

MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE MEETING: 26 JULY 2021

MEETING CONDUCTED VIA ZOOM

Present: First Minister (Chair)
deputy First Minister (Chair)
Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
Minister for Communities
Minister of Education
Minister for the Economy
Minister of Finance
Minister of Health
Minister for Infrastructure
Minister of Justice

In attendance: Junior Minister, TEO (Mr. Middleton)
Junior Minister, TEO (Mr. Kearney)

Interim Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service
Head of Executive and Central Advisory Division
Sir Michael McBride, Chief Medical Officer
Professor Ian Young, Chief Scientific Adviser
Richard Pengelly, Permanent Secretary, Department of Health
Sharon Gallagher, Chief Executive, Health and Social Care Board
Lisa McWilliams, Director of Performance and Commissioning Services, Health and Social Care Board

NR

 Attorney General

INTRODUCTION

The First Minister chaired the first agenda item, noting that today's meeting would consider hospital waiting lists and would also give further consideration to proposed relaxations to the COVID-19 restrictions.

AGENDA ITEM 1

Hospital Waiting Lists

1. The First Minister invited the Minister of Health to introduce a presentation on hospital waiting lists.
2. Following the presentation by the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Health, the Minister of Health and Permanent Secretary responded to queries from Ministers in relation to a number of issues, including: financing; targets for first appointments; staff resourcing; use of the private sector; access to GP services; and bed-blocking.
3. It was agreed that the Executive should issue a statement, putting on record Ministers' commitment to support the Health Minister and wider Health and Social Care system in implementing a programme of investment and reform, and also expressing gratitude to the HSC workforce for their efforts to provide care and services for patients in the most challenging circumstances.
4. The First and deputy First Minister expressed their sympathy and support for Patricia Donnelly following a confrontation by anti-vaccination protestors.

AGENDA ITEM 2

E (21) 158 (C) COVID 19 - Ratification of Relaxation of Decisions reconsidered from Executive meeting of 22 July 2021

5. The deputy First Minister introduced this paper which was discussed by the Executive.
6. Following discussion, the Executive agreed that the easements listed in Annex A would come into effect from a date subsequently confirmed as 18.00 on 27 July.
7. The First Minister and Minister for the Economy requested that advice be provided on social distancing for consideration at the Executive meeting on 29 July, in light of the implications for a number of key events planned for coming weeks, including the European Super Cup and the impact on tourism and travel.
8. The deputy First Minister noted that TEO and DOH officials were in touch with UK Government counterparts regarding vaccine passports for use domestically, and

that this issue would be discussed at a future Executive meeting. The Justice Minister requested that the advice of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and Attorney General was sought in the preparation of the relevant Executive paper. The Health Minister indicated that his department could provide advice on what was technically possible in terms of introducing vaccine passports for domestic use, but considered that the policy decision on whether to introduce them was a matter for the Executive. The deputy First Minister stressed that the issues around use of such passports were matters of public health policy.

AGENDA ITEM 3

Any Other Business

9. The Minister for Communities advised that NR Chair of the Culture Arts and Heritage Recovery Taskforce, had written to raise a number of issues in relation to the return of live music and theatre performances, and to suggest that the Public Health Agency may wish to consider a publicity campaign involving musicians and other high profile artists to encourage vaccine uptake in the 18-39 age group.

Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Executive would take place on Thursday 29 July for COVID and departmental business.

ANNEX A – RELAXATIONS SUBJECT TO RATIFICATION, FOR DISCUSSION ON MONDAY 26 JULY

Relaxations for consideration on 26 July – Note mitigations would apply to all relaxations, that is to socially distance, wear face coverings and to undertake and implement a risk assessment.

Reference	Relaxation as agreed by the Executive on 8th July 2021	CMO and CSA opinion 26th July 2021
1.	<p>Remove the restriction on audiences in seated theatres and concert halls and other such venues</p> <p>Entry to performances for audiences will be by ticket only. Tickets must be purchased in advance of the performance.</p> <p>Audiences for indoor events must have allocated seating and remain seated.</p> <p>Social distancing of 1m required</p>	<p>Moderate risk. Risk may be similar to or somewhat greater than cinemas, depending on nature of performance and potential for audience interaction (singing, or shouting, for example). An interval with audience mixing in a relatively uncontrolled way is more likely than in cinema. Ventilation is likely to be difficult.</p> <p>Risk could be somewhat mitigated by requiring use of face coverings, or by asking for evidence of double vaccination or a negative LFT prior to entry.</p>

Reference	Relaxation as agreed by the Executive on 8 th July 2021	CMO and CSA opinion 26th July 2021
2.	<p>Indoor Domestic Settings:</p> <p>Permit ten people from no more than three households.</p> <p>If one household has ten members, the maximum is increased to 15 from no more than three households</p> <p>Does not include children 12 and under.</p>	<p>Moderate increase in risk over current arrangements, though may significantly increase the numbers of people required to self-isolate as a result of becoming contacts.</p> <p>Everyone present for more than 15 minutes is likely to be a close contact if a case occurs.</p> <p>Risk could be mitigated by use of face coverings and by ensuring windows are kept open.</p>

Reference	Relaxation as agreed by the Executive on 8 th July 2021	CMO and CSA opinion 26th July 2021
3.	<p>In Concert Venues, Theatres and Other Indoor Venues</p> <p>Permit live music for rehearsals and performances</p> <p>No restriction to background or ambient levels of volume</p> <p>Entry to performances for audiences will be by ticket only. Tickets must be purchased in advance of the performance.</p> <p>Audiences for indoor events must have allocated seating and remain seated (unless using facilities) and are not permitted to dance</p> <p>Social distancing of 1m required</p>	<p>Moderate risk - consider in association with comments on 1 above.</p> <p>Risk likely to be greater than 1 due to propensity for audiences to sing along and to shout to each other to communicate during performances or to acknowledge the performer.</p> <p>Risk could be somewhat mitigated by requiring use of face coverings, or by asking for evidence of double vaccination or a negative LFT prior to entry.</p>
4.	<p>Face Coverings</p> <p>Remove requirement for the wearing of face coverings in places of worship from regulations into guidance only</p>	<p>Use of face coverings is strongly advised. If a decision is made to move to guidance, then use of face coverings when moving around or singing is strongly recommended.</p>

Reference	Relaxation as agreed by the Executive on 8 th July 2021	CMO and CSA opinion 26th July 2021
5.	<p>MOT Centres</p> <p>Permit the vehicle to be shared with the examiner and customer for 5 minutes with both wearing a face covering, for the most part the customer will diagonally opposite the examiner while the vehicle is being driven and the examiner conducts the brake roller test. However, for the small number of two seat vehicles, the customer will be side by side with the examiner with both wearing a face covering;</p> <p>Remove the requirement for vehicle examiners to wear face coverings at all times in the test hall as this increases the risk of trips and slips in a semi-industrial environment, particularly when the examiner enters the scissor lift well to conduct the underbody inspection of the vehicle; and</p> <p>Permit customers to be seated safely in the test hall for approximately 8 minutes, socially distanced and wearing a face covering, while the underbody inspection of the vehicle is being conducted.</p>	<p>Moderate risk.</p> <p>Providing that good ventilation is maintained could be allowed to proceed.</p> <p>Risk could be somewhat mitigated by use of regular LFTs by staff.</p>