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MEMORANDUM E (21) 077 (C)

**FROM: FIRST MINISTER
DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER**

DATE: 1 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 decision on them.

Background

2. The Executive's process for assessing relaxations permits a more urgent consideration of those deemed to have urgent or compelling reasons to fall outside the four week review process. DfC, DfE and TEO have submitted proposal as outlined below.

Proposal one – Wedding Showarounds

3. This proposal would enable venues used for marriages and civil partnerships, such as hotels and other venues, to permit potential marriage and civil partnership customers to view their facilities.

CMO/dCSA advice

4. The number of people affected by this is likely to be relatively small. It is likely that those participating in a viewing will be in contact with each other in family settings. The amount of transmission risk associated with this indoor activity is uncertain, though with appropriate mitigations relatively small. Where possible, it would be better if the activity that could be facilitated through a virtual meeting or tour. As

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discussed above, it would be better from the perspective of COVID risk that the Executive waits until the next scheduled review as agreed previously, to avoid increasing social contact at a time of great uncertainty. However, this needs to be weighed against the societal and economic benefits which would result.

5. We advise that it would be best for the Executive to wait until the next scheduled review 15 April. However, risk of proceeding with appropriate mitigations is considered to be relatively low.

Recommendation

6. Due to the low risk nature of this activity and the potential economic and forward planning benefits it would afford the hospitality industry, it is recommended that this proposal is agreed for implementation.

Proposal Two – Outdoor retail

7. Opening of outdoor retail to include :
 - a) New & Used Car Retailers;
 - b) Retailers of Light Motor Vehicles, Lorries & Trailers;
 - c) Retailers of Caravans or Motorhomes;
 - d) Retailers of Agricultural or Other Large Machinery;
 - e) Garden Centres, Plant Nurseries; and
 - f) Car Washes.

CMO/dCSA advice

8. This is likely to be lower risk for customers but may be associated with an increase in transmission among staff in shared transport, offices and lunchrooms (and possibly inside vehicles that are being shown/tested). In addition many car retailers and garden centres have a mixture of indoor and outdoor settings, and we are concerned about mixing in the indoor element. If the Executive prioritises these sectors because of their lower risk to customers, this would be best done at the time of the next planned review, with more information about the impact of previous steps (by which time more of the individuals have been vaccinated, and the risk will be lower). At the appropriate time, there should be specific guidance to avoid transmission in vehicles when they are being exhibited or taken for test drives. Car sharing is a high-risk activity.
9. It is our assessment that the opening of unmanned, automatic or self-service car washes would be low risk and the Executive may decide to allow once the 'stay at home' regulation is removed on 12 April or as soon as is practically possible thereafter.

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10. We recommend that this would be best done at the time of the next planned review 15 April. However, risk relatively low if activities are restricted to outdoors. Unmanned, automatic or self-service car washes would be low risk and the Executive may decide to allow once the 'stay at home' regulation is removed on 12 April.

Recommendation

11. Due to the higher transmission risk associated with vehicle sales and the indoor aspect of garden centres and nurseries, one option would be to delay this section of the proposal and submit those to the 15 April review, whilst agreeing to the reopening of the car wash sector on 12 April, as it is outdoors and therefore lower risk.

Alternatively, Ministers may wish to consider opening all of outdoor retail on the 12 April as suggested by the Minister for the Economy, with a particular emphasis on ensuring that all activities with customers must take place outdoors and that mitigations are in place for staff and those who need to be indoors.

Proposal Three – Increased attendance at Funerals

12. Increase numbers at funerals – an initial move to increase numbers permitted from 25 to 35, including officiants, (ushers and stewards who do not attend the service are not included in the numbers), with a further phased move to venue-based capacity after behavioural research and revised messaging is agreed and approved.

CMO/dCSA advice

13. Any increase in numbers will be associated with some increased risk; the greater the number the greater this risk. In this context, maintaining current numbers until the impact of initial relaxations is clear from data would be best. If numbers are increased, then the smaller the increase the better. Currently the number includes the officiant and children under 12, but ushers and stewards are excluded as they can withdraw from the venue once the 25 are in attendance. There is a material difference in terms of behaviour at a funeral and the risk of close personal contact, given the expressed grief and the need for others in attendance to console the bereaved. This clearly impacts on the ability for attendees to maintain social distancing. There is evidence that transmission of the virus is associated with funerals and with increased numbers, there will be a greater risk of inter-household mixing and the establishment of new chains of infection. While mindful of the impact that these measures have on the bereaved, but at present our advice would be to minimise any increase in numbers above 25. Any increase in numbers should be

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minimised. A move to venue based capacity should wait until clear data on the impact of initial relaxations is available.

