

**FROM: FIRST MINISTER
DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER**

DATE: 15 APRIL 2021

TO: EXECUTIVE COLLEAGUES

FINAL EXECUTIVE PAPER: Pathway out of Restrictions – Proposals for Relaxation

Introduction

1. The purpose of this paper is to outline the proposals submitted for relaxation and to seek the Executive's agreement to them.

Background

2. In the Pathway out of Restrictions, the Executive outlined its priorities for relaxing restrictions. These included an initial focus on children and young people, resulting on the full return of schools from Monday 12 April. It also included a focus on outdoor activities (which have a lower transmission risk), a focus on economic factors and community wellbeing and a need to allow to sectors time to prepare for reopening.
3. In accordance with the agreed process, the proposed relaxations have been submitted by Ministers and considered by the cross-Departmental Group in the context of key data and behavioural insights advice. Advice has also been sought from the Chief Medical Officer and Chief Scientific Adviser.

Data Dashboard

4. The dashboard of key health, economic and societal data that has helped to inform the package of proposals is attached at **Annex A**:
 - From a **health** perspective, the trends across most indicators from WHO appear to be improving, with continued progress in vaccine delivery and a positive trajectory in relation to case numbers and hospital admissions. However, we must also be mindful of a possible third wave and Variants of Concern.

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- The **economic** data indicates that economic activity continues to be severely dampened by lockdowns with the labour market operating at levels significantly below pre Covid levels, with long term scarring remains a risk.
 - The trends across most **societal and community** related indicators suggest that the pandemic is having an increasingly negative effect on societal and personal well-being, potentially having an overall negative impact on mental health.
5. Going forward, it is proposed that this dashboard will be provided to the Executive on a weekly basis to give an overview of the main indicators and statistics under consideration in relation to the relaxation of restrictions.

Behavioural Insights

6. Working in partnership with DoF's Innovation Lab and through a contract with the Behavioural Insights Team, the Adherence Workstream of the Executive's COVID-19 Taskforce has facilitated the provision of specialist behavioural insights advice both in relation to the Pathway more generally and also in relation to the specific relaxations outlined below.
7. While specific advice is outlined under each proposal, the overall advice from a behavioural insights perspective is to **make compliance easy and focus on the riskiest behaviours**. In particular, it is recommended that Departments:
- i. *Revisit existing guidance to make sure that it captures the most important behaviours*. As a rule of thumb, every document should mention the importance of ventilation - this is not currently the case.
 - ii. *Create short checklists for businesses and individuals to focus on the most important behaviours around the re-opening*. Some of the existing guidance is very long and it will be difficult for readers to pull out and remember the most important things.
 - iii. *Create communications (e.g. posters) that illustrate what should a customer expect to see & do when they return to a business*. For example, confirm if they need to record their contacts, sign in at the premises etc., give people an excuse to enforce the rules in awkward social situations; and tell them to report or leave a venue if they don't see the most important set of precautions in place.
 - iv. *Encourage active decision making so people plan their response to events & activities*: For example:
 - a. Use "if/then" prompts: *if it starts raining, then we'll postpone the outdoor barbecue*; and
 - b. Ask people to plan a journey and anticipate needs in advance (e.g. bathrooms, snacks, facemask, rubbish bag).

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8. You will note that paras 7iii and 7iv above change the focus from a sectoral perspective to a personal/ customer responsibility and we recommend that your officials consider this advice and work through it with your stakeholders. We will ensure it is sent out to those on the cross-departmental working group for consideration.

