



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Unlocking our society and economy: continuing the conversation



May 2020

First Minister's foreword

Over the last eight weeks, we have seen an incredible effort, from all parts of our society, to respond to the unprecedented challenge to our way of life posed by the COVID-19 virus.

I am proud of the heroic efforts made by NHS staff and those working in the social care sector to help those who have become ill. Shop workers, those working on public transport and in the freight industry, cleaners, postal workers, public service staff and many others have helped to sustain our communities. An exceptional volunteer effort has helped look after those who need help most. And, crucially, people have stayed at home and observed social distancing when it has been necessary to leave the house; this, more than anything else, has helped slow the spread of the disease.

As a result, we, like countries across the world are able to start to think about how we can move out of the lockdown. But it is essential as we do so that we realise that this is not a short-term crisis. Until there is a vaccine or effective treatments, we will have to live with the disease in our society and to try to control its spread and mitigate its effects.



On 24 April we published ‘Leading Wales out of the coronavirus pandemic: a framework for recovery’. In that document we set out our general approach to determining how and when restrictions might be eased.

We identified three pillars:

- 1 Measures and evidence
- 2 Principles underpinning adjustments to restrictions
- 3 Public health purpose

In this document, we build on that approach to lay out the specific steps we are considering taking as we move forward.

As Wales moves into the next phase of response to the virus, it is important to be clear about the challenges that we now face.

These challenges are the same as those which confront the rest of the United Kingdom and which are set out in the UK Government’s document ‘Our Plan to Rebuild: The UK Government’s COVID-19 Recovery Strategy’. They can be summarised as follows:

- In the very short term, we cannot afford to make drastic changes. If we were to go too far, too quickly, for example, by everyone returning to work or by relaxing all social distancing measures now, we would see a resurgence of the virus and a second wave that could be larger than the first.
- There is no ‘quick fix’. Until there is a vaccine or effective treatments, we will have to live with COVID-19 and ensure we have measures to limit as far as possible the number of infections and deaths, while allowing our society and economy to function.
- We have to reduce the number of new cases by keeping the transmission rate (R) below 1. If not, it is likely we will lose the ability to control the spread of the disease.
- Putting in place an effective system to track, trace and protect will be essential if we are to take any of the steps we are considering. We need to be able to identify and isolate new outbreaks and to alert those who might have been infected to stay at home until they have been tested.
- We need to continue learning about the disease and to understand how it is spread. In particular we need to understand who is at greatest risk, what proportion of those who become infected do not show symptoms, when the risk of someone who has been infected passing on the disease is greatest and ‘what works’ in terms of specific shielding and suppression measures.

- Any steps we take depend on continued widespread compliance. So far people in Wales have been extraordinarily disciplined. However, to avoid R tipping above 1 and the epidemic increasing in an uncontrolled manner, we need people to continue to follow advice – and in particular to be prepared to self-isolate if they become ill or may have been infected. That is why as a Government we believe transparency is essential, so people understand the scientific evidence on which our decisions are based. We will continue to publish on a weekly basis the advice we receive from our Technical Advisory Cell.
- The situation will become more difficult as we move into the autumn and winter and prepare for the winter flu season. It will make it harder to identify COVID-19 outbreaks (because so many people without COVID-19 are likely to have symptoms that resemble COVID-19), as well as increasing the demand for hospital beds.

All of this underlines why we believe we can only move forward cautiously.

Because the challenges we face are common to all parts of the United Kingdom, we, as a Government, have always strongly supported a four-nation approach to the lifting of the lockdown.

But this has to respect the responsibilities of each Government to determine the speed at which it is safe to move and the balance to be struck between different forms of 'easement' – how to prioritise between allowing people to meet up with close family, to go shopping or to the hairdresser, to get back to work or visit the seaside. With limited 'headroom' to ease the current restrictions, choices need to be made and we want to make those choices in consultation with our stakeholders and the people of Wales.

That is why we are publishing this document, not as the final word, but as part of a continuing conversation.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Drakeford".