Recommendation

14. In line with CMO/dCSA advice, it is recommended to proceed with the initial move to increase numbers permitted from 25 to 35, including officiants, (ushers and stewards who do not attend the service are not included in the numbers). A further phased move to venue-based capacity will take place after behavioural research insights to this matter and the development of revised messaging in support of that move.

Proposal Four – Extension of sports provision

15. To extend the provision for up to 15 people (including coaches) to participate in structured outdoor sports training beyond those clubs affiliated to recognised governing bodies to include structured outdoor sports training in a regulated environment and with appropriate protocols in place. This will cover structured outdoor sports training organised by clubs/individuals affiliated to recognised sports governing bodies or representative organisations for sport and physical activity. This would permit PTs and yoga/dance etc.

CMO/dCSA advice

16. The move to reintroduce sports that were organised by a governing body was judged to be low risk because of the extra assurance that the governing body brought. It is unclear from this application how many people this proposal affects, and what assurance would be provided that the activity would be 'COVID-secure' in the way that governed sports are. Previous experience has shown that the risk of informal mixing outside the immediate sporting context may be significantly increased in the case of sports teams and similar mixing, and this will be associated with increased transmission risk. The risk of sport extension is likely to be significantly greater than wedding viewings for these reasons.
17. We recommend waiting to see the effect and experience of the return of governed sports before making another change. We recommend waiting to see the effect and experience of the return of governed sports before making another change. We would like more information about the number of individuals who are likely to be affected by this change and what mechanisms of assurance will be employed. We are concerned about consequences for social mixing outside the immediate social context (gatherings in households etc).

Response from DfC

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18. This proposal covers the provision of outdoor sport and physical activity which is not under the control of a recognised Governing Body or affiliated club but is regulated by a representative body including for example councils, GLL, ActiveUK be permitted from 12 April. A definition to cover 'recognised sports governing bodies and representative organisations for sport and physical activity' would be:

- Organisations that regulate and provide advice and guidance to their members/clubs on matters relating to sport and physical activities. These Bodies/Associations must have developed Return to Sport covid protocols and be in a position to engage with their members on the implementation of and compliance with those protocols.
- This would cover, for example, qualified PTs with the appropriate affiliations (e.g. UK Active, Greenwich Leisure Limited) and yoga.
- These representative bodies will be responsible for ensuring protocols are in place.

Recommendation

19. It was considered an anomaly that this group of sports regulators and those outside of the club environment were not included in the first decision and therefore it is recommended that in line with the 15 from clubs with governing bodies provision coming into place on 12 April, this extension to include structured outdoor sports training for up to 15 in a regulated environment and with appropriate protocols in place is agreed.

Final Recommendations Overview

20. It is recommended that the Executive agrees:

1. From 12 April – to permit potential marriage and civil partnership customers to view the facilities of venues used for marriages and civil partnerships, such as hotels and other venues.
2. To either :
 - a) Reopen the car wash sector on 12 April and delay the vehicle, gardens centres and nurseries aspect of this proposal until the 15 April review;
 - or
 - b) From 12 April – to reopen all outdoor retail.

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To include :

- i. New & Used Car Retailers;
 - ii. Retailers of Light Motor Vehicles, Lorries & Trailers;
 - iii. Retailers of Caravans or Motorhomes;
 - iv. Retailers of Agricultural or Other Large Machinery;
 - v. Garden Centres, Plant Nurseries; and
 - vi. Car Washes.
3. From 12 April - to increase the number permitted to attend funerals to 35, including officiants, (ushers and stewards who do not attend the service are not included in the numbers).
4. That a further phased move to venue-based capacity for funerals takes place after further behavioural research insights to this matter and the development of revised messaging in support of that move.
5. From 12 April - to extend the provision for up to 15 people (including coaches) to participate in structured outdoor sports training beyond those clubs affiliated to recognised governing bodies to include structured outdoor sports training in a regulated environment and with appropriate protocols in place. This will cover structured outdoor sports training organised by clubs/individuals affiliated to recognised sports governing bodies or representative organisations for sport and physical activity.

RT. HON ARLENE FOSTER MLA
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