

**FROM:** Robin Swann MLA, Minister for Health

**DATE:** 7 October 2020

**TO:** First Minister and Deputy First Minister

## **NON PHARMACEUTICAL INTERVENTIONS – A TIERED FRAMEWORK APPROACH**

1. Over the last week, there has been a marked increase in new COVID-19 cases in the context of stable testing along with a progressive rise in COVID-19 hospital patients.
2. There is currently widespread community transmission across the whole of NI. NI wide 7-day incidence is currently 191.1/100k, with the 14-day incidence at 280.3/100k. R is estimated to be 1.3-1.8, with a doubling time for positive cases of 7 days and for hospital admissions it is currently 9 days.

## **APPROACH ELSEWHERE**

3. Other regions in the UK and Ireland have introduced, or are planning to introduce, a tiered approach to NPIs. There are benefits in this approach, not only in terms of operational planning for all sectors concerned, but also in terms of public messaging.
4. Ireland has opted for a 5-tiered approach. The Irish model sets out 20 categories of activity, with up to 5 gradations of restrictions for each. (In theory potentially 100 cells in the table but in practice several are repeated). Currently all of Ireland is at level 3 as of Tuesday 6 October, and the level 3 in Dublin and Donegal has been extended at least another 3 weeks as part of this announcement.
5. England are likely to adopt a three tiered approach later this week. The draft system being considered for England currently has 35 categories of activity with 3 possible gradations for each. Whilst it is likely this will be

more detailed in terms of the advice it provides for each sector, the fundamental framework generally aligns to the approach taken in ROI, with the three tiers corresponding approximately with levels 2, 3 and 4 of the Irish model. The most relaxed and most restricted levels are not represented in the English model i.e. there is no equivalent in the English model to levels 1 and 5 of the Irish model.

6. Wales introduced a traffic light system when coming out of lockdown in May 2020. They plan to use the same system to introduce local lockdowns. This is more intricate as each sector could be red, amber or green at any time according to where the main areas of transmission are that need to be addressed. This makes communication more challenging, as a geographical area may not have the same status applying for all sectors at the same time.
7. Scotland have not published a separate restrictions framework. They employed a 4-phased approach to exiting lockdown, but haven't as yet published a phased approach to re-instating restrictions.

## **NI FRAMEWORK**

8. The purpose of developing a framework approach for NI is:
  - a) To provide clarity for the individuals and sectors impacted and allow greater planning and hence more opportunity to mitigate the detrimental impacts of restrictions;
  - b) To enable more rapid decision making and implementation, as actions to be taken in any given COVID scenario will already be determined – the decisions will focus on whether to move to another level rather than on the details of the restrictions themselves.

### Defining 5 levels of restrictions

9. The NI Executive 'Approach to Decision Making' (May 2020) has six broad categories against which a pathway to recovery was mapped (work; retail; education; travel; family & community; sport, cultural and leisure activities).

10. In order to develop NI appropriate levels which align strategically with the approach in Ireland and the UK, DoH is suggesting that a 'legislative snapshots' approach is adopted. Each level considers a point in time since March this year and reflects the restrictions and requirements that were in operation then, with some small adjustments to account for the sequencing of relaxations. This framework uses the same number of levels as Ireland, adjusting the numbers and measures to match the approach to restrictions that has already been taken in NI to date, therefore retaining an element of familiarity for the public.

11. **Annex A** outlines five proposed levels for NI, and the legislative snapshots on which these are based are outlined below:

- a) Level 1: Position at 10 August, i.e. the most-relaxed restrictions and requirements, with the addition of soft play areas (14 September) and wet pubs (23 September).
- b) Level 2: Position at 26 August, when the limits on gatherings in private dwellings – indoors and outdoors – were lowered, and the threshold was reduced from 30 people to 15 for the requirement on the organiser to carry out a risk assessment and to take reasonable measures to reduce the risk.
- c) Level 3: Status across NI as of 1 October 2020, which introduced the 'curfew' on the alcohol sale and consumption on licensed premises. The postcode-based restrictions introduced in Ballymena etc. had been extended to all of NI, by direction, on 21 September, restricting indoor and outdoor gatherings in private dwellings.
- d) Level 4: Total restrictions and requirements in place in Derry City and Strabane LGD after the addition of new restrictions w/c 5 October.
- e) Level 5: Position as when the original principal regulations came into operation on 28 March.

12. Consideration should also be given to industries which didn't open before restrictions began to be reintroduced, such as theatres and conference centres, and also adjustments could be made to take account of learning

over the previous months, such as elements of the initial complete 'lockdown' which were quickly relaxed (e.g. access to cemeteries).

13. The main advantage of this approach is that each option is factually categorical: each is a snapshot of restrictions and requirements that were (a) agreed by the Executive, and (b) legislated for and in operation over a precisely defined period. This could save critical time in the decision-making and implementation by reducing the time taken to agree details that have already been scrutinised and approved by the Assembly.

