nature of nightclub settings, that removing the requirement to wear masks may lead to a significant increase in transmission.

From an enforcement/adherence perspective, whilst theoretically our approach is more conservative than Wales, in practice it will amount to the same thing. We can talk about the impact on wider compliance on having rules which are difficult or impossible to enforce. Given it will move to guidance this becomes more of an issue.

Goes without saying that lifting the restrictions on Halloween night may also lead to a surge in cases.

Please state that although other mitigations are suggested to address that reality (such as evidence of full vaccination and/or testing) we believe this should be mandatory in such very high risk environments and ask for specific advice with respect to the likely impact on public health.

Many thanks

NR