Summary of Proposed Relaxations

Annex	Proposal	Phase	Recommended Date
1.	Resume driving instruction and theory tests	2	23 April
2.	Resume driving testing	2	23 April
3.	Reopening of Close Contact Services	3	23 April
4.	Reopening of outdoor visitor attractions	2	23 April
5.	Equine Assisted Therapy and Learning (EATL) to resume on an outdoor basis in gatherings of up to 10 persons.	2	23 April
6.	Outdoor sport organised by a club, individual or individuals affiliated, in each case, to a relevant sporting body or to an organisation that regulates and provides advice and guidance to members on matters relating to sport and physical activities extended to cover squad training. A return of competitive outdoor sport organised by a club, individual or individuals affiliated, in each case, to a relevant sporting body or to an organisation that regulates and provides advice and guidance to members on matters relating to sport and physical activities. Numbers (including officials, participants, management and support personnel) should be restricted to the minimum number required for the delivery of the event and should not exceed 100. Spectators are not permitted.	2	23 April
7.	Reopening of all retail	3	30 April
8.	Self-contained Tourist Accommodation	3	30 April
9.	Unlicensed premises and licenced premises - outdoors only with a maximum of 6 people from 2 households per table, including removal of the curfew on takeaways and off licences	3	10 May
10.	Return of individual activities in gyms, swimming pools and other large venues – will include a carer and allow 1-2-1 training/coaching with social distancing.	3	10 May

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11.	Post wedding and post burial events in hospitality venues limited to 30 people.	3	14 May
12.	Domestic Setting Outdoors – maximum of 15 people from no more than 3 households	3	14 May
13.	Unlicensed premises and licensed premises indoors	4	Not before 1 June
14.	Rest of Tourist Accommodation	4	Not before 1 June
15.	Domestic Settings Indoors	3	Not before 1 June
16.	Reopening of indoor visitor attractions	3	Not before 1 June
17.	Return of indoor group exercise and training in numbers limited to suit the venue.	3	Not before 1 June

9. Further details of the proposed relaxations are set out in **Annexes 1-12**. Each proposal contains details of CMO/CSA advice, Behavioural Insights advice (where available) and a proposed recommendation.
10. Proposals 13-17 above are being recommended as an **indicative** date, and will need to be reconsidered at the Executive's next formal decision point on 13 May. These dates are based on the assumption that those venues that host events (such as weddings, civil partnerships or stadia, music venues etc.) will reopen at a capacity determined by risk assessment, rather than via staged gathering numbers. The risk assessment capacity will be informed by the outcome of the reviews referred to in paragraph 11 below. **We recognise that life events such as weddings and civil partnerships are important to our citizens, and we recognise that sectoral events such as outdoor sport require lead in times.**
11. An indicative timeline for those areas not subject to detailed consideration in this paper, including those activities in Phases 4 and 5 of the Pathway, is currently being considered and will need to be informed by the impact of the Executive's decisions taken to date, together with the outcome of the ongoing four major reviews in relation to global travel, mass events, social distancing and vaccine certification. **Specifically, we have asked officials to co-ordinate work across Departments to prioritise a piece of work on larger scale events which currently sit outside the Pathway phases. Sectors have a need for prior planning which cannot be conducted quickly, for example conferences and large indoor events. We wish to give some clarity on these issues as soon as practicable next week.**

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Financial Support

12. The Executive agreed to the creation of the Localised Restrictions Support Scheme (LRSS) to provide financial assistance to businesses required to close or severely curtail their normal services or business operations. When the restrictions are lifted on a business, the LRSS payments stop. The implications of the proposed re-opening dates in this paper are that LRSS payments will stop for:

- Close contact services and outdoor visitor attractions on 23 April;
- All retail and self-contained tourist accommodation on 30 April; and
- Gyms offering individual training on 10 May.

13. The relaxation to allow hospitality businesses to open for outdoor service only from 10 May will still represent a severe curtailing of the service which these businesses can offer. Therefore, **the Executive is asked to agree that LRSS payments will continue for hospitality businesses while the restrictions on indoor service continue**. This is consistent with the decision that retail businesses should continue to receive the payments when click and collect services resumed in March 2021.

Final Recommendations Overview, based on CMO/CSA advice.

14. It is recommended that the Executive agrees:

(a) From 23 April to:

1. Resume driving instruction and theory tests.
2. Resume driving testing.
3. Reopen close contact services including training.
4. Reopen outdoor visitor attractions
5. Permit Equine Assisted Therapy and Learning (EATL) to resume on an outdoor basis in gatherings of up to 10 persons.
6. Outdoor sport organised by a club, individual or individuals affiliated, in each case, to a relevant sporting body or to an organisation that regulates and

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provides advice and guidance to members on matters relating to sport and physical activities extended to cover squad training.