Mark Drakeford MS
First Minister of Wales

1 Introduction



The UK Government published on 11 May its approach to moving out of the current COVID-19 lockdown in England.

We will continue to work with all four governments across the UK to ensure our approach remains consistent and coherent.

And we recognise that after nearly eight weeks of lockdown, people in Wales want to have a far better sense of what happens next. Without some sense of the future, it will be much harder to sustain the extraordinarily disciplined way in which people in Wales have responded to the crisis.

As we have made clear over the last week or so, the Welsh Government favours an approach that is governed by what we know about what is happening with the virus, here in Wales – not just to how we apply the legal restrictions, which remain broadly the same across the whole of the UK, but to the messages we send.

The reason that the peak in infections came sooner, was smaller than we had originally expected and that our NHS has been able to cope, is due less to the legislative restrictions, than to the way in which people across Wales have responded to the message to stay at home in order to save lives and protect the NHS.

We now believe however that there is a growing risk that changed behaviours even within the same legal framework, could lead to a rapid, possibly uncontrolled increase in the spread of the disease.

It would be tragic if, having already invested so heavily and given up so much to save lives, we were to discover that the same lives were still lost but simply over a longer period.

To avoid this, we need to move at a pace which is matched by our capacity to identify and shut down new outbreaks of the disease – to test, trace and protect those who become ill or have the virus without symptoms and ensure that they self-isolate to protect onward transmission.

We are working hard to ensure that robust systems are in place by the end of this month, at the point of the next formal review of our regulations. But until we are sure, we cannot set a timescale for the next stages of removing the restrictions we have put in place.

We also need to use the next few weeks to do all we can to adapt our workplaces, our public spaces and other places where we come in contact with each other to the necessity of maintaining social distancing.

So in this document, which we see as part of a whole four nations approach, we:

- 1 Explain where we are now in terms of preparing to lift restrictions.**
- 2 Set out how we will review any changes we wish to make to the restrictions.**
- 3 Outline our proposed ‘traffic light’ approach to lifting lockdown.**
- 4 Indicate how we propose to develop further guidance.**

2 Moving out of lockdown: The starting point

The coronavirus will remain a serious risk to us until a vaccine or an effective treatment is available. So as we start to consider moving out of the rigid but effective control measures that we first put in place, we are clear that this is a process of managing, not eliminating risk.

Much as we might want it to, 'normal' life will not be possible for many months – possibly years.

The enormous effort we have made to date has succeeded in reducing the rate at which the virus has spread through our communities and it is clear that, at least for the moment, we have passed the peak. The level of new infections, new admissions to hospital and patients in Intensive Care Units have each stabilised and are beginning to fall.

Critical to understanding this is the reproduction rate.

The epidemiological advice is built around the basic reproduction number R_0 for the virus. The expected number of infections arising from one case, for COVID-19, in the absence of any control measures is about three. All of the control measures, such as social distancing and workplace restrictions, and the changes in people's behaviours have decreased R in Wales to below one. So the numbers of infections are decreasing. The R value changes over time and is therefore referred to as R_t (t = time). We can calculate R_t by measuring different things like hospital admissions or confirmed cases and the more reliable things we can measure, the more accurately we can understand R . R is also different in different places, for example R can be: higher in some closed settings when compared to the community - or lower in places such as Mid Wales compared to South Wales. Even with these differences R is a useful way in which we can describe the state of play of COVID-19 in Wales.

The current R rate across Wales as a whole is thought to be between 0.7 and 0.9.

Anything we do to ease the formal restrictions, or simply to change our behaviours by increasing contacts with other people, will increase the R rate. And small increases in the rate can lead to very large changes in the number of new infections and new deaths. So at any time, unless the R rate falls further, we will have limited 'headroom' to make changes: we will need to make choices.

Any changes we do make will also rely on certain behaviours becoming normal. Physical distancing and better hygiene practices will need to continue for the foreseeable future to ensure we reduce the chances of exposure to the virus.

