



Health Minister welcomes Executive agreement

Date published: 18 December 2020

Health Minister Robin Swann has welcomed the NI Executive's agreement to introduce a series of Covid-19 restrictions from 00:01 on December 26, 2020.

The restrictions will be in place for six weeks, subject to review at four weeks.

The Health Minister will be making an oral statement to the Assembly on Monday setting out the evidence that informed the Executive's discussions and detailing the regulations that are being introduced.

COVID-19 UPDATE

In summary, the restrictions for the six-week period include:

- closure of hospitality and non-essential retail with a stricter demarcation between essential and non-essential retail than that deployed during the recent circuit breaker. Click and collect retail will not be permitted, and homeware will not be categorised as essential retail. Off sales (including from bars) will be permitted from 08:00 on Monday to Saturday, and from 10:00 on Sunday, until 20:00 on any day. Hospitality businesses will only be allowed to offer takeaway and delivery food.
- closure of close contact businesses
- places of worship can remain open under strict conditions

In addition, there will be a one-week period of additional restrictions from 26 December to 2 January. Between 20:00 and 06:00 during this period:

- all businesses which are able to remain open as part of the restrictions must close between these hours

- no indoor or outdoor gatherings of any kind would be permitted after 20:00 and before 06:00, including at sporting venues
- outdoor exercise would be permitted only with members of your own household
- no household mixing would be permitted in private gardens or indoors in any setting between these times, except for emergencies or the provision of health or care services or where households have chosen to form a Christmas bubble for a period of time between 23 to 27 December with provision for travel a day either side when absolutely necessary

The Health Minister stated: “We have introduced these measures with a heavy heart, very mindful of the impact the last year has had on lives and livelihoods.

“The evidence before us was clear that decisive intervention was required to prevent the growing tide of Covid-19 cases overwhelming our health service, with catastrophic consequences.

“Many parts of Europe have introduced significant restrictions for the same reason.

“Those railing against these measures are noticeably much quieter when it comes to suggesting feasible alternatives.

“I would appeal to everyone to unite behind these restrictions so that we can derive the maximum benefit in terms of driving down infection levels.

“We must all play our part and keep following public health advice on keeping ourselves and others safe.

“We are in large part returning to the sustained lockdown introduced in March.

“Once again, a heavy responsibility will rest on all of us to remain at home as much as possible over the course of the six-week period.

“Stay at home, reduce your contacts, save lives, protect the health service – the message is as vital and as powerful as it was in the early stages of the pandemic.

“There is so much at stake, so much resting on our collective efforts. We can weather this period of extreme challenges together, knowing that hope is on the horizon with the roll-out of the vaccination programme.”

Notes to editors:

1. For media enquiries please contact the DoH Press Office
by email pressoffice@health-ni.gov.uk (<mailto:pressoffice@health-ni.gov.uk>).

2. Follow us on Twitter [@healthdpt](https://twitter.com/healthdpt) (<http://twitter.com/healthdpt>)

3. The Executive Information Service operates an out of hours service for media enquiries between 1800hrs and 0800hrs Monday to Friday and at weekends and public holidays. The duty press officer can be contacted on 028 9037 8110.

Share this page

[\(/#facebook\)](#)

[\(/#twitter\)](#)

Latest news

- [Emergency Care Waiting Time Statistics \(April – June 2023\)](#) ([/news/emergency-care-waiting-time-statistics-april-june-2023](#))

01 August 2023

- [Mental Health Strategy Delivery Plan for 2023/24](#) ([/news/mental-health-strategy-delivery-plan-202324](#))

01 August 2023

- [Dental Earnings and Expenses Estimates, 2021/22](#) ([/news/dental-earnings-and-expenses-estimates-202122](#))

27 July 2023

- [Independent Neurology Inquiry Implementation Plan Published](#) ([/news/independent-neurology-inquiry-implementation-plan-published](#))

27 July 2023

[More news ...](#) ([/news](#))