7. A return of competitive outdoor sport organised by a club, individual or individuals affiliated, in each case, to a relevant sporting body or to an organisation that regulates and provides advice and guidance to members on matters relating to sport and physical activities. Numbers (including officials, participants, management and support personnel) should be restricted to the minimum number required for the delivery of the event and should not exceed 100. Spectators are not permitted.

(b) From 30 April to:

1. Reopen of all retail.
2. Reopen and permit overnight stays in self-contained tourist accommodation, one household only.

(c) From 10 May to:

1. Reopen unlicensed premises and licenced premises, including social clubs, outdoors only, limited to 6 people from no more than 2 households, on the basis of booking and priority booking only.
2. Remove the curfew on takeaways.
3. Remove the curfew on off licences.
4. Permit individual activities in gyms, swimming pools and other large venues – including a carer and to allow 1-2-1 with social distancing.

(d) From 14 May, to:

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1. Permit post wedding and post burial events in hospitality venues, maximum of 30 people.
2. Increase the numbers permitted to gather in Domestic Setting Outdoors – to 15 people from no more than 3 households.

(e) That the following will be considered at the 13 May review, to have an opening date not before 1 June:

1. Licensed and unlicensed premises indoors.
2. Remaining Tourist Accommodation.
3. Domestic Settings Indoors.
4. Indoor visitor attractions.
5. Indoor group exercise and training.

(f) Agree that LRSS payments will continue for hospitality businesses while the restrictions on indoor service continue.

RT. HON ARLENE FOSTER MLA
First Minister

MICHELLE O'NEILL MLA
deputy First Minister

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ANNEX A

DATA DASHBOARD



13 April ECT
Dashboard.pdf

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Annexes 1 & 2

Proposals one and two – Driving instruction, theory tests and driving testing

15. The resumption of driving instruction and theory tests, followed closely by the resumption of driving testing will have a beneficial impact on young people, particularly those in rural communities. It will positively impact the economy. The Pathway has this as first step toward the reopening of the wider close contact services. The proposal outlines strict mitigations.

CMO/dCSA advice

16. Risks can be mitigated by the measures proposed, and particular emphasis should be placed on ventilation through use of open windows during instruction. Overall, the level of risk of likely to be modest. 23 April agreed.

Behavioural Science Response - Dfl

17. Dfl will issue driving and motorcycle instructors with and updated information pack that will include the latest advice on ventilation and will discuss this in detail with the NI Approved Instructors Council (NIAIC) when we meet them on Friday 16 April. They will also provide Phase 1 and Phase 2 candidates with a link to new guidance which sets out 'Important Public Health Information for candidates taking a practical driving test'; and update driving examiners with the latest up-to-date precautions set out in our risk assessment, and emphasise the importance of ventilation.

Recommendation

18. Resume on 23 April.

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Annex 3

Proposal Three – Close Contact Services

19. Reopening of close contact will be a major step with several mitigations in place, including recording of details, limits on numbers, appointments only and wearing of masks. It is important economically and from a personal wellbeing perspective. It is considered an area where reopening would be particularly welcomed across society.

CMO/dCSA advice

20. This includes a wide range of activities and settings, with the total volume of interactions and activities likely to be relatively high. It will be important to establish and enforce sector / setting specific mitigations to reduce the overall risk, which will nonetheless remain significant. We strongly advise that the sector operates on an appointment only basis in the first instance with mandatory recording of customer contact details to allow efficient contact tracing if required. 23 April agreed.