In recognition of this, we have already put in place regulations to require employers to make 'reasonable adaptations' in the workplace to ensure that people wherever possible are kept at least two metres apart. We have supported this with guidance.

Building on this, we are also already engaged in the process of developing additional protocols or guidance, working in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders, including employers' organisations and trades unions, the third sector and civic society. A description of the work underway is set out in Chapter 5.

We will press ahead with this work vigorously and encourage all our partners to do likewise: the more preparation we can collectively do now, the quicker and more sustainably we can move to take the appropriate measures when the time is right.

However, even with the most effective mitigations in place, we know the virus has not been and will not be eradicated. Critical to avoiding a second, potentially still larger, second peak is putting in place the infrastructure to manage future outbreaks of the disease.

We have set out in our 'Test, Track, Protect' Strategy (<https://gov.wales/test-trace-protect>) published on 13 May our proposals for doing this.

We will also have to continue to protect those who are most vulnerable to the disease - the 121,000 people who are 'shielded' owing to prior health conditions.

We will set out our proposed next steps for this group well before the current deadline for our Chief Medical Officer's advice to them to stay at home expires in mid-June.

3 How we will evaluate ‘easements’



The restrictions that are currently in place are there for the express purpose of protecting our health and controlling the spread of coronavirus. The law we have made in Wales requires those restrictions to be kept under review to ensure they are proportionate to what we are seeking to achieve by them.

When they are no longer proportionate, we must amend or withdraw them.

This is fundamental to our plans for exiting the current restrictions – our actions will be firmly based on our understanding of the health risks that the virus presents.

We will ease or amend the restrictions that we have put in place when, and only when, we are satisfied that any change will not threaten public health and we will not maintain any restrictions when there is no public health case for doing so.

We are very aware, as people across our nation will be, that there are also risks to our health and well-being associated with the current arrangements. We will be taking these into account when we make decisions about what restrictions to remove or amend.

Before we take any action, we will;

- **Assess the potential impact of our decisions on containing the virus**
- **Assess what measures we can put in place to reduce the effect of our decisions on containing the virus**
- **Assess the impact of our decisions on general public health**

Only when we have considered all of the above, will we assess any social, economic or environmental impacts of our decisions.

In making these judgments, we will be informed not only by the expertise offered by the Chief Medical Officer for Wales, Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies and by our Technical Advisory Cell, but also by international experience. With many of our European neighbours and other OECD countries on a similar trajectory but a few weeks ahead of us, we will be able to benefit in real time from learning about which measures seem to be relatively less risky and which appear to have had unintended consequences.

The Welsh Government remains fully committed to a more prosperous, more equal and a greener Wales and we remain ever mindful of the way in which some groups and communities have been hit harder than others by the virus and the restrictions we have put in place to control it. We will make sure that as we work our way through the challenges ahead, no one in Wales will be left behind.

We will only be able to manage this virus if everyone pulls together. We will need to plan our future as part of a collective effort that recognises the contribution that each of us can make. We already have in place a model of working that brings together employers, local authorities and trade unions to find common solutions to the challenges that we face in the work place and the wider economy. This social partnership will be vital as we move forward; harnessing the strength of all of the people of Wales and their representatives. The voluntary sector has stepped up to meet the unprecedented challenges of the last few months and is a vital partner as we address our future. There is a lot of uncertainty still ahead of us but we are confident that we have the collective will and purpose to face the future with confidence.

4 Moving out of lockdown: A traffic light guide



In this section, we provide a ‘traffic light’ guide to our thinking about how we move out of the current lockdown.

COVID-19 is spread by social interaction and the effects of meeting other people.

Where two people from different households meet and both otherwise live and work on their own, then the risk is low. As numbers of contacts grow so do the risks of creating chains of transmission and outbreaks. Without a vaccine the chance of passing the virus from household to household or setting to setting will exist.

As we move out of lockdown, we will need to ‘ration’ the amount of social contact we each have, and we also need to recognise that social distancing will be most difficult with those we are emotionally closest too – our parents, children, grandchildren and friends.