#### Other measures running in parallel to the 5 level approach

14. The wearing of face coverings regulations should remain unchanged at all levels, as this represents a sensible measure to limit transmission regardless of the incidence in NI. Uniform application of face coverings requirements across all of NI at all times will also reduce confusion and increase compliance.
15. Certain aspects of the hospitality package introduced on 23rd September could be retained at all levels, such as the requirement to record and retain visitor information for at least 21 days.
16. It is worth noting that whilst the framework proposed is an escalator approach, it would be possible to introduce any level of restrictions at any time. It does not necessarily follow that level 2 must be introduced before level 3, if the situation warrants more rapid action.
17. It is also possible that different levels of restriction could apply in different geographical areas of NI at the same time, i.e. the levels may be applied across NI or as localised restrictions.

#### Triggers

18. It would be a decision for the Executive on which level applies at a particular time, within NI regions and nationwide. My Department would provide advice to the Executive on when a change in level should be considered. Whilst there would be no one trigger which would automatically cause a recommendation to move levels, there are a set of factors which will provide a complete picture on which recommendations

would be based, in line with the approach that has been taken throughout the pandemic. These would include:

- Incidence /100k of the population
- Positivity rate
- Testing rate
- Any known large, contained clusters affecting results and/or potential measures required
- R community and hospital
- The number of COVID-19 patients currently in NI hospitals
- The doubling time of estimated new infections across NI
- The number of beds being used for COVID-19 patients (expressed as a percentage of total available beds)

19. The modelling group will be using a traffic light system to assess the impact of Covid-19 demand on bed capacity of Trusts, to predict whether Trusts are likely to be at excess capacity within the next 21 days. This will also inform recommendations to the Executive.

20. It is proposed that a high level methodology statement would be published so the public are able to understand why changes in levels may occur. Once changes were recommended by my Department, a separate statement could be published outlining the rationale for the recommendation made.

## **CONCLUSION**

21. The table in **Annex A** is a draft proposal for how 5 levels of restriction could be defined. I am submitting this for your consideration as a work in progress, to be integrated by TEO into the development of a collaborative approach for Executive decision making on future restrictions.

**Minister Robin Swann**

## Five-level model of COVID-19 restrictions and requirements, draft 7 October 2020

Restrictions and requirements are in regulations unless indicated as advice or policy decisions.

	<b>Level 1</b> 10 August	<b>Level 2</b> 26 August	<b>Level 3</b> 1 October	<b>Level 4</b> 5 October, Derry City & Strabane	<b>Level 5</b> Level of maximum restrictions **
<b>NB: For every level, wearing of face coverings is mandatory on public transport and in shops and shopping centres.</b>					
<b>Work</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advice: work from home where possible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advice: work from home where possible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advice: work from home where possible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advice: work from home where possible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stay home unless reasonable excuse</li> <li>Cessation of businesses listed in Schedule 2 Pt 2 (listed below)</li> </ul>
<b>Retail</b> (inc. services and hospitality)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wearing of face coverings required</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hospitality: at 26 Aug regulations said that indoors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hospitality:</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Closure of hospitality businesses except</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Closure of all retail except types listed in Schedule 3 Pt 3.</li> </ul>

	<p>in shops and shopping centres</p> <p>Add:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wet pubs open</li> <li>• Soft play open</li> </ul>	<p>alcohol could only be served with food, however DoH proposes that Level 2 allows wet pubs to open.</p> <p>Add:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wet pubs open</li> <li>• Soft play open</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• restrictions on opening hours</li> <li>• 6 people from 2 households per table.</li> <li>• no live music, dancing and music for dancing.</li> <li>• other specific requirements on hospitality.</li> <li>• Wet pubs open</li> </ul> <p>Add:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Soft play open</li> </ul>	<p>outdoor dining, deliveries, drive-ins or in a harbour terminal, airport or motorway service area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restrictions on sale of food &amp; drink in hotels and guesthouses</li> <li>• Closure of cinemas, museums &amp; galleries, trampoline parks, inflatable parks, escape rooms, bowling alleys, ice rinks</li> <li>• Restrictions on libraries operating.</li> <li>• Soft play permitted</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Closure of premises, where food or drink are sold for consumption on those premises</li> <li>• Closure of premises not required to carry out permitted business or services</li> <li>• Ban on sale of food or drink for consumption on premises</li> <li>• Closure of businesses offering goods for sale or for hire in a shop (exceptions listed in Schedule 1 Pt 3)</li> <li>• Closure of library services</li> <li>• Closure of holiday accommodation</li> <li>• Closure of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• restaurants</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• cafes</li> <li>• bars</li> <li>• public houses</li> <li>• cinemas</li> <li>• theatres</li> <li>• nightclubs</li> <li>• bingo halls</li> <li>• concert halls</li> <li>• museums and galleries</li> <li>• casinos</li> <li>• betting shops</li> <li>• spas</li> <li>• nail, beauty, hair salons &amp; barbers</li> <li>• massage providers</li> <li>• tattoo and piercing parlours</li> <li>• skating rinks</li> <li>• indoor fitness studios, gyms, swimming pools, bowling alleys, amusement arcades or soft</li> </ul>
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					play areas or other indoor leisure centres or facilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• funfairs (outdoors or indoors)</li> <li>• playgrounds, sports courts and outdoor gyms</li> <li>• outdoor markets (except stalls selling food)</li> <li>• car showrooms</li> <li>• auction houses.</li> </ul>
<b>Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools open</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools open</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools open</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools open</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Closure of schools (by policy decision) except for children of key workers</li> </ul>
<b>Travel</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No restriction on individual movement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No restriction on individual movement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No restriction on individual movement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advise: necessary travel only.</li> <li>• Advise: avoid public transport if possible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requirement on each person to 'stay home' unless they have a reasonable excuse as listed.</li> </ul>