Behavioural Science Response - DfE

21. Updated guidance is being worked through with sector to ensure users are familiar and to reinforce necessity to understand continued compliance and vigilance;
22. DfE have been engaging with DfC to promote a consistent approach to Covid 19 measures in terms of marshalling, street signage, hand sanitisation while respectful of autonomy of local councils;
23. Close Contact guidance revised and incorporates UK wide agreed additional ventilation measure which have been written in plain English to further protect staff and customers;
24. Appointment and or pre- booking systems are in place and have operated successfully prior to current restrictions;
25. Providers have adopted extended operating hours to address implications of reduced service provision (reduced by 30% to facilitate social distancing requirements) – this also reduces car sharing as staff spread over different rotas and reduces lunchtime interfaces as no longer synchronised breaks; and
26. DfE are mindful that everyone employed in close contact qualifications contain highly regulated training requirements in hygiene and chemical controls at a minimum of level 2 and frequently up to Level 4 on Register of regulated Qualifications.

Recommendation

27. Reopen on 23 April, appointment basis.

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Annex 4

Proposal Four – Outdoor Visitor Attractions

29. Opening of outdoor visitor attractions will provide a safer environment for people to get out and about in a way that permits social distancing easily and therefore lowers the likelihood of transmission. It will have mental health benefits and with the weather becoming more pleasant will afford families the opportunity to go out. It aligns with the priority focus on outdoor venues in the Pathway, and with families/young people.

CMO/dCSA advice

30. In general outdoor activities are associated with relatively low risk. Measures should be taken to minimise crowding in queues and other areas, which may require limitations on attendance, and careful attention should be paid to mitigations in toilet and other shared areas. Strong guidance should be provided in relation to travel to and from visitor attractions, with household groups travelling together and not mixing where possible. If a stay local message remains part of guidance, opening of outdoor visitor attractions may appear to conflict with this. Overall level of risk likely to be modest. 23 April agreed.

Behavioural Science Response -DfE

31. DfE have been engaging with DfC to promote a consistent approach to Covid 19 measures in terms of marshalling, street signage, hand sanitisation while respectful of autonomy of local councils;
32. Appointment and or pre- booking systems are in place and have operated successfully prior to current restrictions; and
33. Providers have adopted extended operating hours to address implications of reduced service provision – this also reduces car sharing as staff spread over different rotas and reduces lunchtime interfaces as no longer synchronised breaks.

Recommendation

34. Reopen on 23 April.

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Annex 5

Proposal Five – Equine Assisted Therapy and Learning

35. Equine Assisted Therapy and Learning taking place outdoors only limited to ten persons only. This is a highly beneficial activity for those who take part, enhancing their quality of life and mental health and wellbeing.

CMO/dCSA advice

36. Risk likely to be low with mitigations in place. 23 April agreed.

Behavioural Science Response - DAERA

37. DAERA will work with the relevant representative bodies (e.g. RDA and BHS) to strengthen their protocols to take account of the BIS general comments.

Recommendation

38. Resume from 23 April, outdoors, limited to ten people.

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Annex 6

Proposal Six – Outdoor sport organised by a club, individual or individuals affiliated, in each case, to a relevant sporting body or to an organisation that regulates and provides advice and guidance to members on matters relating to sport and physical activities extended to cover squad training

A return of competitive outdoor sport organised by a club, individual or individuals affiliated, in each case, to a relevant sporting body or to an organisation that regulates and provides advice and guidance to members on matters relating to sport and physical activities. Numbers (including officials, participants, management and support personnel) should be restricted to the minimum number required for the delivery of the event and should not exceed 100. Spectators are not permitted.

39. This would be a final step in a return to outdoor sport and would remove the current 15 persons limitation and retain the need for affiliation to a sports organisation or governing body. The proposal would permit competitive sport, but limited to the minimum number required. It aligns to the outdoor message, has strong mental and physical health benefits for those involved.

CMO/dCSA advice

40. Overall risk likely to be modest if mitigations are adhered to. There have been numerous examples of outbreaks linked to mixing as a result of social interactions before and after such sessions. It will be important to stress that mixing should be limited to training sessions themselves and that interactions in less controlled settings before and after training should continue to be prohibited in line with other restrictions. 23 April agreed.