Every step in the table below depends on making the right decisions – as individuals and a society – about who we meet and how we meet. The Welsh Government has already produced guidance on workplaces and we will also produce guidance setting out the things people need to consider when making decisions about seeing others; including how to protect family, friends and our community from contracting coronavirus and other harm. This guidance will need to be in place before we can move forward on many of the indicative actions in this table.

The ‘red’ ‘amber’ and ‘green’ labels represent broad phases to illustrate how we can begin lifting lockdown measures. They are not intended to be exhaustive and the specific details are being developed with businesses, trade unions, local authorities, public service providers and others.

We will not move wholesale from one phase to the next. Recent changes have started to move us into the Red phase (current measures in **bold** below), but we are progressing carefully and slowly. Doing more in the ‘red’ phase, or moving beyond it, is dependent on continued progress in containing the spread of the virus, as well as developing further guidance. In particular, we need to have effective contact tracing in place to underpin our confidence in being able to move between the phases. We will only be able to move out of the ‘green’ phase once a vaccine or effective treatment is available.

It is possible that we could move more quickly in some areas than others as the evidence changes and we understand more about the risks and how they can be managed in different settings. Similarly, we may need to reverse course in some areas should conditions worsen. We have established a series of ‘circuit breakers’ that will trigger the re-imposition of measures if the growth of COVID-19 becomes unacceptable and could not be controlled by things like ‘test, trace and protect’.

This approach is consistent with the steps set out across the rest of the UK. We are continuing to work collectively on a four-nations basis wherever possible, and the Alert Levels being developed by the Joint Biosecurity Centre will inform our movement between these phases. The Joint Alert Levels will help determine the direction and speed of travel between the phases set out below; Higher Alert Levels may require us to re-impose restrictions or even go further.

Descriptions in **bold** represent the current status of measures in Wales (at 15 May)

Education and Care for Children*

- Lockdown** **Closed except to key workers and vulnerable children. Outreach services in place.**
- Red** **No change, but able to manage increase in demand from children already eligible to attend schools and childcare.**
- Amber** Priority groups of pupils to return to school in a phased approach. Increased numbers of children in childcare.
- Green** All children and students able to access education. All children able to access childcare.

**(Schools, Colleges, HE/FE institutions, Childcare providers, PRU's, Special Schools and EOTAS)*

Seeing family and friends

- Lockdown** **Stay at home and contact only within households (limited exceptions).**
- Red** Seeing one person from outside your household to provide or receive care or support whilst maintaining appropriate social distancing.
- Amber** Taking exercise with one other person or small group whilst maintaining appropriate social distancing.
- Green** Meeting one other person or small group to socialise whilst maintaining appropriate social distancing.

Getting around

- Lockdown** **Leave the house for essential travel only.**
- Red** **Local travel, including for click-and-collect retail. Promote active travel and adapt public transport for physical distancing.** Allow outdoor leisure and recreation.
- Amber** Travel for leisure, access non-essential retail and services, and more people travelling to work.
- Green** Unrestricted travel subject to ongoing precautions.

Exercise, playing sport and games

- Lockdown** Exercise once a day outside of house on own or with household.
- Red** **Exercise more than once a day and incidental activity locally.** Outdoor sports courts to open. Elite athletes resume some activity.
- Amber** Team and individual sports, non-contact sport and games in small groups indoors and outdoors. Some outdoor events with limited capacity and events behind closed doors for broadcast.
- Green** All sports, leisure and cultural activities open, with physical distancing. All events resume with limited capacity.

Relaxing and special occasions

- Lockdown** **Stay at home and only leave the house for essential purposes.**
- Red** Some opening of outdoor cultural and other sites. Relaxation and leisure outdoors where local.
- Amber** More cultural and leisure sites to reopen (e.g. museums and galleries). Weddings and other events with limited capacity and physical distancing.
- Green** All special occasions and cultural and leisure activities permitted with precautions in place.

