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MEMORANDUM E (21) 094 (C)

**FROM: FIRST MINISTER
DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER**

DATE: 6 May 2021

TO: EXECUTIVE COLLEAGUES

FINAL EXECUTIVE PAPER: Pathway out of Restrictions - Proposal for Relaxation - Increase in numbers permitted for indoor and outdoor gatherings

Introduction

1. The purpose of this paper is to outline a proposal submitted for relaxation and to agree a position in relation to it.

Background

2. In the Pathway out of Restrictions, the Executive outlined its priorities for relaxing restrictions. TEO has submitted a proposal and requested urgent consideration of the matter outside of the four week process.
3. Advice has also been sought from the Chief Medical Officer and Chief Scientific Adviser.

Summary of Proposed Relaxation

4. From 24 May:
 - 1) To permit indoor gatherings of no more than 50 people (or capped as per risk assessment for venue if lower) across all sectors, including spectators at sports events (exclusive of sports participants). Over 15 people must be an organised gathering and would require a risk assessment.
 - 2) To permit outdoor gatherings of up to 500 people (or capped as per risk assessment for venue if lower) across all sectors, including spectators at sports event (exclusive of sports participants). Over 30 people must be an organised gathering and would require a risk assessment.

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CMO/CSA Advice

5. Risk will be higher with indoor gatherings than outdoor gatherings. In both cases, guidance should be provided about travelling to and from events in household events if possible. Full mitigations as discussed in proposal should be in place.
6. If events are to be allowed to proceed, then requiring a negative lateral flow test within 24 / 48 hours of the event would provide some additional mitigation. However, the risk of false negative LFTs means that it is essential that full mitigation measures remain in place for all of those attending.
7. Results of NI pilot event will not be available ahead of this relaxation, though results may be available from rest of pilot events in UK.
8. The impacts of current relaxations cannot be judged before 20 May. However, the measures outlined in this proposal are unlikely to confer significant additional risk to virus transmission beyond those associated with opening of indoor hospitality.
9. Greater risk is associated with indoor gatherings compared with outdoor gatherings. However, could proceed with full mitigations as discussed above dependent on assessment of data on 20 May.

Behavioural Science Advice

10. BIT and iLab could add value in relation the risk assessment process by providing guidance for use across the sectors.
11. DCMS pilot studies should be considered (Note: officials are involved in this work)
12. You could recommend people get an LFD before going to one of these events. And have a list of other precautions they can take (e.g. face masks, don't carpool with people outside of your household). (Note – Also covered by CMO & CSA)

Recommendation

13. It is recommended that the Executive agree:

From 24 May (subject to review on 20 May):

- I. permit indoor gatherings of no more than 50 people (or capped as per risk assessment for venue if lower) across all sectors, including spectators at sports events (exclusive of sports participants). Over 15 people must be an organised gathering and would require a risk assessment.

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- II. permit outdoor gatherings of up to 500 people (or capped as per risk assessment for venue if lower) across all sectors, including spectators at sports event (exclusive of sports participants). Over 30 people must be an organised gathering and would require a risk assessment.

With the following mitigations:

- a) The smaller gatherings (fewer than 15 indoors, fewer than 30 outdoors) will be informal and whilst they will not require a risk assessment the message will still be to socially distance, wash hands, wear masks and ensure the space is well ventilated.
 - b) For the larger gatherings a risk assessment will be required from the organiser ensuring consideration has been given to the venue and numbers involved to ensure maximum mitigations are in place.
14. It is recommended that the Executive consider whether they wish to introduce a requirement for a Lateral Flow Test 24/48 hours before a large gathering, for example for any gathering of over 200 people.
 15. It is recommended that the Executive agree to commission Behavioural Science input in relation to guidance on risk assessments and messaging for people attending events.

RT. HON ARLENE FOSTER MLA
First Minister

MICHELLE O'NEILL MLA
deputy First Minister

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