Behavioural Science Input – response from DfC

41. Squad training - The review by the Behavioural Analysis Team of the proposal for the return of non-competitive squad training for outdoor sports by organisations and clubs sets out general advice and recommendations that will be reflected in Return to Sport protocols as appropriate. SportNI has provided a detailed checklist which includes advice and guidance on risks assessments, public health messaging and the practical implementation of protocols. This is supported by a Return to Sport on-line support service to deal with specific Covid related queries. Regular meetings are taking place with the sport's Governing Bodies to help resolve issues and to ensure that up to date information is cascaded throughout the sector. The on-line advice and guidance is regularly updated to reflect the changing situation and in addition signage / PPE packs have been distributed across the sector in advance of a return to sport. This is underpinned by a continued focus on key messaging around good hygiene, track and trace record keeping, social distancing and issues including sharing of transport.

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42. Competitive Sport - With regard to broadcasting of competitive events these have been ongoing as the elite competitions have continued to take place. The sports involved have guidelines in place that should be followed by all participants and non-participants present at fixtures/events including advice on acceptable participant behaviour. Elite performers are reminded of their responsibility as role models. For grassroots sports the advice and guidance from the respective governing bodies will include reference to acceptable behaviour when taking part in, officiating at or organising a competitive fixture/event.

Recommendation

43. Resume from 23 April outdoor sport organised by a club, individual or individuals affiliated, in each case, to a relevant sporting body or to an organisation that regulates and provides advice and guidance to members on matters relating to sport and physical activities extended to cover squad training and a return of competitive outdoor sport organised by a club, individual or individuals affiliated, in each case, to a relevant sporting body or to an organisation that regulates and provides advice and guidance to members on matters relating to sport and physical activities. Numbers (including officials, participants, management and support personnel) should be restricted to the minimum number required for the delivery of the event and should not exceed 100. Spectators are not permitted.

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Annex 7

Proposal Seven – All remaining retail

45. Non-essential retail has been closed since the end of December, with some relaxations made in relation to click and delivery, as well as for outdoor retail. This is an important sector for both economic reasons, and in relation to furlough numbers and therefore peoples wellbeing and community factors.

CMO/dCSA advice

46. Opening of retail is likely to be of lower risk than opening hospitality, with appropriate mitigations in place. Careful consideration should be given as to how to minimise crowding risks, particularly in the context of communal areas in enclosed shopping centres.

Behavioural Science Response - DfE

47. DfE have been engaging with DfC to promote a consistent approach to Covid 19 measures in terms of marshalling, street signage, hand sanitisation while respectful of autonomy of local councils:
48. DfE has engaged with enforcement agencies and communication agencies to ensure revised guidance is widely disseminated and understood;
49. Since re-opening of click and collect as of 8 March 2021 there have been no breaches of revised guidance and enforcement teams report positive adherence to guidance and
50. Providers have adopted extended operating hours to address implications of reduced service provision – this also reduces car sharing as staff spread over different rotas and reduces lunchtime interfaces as no longer synchronised breaks.

Recommendation

51. Reopen all remaining retail on 30 April.

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Annex 8

Proposal Eight – Self-contained tourist accommodation – (static caravans, holiday homes, no shared facilities)

52. This would be well received first step in the reopening of the tourism sector and would be highly supported by the LG and PSNI as well as the tourism sector generally as a first step.

CMO/dCSA advice

53. Content for reopening of self-contained accommodation from 30 April.

Behavioural Science Response – Not available

Recommendation

54. Reopen or permit for overnight stays from 30 April.

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Annex 9

Proposal Nine – Outdoor Licenced and Unlicenced premises and removal of take away curfew and off licences curfew.

55. Sectoral engagement has shown there has been a high level of investment in logistics to enable a safer return and the opportunity to socialise with family and friends in these settings albeit with limits in place would be of a significant benefit to people and show a positive move forward in the relaxations.

