

Note | Upcoming Decision on Christmas Restrictions

1. UKG and DAs are actively discussing the easing of restrictions across the UK in the Christmas period at an official level and the early discussions have yielded the following agreement - at official level:
 - a. That easing of restrictions can only take place for a very limited time, possibly between 3-6 days over the Christmas period. This must allow for people travelling to their destination for Christmas, and then spending Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and Boxing Day there. This will not include NYE.
 - b. That the easing of restrictions would be focussed on allowing people to spend time together in private dwellings (labelled as social restriction easing), as opposed to being able to frequent hospitality venues (labelled as economic restriction easing).
 - c. England, Northern Ireland and Wales indicated that they would not have regional level restrictions over this period. Even if one area had higher cases, people would still be allowed to travel from it for the festive period. Scottish officials were non-committal.
 - d. All were concerned that overly restrictive measures over this period would encourage non-compliance. Initial UKG polling indicated over 30% of people in England would break the rules if the current restrictions were in place over the Christmas period. This could be expected to rise as Christmas comes closer. All were concerned that banning NYE gatherings, as is being considered, could encourage non-compliance. Mistakes risk creating a culture of non-compliance.
2. NICS have flagged that they would need to consider the economic implications of decisions made, and DAs pressed UKG for more detail on how businesses depending on Christmas custom to survive would be protected.
3. NICS have also highlighted the need for Ireland and Northern Ireland to compliment each other in any easing of restrictions over the festive period. This may reduce their ability to align on dates and any joint statement which is planned by UKG.
4. UKG have indicated that their early thoughts are as follows, these were not agreed by DAs, who are considering these issues:
 - a. There would be difficulties in allowing easing on Hanukkah, having not taken the equivalent steps for Eid and Diwali. NIE are keen to show that they have considered faiths in their decision making, but agree with this principle.
 - b. UKG officials believe a Joint Statement on Travel would be useful in binding together the policy intentions of the four nations.
 - c. UKG would be keen to start communicating decisions towards the end of November so that the public across the UK are prepared for changes over the festive period.

Students

5. A separate plan is in place for students in England, who will be encouraged to travel home in the first week of December, possibly with the assistance of mass testing. A readout of the Covid-O where this was discussed is [here](#).