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advise: share cars with members of own household only.</li> <li>• No restriction on individual movement</li> </ul>	
<b>Family &amp; community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indoor gatherings up to 30 people</li> <li>• Outdoor gatherings up to 30 people</li> <li>• Gatherings of more than 30 permitted where organiser has done risk assessment and taken reasonable steps to reduce risk</li> <li>• Private dwellings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indoors – 10 people from up to 4 households</li> <li>• Outdoors – 30 people</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Private dwellings – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indoors: 6 people from 2 households</li> <li>• Outdoors: 15 people</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Gatherings: max 15 people indoors or outdoors</li> <li>• Larger gatherings permitted with risk assessment and reasonable steps by organiser to reduce risk</li> <li>• Up to ten people to attend a wedding or civil partnership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Private dwellings – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indoors: no mixing (except bubble 6ppl from 2HHs)</li> <li>• Outdoors – 6ppl from 2HHs (except bubble 15ppl from 2HHs)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Gatherings: max 15 people indoors or outdoors</li> <li>• Larger gatherings permitted with risk assessment and reasonable steps by organiser to reduce risk</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Private dwellings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indoors: no mixing (except bubble 6ppl from 2HHs)</li> <li>• Outdoors: 6 people from 2 households (except bubble 15ppl from 2HHs)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Gatherings – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indoors: no mixing of households, with exemptions for weddings, funerals, worship,</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Private dwelling – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indoors: no mixing (except bubble – single person household)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Gatherings in public places limited to 2 people, unless from same household or for certain purposes</li> <li>• Closure of places of worship; exceptions include funerals &amp; essential voluntary services</li> <li>• Closure of community centres</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Places of worship remain open</li> </ul>	<p>ceremony indoors at private dwelling where one participant is terminally ill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funerals exempted from restrictions on gatherings and restrictions re private dwellings; those involved in funeral required to comply with DoH guidance</li> <li>• Places of worship remain open</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Places of worship remain open</li> </ul>	<p>workplace, education or training, childcare, youth service, care or assistance, house-moves, building or maintenance, avoidance of injury or illness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outdoors: 15 people max. (No exemption based on risk assessment)</li> <li>• Places of worship remain open</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requirement to close burial grounds &amp; crematorium would not be part of Level 5 restrictions.</li> </ul>
<b>Sport, cultural and leisure activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sports permitted in indoor arenas not capable of seating 5,000 or more spectators</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sporting events: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indoors: 15 people, or more with risk assessment.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sporting Events –</li> <li>• Indoors – 15 people, or more subject to risk assessment in arenas not capable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sporting events: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indoors: 15 people, or more with risk assessment. No</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No sporting events</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Closure of: nightclubs, conference facilities, theatres and concert halls apart from rehearsals, indoor arenas capable of seating more than 5000 spectators.</li> </ul> <p>Add:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theatres and concert halls open for rehearsals and recordings without audience</li> </ul>	<p>Spectators permitted.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outdoors: 15 people, or more with risk assessment. Spectators permitted.</li> <li>• Closure of: nightclubs, conference facilities, theatres and concert halls apart from rehearsals, indoor arenas capable of seating more than 5000 spectators.</li> <li>• Theatres and concert halls open for rehearsals and live recordings without audience</li> </ul>	<p>of accommodating &gt;5000 spectators. Spectators permitted.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outdoors - 15ppl or more with R.A. Spectators permitted.</li> <li>• Closure of nightclubs, conference facilities, theatres and concert halls apart from rehearsals,</li> </ul>	<p>spectators permitted.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outdoors - 15ppl or more with R.A. No spectators permitted.</li> <li>• Closure of nightclubs, conference facilities, theatres and concert halls apart from rehearsals, cinemas, museums, galleries, inflatable parks, trampoline parks, ice rinks and bowling alleys.</li> </ul>	
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**\*\* Along similar lines to the restrictions first introduced in March 2020**