CMO/dCSA advice

56. Unlicenced Premises and Takeaway curfew - Lifting of the takeaway curfew is likely to be associated with modest risk, providing that existing mitigations remain in place. Opening of coffee shops for table service is likely to be at the lower end of risk so far as hospitality sector is concerned. However, due to the relatively long duration of attendance, preponderance of indoor settings and difficulties with social distancing the hospitality sector in general remain of high risk. It is important to record details of all those who attend for TTP purposes.
57. As an alternative proposal, we suggest consideration that **all outdoor** hospitality could be opened for table service with mitigations in place and recording of details of all of those present. This would be on the basis of booking and priority booking only, and would increase opportunities for social interaction and family meetings in a broader range of settings as well as allowing opening up of a wider range of businesses in the hospitality sector.
58. While it is difficult to directly compare risks of outdoor hospitality with indoor retail, interactions in a hospitality setting are likely to last for longer and may involve close interactions between individuals sitting at tables. A date of 10 May would be feasible.
59. Opening of indoor hospitality would then be deferred until the impact of other relaxations is clear (likely not before the beginning/middle of June).

Behavioural Science Response - DfE

60. DfE have been engaging with DfC to promote a consistent approach to Covid 19 measures in terms of marshalling, street signage, hand sanitisation while respectful of autonomy of local councils; and
61. DfE are mindful that many in the hospitality and café are Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCPs) qualified within their role

Recommendation

62. Reopen outdoor areas of licenced and unlicenced premises from 10 May, with table service and mitigations in place and recording of details of all of those present. This would be on the basis of booking and priority booking only. Restricted to no more than 6 people from no more than 2 households and the removal of the curfew on

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takeaways and off licences from 10 May.

Annex 10

Proposal Ten – Return of individual activities in gyms, swimming pools and other large venues – allow personal training/coaching on a 1-2-1 basis with social distancing or a carer to be present.

63. This would be well received first step in the reopening of the tourism sector and would be highly supported by the LG and PSNI as well as the tourism sector generally as a first step.

CMO/dCSA advice

64. With appropriate mitigations in place, the overall impact of these relaxations on COVID transmission is likely to be modest. Details of all participants should be recorded to allow efficient TTP. An opening date forward of 10 May would align with outdoor hospitality.

Behavioural Science Response - DfC

65. The review of the proposal on a return of individual activities at gyms, swimming pools and other large indoor venues by the Behavioural Analysis Team sets out general advice and recommendations. These will be reflected, as appropriate, in Return to Sport protocols that have been developed by the Governing Bodies. Councils also have a significant role to play as the major provider of indoor sports facilities and they have measures in place to manage hygiene and ventilation concerns as well as signage and messaging. SportNI meet regularly with senior representatives from the Governing Bodies and have measures in place to provide advice, deal with queries and publish up to date guidance.

Recommendation

66. Reopening of gym, pools and other exercise facilities for individual use, with exemptions for one to one training/coaching and carers from 10 May.

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Annex 11

Proposal Ten – Post wedding, civil partnership and funeral events.

67. Wedding receptions and post funeral events have not been permitted and there has been an impact on those experiencing life events without their friends and family around them, as well as the sectors delivering these services. This would enable a first step back to the full resumption of these type of events.

CMO/dCSA advice

68. Risks similar to or greater than indoor hospitality – a number of substantial outbreaks have been associated with wedding receptions. Would therefore be best to align with indoor hospitality. However, some scope to allow outdoor wedding receptions with limited numbers (for example, 30) from mid-May. If Marquees are to be used, this should be on the basis of roof only (i.e. not an enclosed tent).

Behavioural Science Response – Not available

Recommendation

69. Resume post wedding and funeral events from 14 May, limited to 30 people.

Annex 12

Proposal twelve – Domestic Settings, Outdoor Gatherings

70. This would permit no more than 15 people from no more than 3 households to meet in an outdoor domestic setting. This would represent a good move forward in allowing more people to meet up more safely in the outdoors.

CMO/dCSA advice

71. Would be best aligned with indoor hospitality (not before 1st June subject to further review). Numbers for meetings in gardens could be relaxed at an earlier stage (possible Mid May). This would be keeping with the Executives commitment to family life.

Behavioural Science Response – Not available

Recommendation

72. Permit from 14 May, 15 people from no more than 3 households.