Working or running a business

- Lockdown** Work from home if possible. List of businesses required to close. 2m requirement in workplaces where not possible to work from home.
- Red** **More outdoor work and click-and-collect retail. Businesses not required to close (e.g. construction) reopening under safe working practices.**
- Amber** Non-essential retail to reopen with physical distancing. Trial some personal services under appointment (e.g. hairdressers). Accommodation businesses open without shared facilities.
- Green** Restaurants, pubs and customer contact industries under physical distancing. All businesses and workplaces open under new protocols.

Going shopping

- Lockdown** Essential retail only face-to-face.
- Red** **Include click-and-collect for non-essential retail.**
Begin making adaptations to public realm (e.g. town centres).
- Amber** Can access most non-essential retail where adaptations are possible to maintain physical distancing. Town centres and high streets adapted to facilitate shopping and accessing services under physical distancing.
- Green** Able to access all retail and leisure facilities whilst taking reasonable precautions.

Using public services

- Lockdown** Access to emergency or essential services only.
- Red** **Increase the availability of public services gradually (e.g. waste and recycling, libraries). Increase scope of essential health and social care services.**
- Amber** Continue to increase the availability of public services. Increase access to non-essential health and care services (e.g. elective surgery, dentistry).
- Green** Access to all normal public, health and social care services under physical distancing where possible or precautions in other settings.

Practicing faith

- Lockdown** **Closure of places of worship, with exceptions for funerals and cremations.**
- Red** Opening of places of worship for private prayer under physical distancing.
- Amber** Limit services and size of congregations linked to ability to ensure physical distancing.
- Green** All places open with full range of services, alongside physical distancing.

5 Further Guidance

We want to make sure that everyone understands what we are asking of each other as we plan to ease some of the restrictions that we have had to put in place to control coronavirus.

It is the responsibility of government, we believe, to provide guidance to people about how to take the next steps on the road to easing restrictions.

We want to avoid the confusion that can arise without clear guidance. We recognise however, that like people, no two schools, businesses or communities are alike. The guidance we will offer will be based on the approach to protecting public health that we have set out already in this document but it cannot be prescriptive; no one size fits all.

That is why we intend to consult widely on the guidance we want to provide before we ask you to adopt and follow it.

We intend to start an open and honest dialogue with our partners; employers and industry; health and care service providers, local government, civic society and the general public. Such an approach recognises how important it is for us all to work together to move on from the current situation in a safe and purposeful way.

Over the next 10 days we will be talking to as wide a range of our partners as we can so that we are able to develop a common understanding of what needs to be done to prepare for the gradual reduction in restrictions.

Initially, we will consult on guidance in relation to the following;

- **The workplace**
- **Public transport**
- **Schools, childcare, further education and other public services**
- **Higher education**
- **Culture and tourism**
- **Sport, recreation and leisure**
- **Housing and construction**

In time, we will consider issuing further guidance in relation to;

- **Health services and social care**
- **Farming and Forestry**

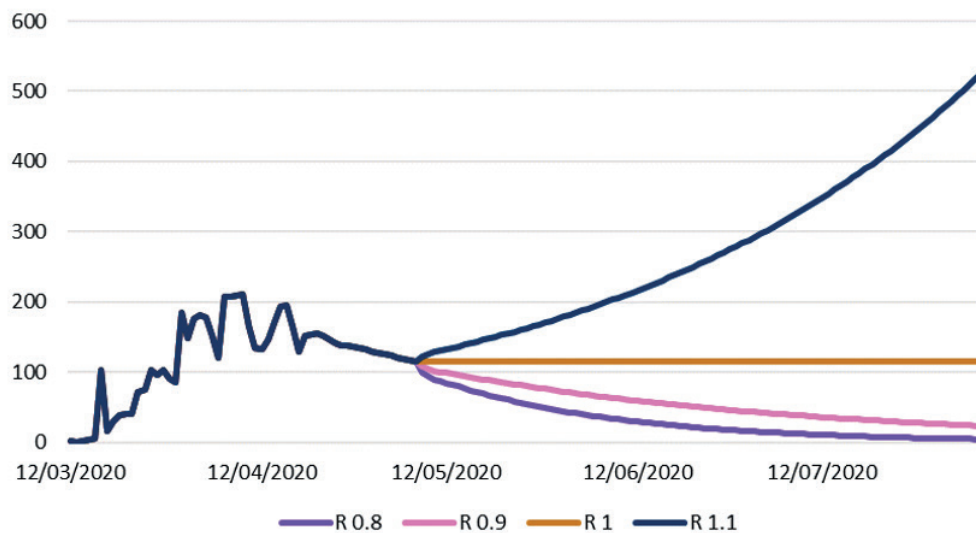
As far as what we can do as individuals is concerned, all of us can continue to support the national effort by;

