

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE MINISTER
Diane Dodds MLA



From: Diane Dodds MLA
Minister for the Economy

Netherleigh
Massey Avenue
Belfast BT4 2LP
Tel: **I&S**
email: private.office@economy-ni.gov.uk

Date: 12 November 2020

To: Executive Colleagues

COVID-19: EASING OF RESTRICTIONS

As an Executive we have been discussing for some days the direction of travel for easing restrictions where possible. I am as keen as anyone to find an agreed solution which balances the need to protect public health, whilst ensuring that we are also protecting people's livelihoods.

Protecting businesses is particularly acute at this time of year, as we are all aware that the six week run up to Christmas is often the difference between businesses surviving or failing.

As I have stated previously, my preference is to see the economy re-opened in full, however, like colleagues, and in the interests of compromise, I suggest the following is agreed by the Executive:

- a) Close contact services including driving instructors will reopen by appointment on 20th November;
- b) Hospitality will reopen on a graduated basis, with unlicensed premises such as cafes and coffee shops opening on 20th November;
- c) Support will be provided for mitigations to reduce risk within the hospitality sector, including improved ventilation and requirements for the recording of customer information for contact tracing purposes;
- d) The remaining current restrictions on households etc would be extended and come to an end at midnight on 26th November, leaving all elements of hospitality including hotels able to open on 27th November;
- e) A vaccination programme will be rolled out from as early as possible in December in line with England, initially targeting priority groups such as health care staff, care homes and those with underlying vulnerabilities;
- f) Ongoing preparation for introduction of rapid testing at the earliest opportunity;
- g) Additional financial support for affected businesses; and
- h) A strengthened adherence/compliance working group, which will work to assist and to mitigate risk in the opening up of the hospitality businesses.

These measures have the support of my Ministerial colleagues; the First Minister, Minister for Education and Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

RECOMMENDATION

You are recommended to agree the approach outlined at a.- h. above.

I am also copying this to the Attorney General and Departmental Solicitor and to First Legislative Counsel and the Executive Secretariat

Yours sincerely

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DIANE DODDS MLA
Minister for the Economy