- **Continued social distancing, continuing to break chains of transmission between households and settings.**
- **Continued good hand hygiene and sanitation, improving our own personal well-being and health by talking more, exercising and healthy eating.**
- **Working together as communities and families, supporting each other where we can.**
- **Isolating when you become ill, identifying and informing those who you have recently been in close contact with.**

Welsh Government remains committed to addressing inequality in our society. We know that the most vulnerable in our society have been hit the hardest by the virus. People on low incomes, people who have lost their job; those who are homeless, for example, have faced additional challenges brought on by the virus. There is growing evidence too that COVID-19 is having a disproportionate impact on people with Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds and the First Minister has set up a BAME Advisory Group to examine this issue.

The Framework for Recovery (24 April) made clear addressing inequality is a key test in our plans for restart and recovery, and we will be assessing the impact of proposals as part of our decision-making. Our work will be guided by data informing our understanding of inequalities but also through working with stakeholder groups and Equality Fora.

Estimated number of hospital admissions for COVID patients each day in Wales based on different Rt scenarios, to 7 August



Demand and capacity in hospitals: Falling but could increase if restrictions are lifted.

Source: TAC, Welsh Government Date: 08 May 2020

If we lift the measures too quickly, the R rate will increase.

Rt scenario	Cumulative total for the time period 8th May to 7th August		
	Confirmed Cases	Hospital Admissions	Deaths
0.8	5,100	2,800	800
0.9	9,300	5,000	1,400
1.0	19,600	10,600	2,900
1.1	47,600	25,700	7,200

A rise of just 0.1 could mean thousands of more people admitted to hospital and a large number of deaths.

6 Conclusion



In this document we have set out our intended approach to moving out of lockdown, making clear that significant changes can only happen once the capacity to identify and shut down new outbreaks is in place and subject to making the necessary adaptations to our workplaces and public spaces.

We need to recognise that decisions on different easements are inter-linked. People who cannot work from home will not be able to go back to work if childcare settings or schools are not open for their children. Small construction companies cannot operate effectively if builders' merchants remain shut. There is little point allowing people to take holidays at the coast, if caravan and camping sites, pubs and restaurants are closed.

But at the same time, we will need to make choices between some of the easements considered in Chapter 4. It is unlikely that the 'headroom' which we have to remove restrictions at any one point without risking an R rate above 1 and an exponential rise in infections will allow us to move from 'red' to 'amber' or from 'amber' to 'green' across the board at the same time.

As a Government the choices we make must and will reflect our values.

A high priority will be to focus on the most vulnerable in our society, including those children and young people whose family circumstances mean that they are most adversely affected by missing out on schooling. We need to recognise that the lockdown has been most difficult for those who live in cramped or unsatisfactory housing, who suffer mental health issues or who have failed to seek treatment for non-COVID related illnesses because of their fear, who are in abusive relationships or who are elderly and live alone.

So while enabling those who cannot work from home to get back to work is an essential part of what we must achieve over the coming months, we will not neglect those easements which will have most impact in terms of improving the lives of us all – for example, the opportunity to meet family and friends.

The world we are moving towards is not the pre-COVID world. We must adapt to a future with the virus in it. In doing so, we should embed some of the more positive consequences of coping with the disease such as: more sustainable ways of working and travelling, flexibilities for using IT in businesses, services and education, and a stronger emphasis on voluntary and community action.

This document is part of a continuing conversation, not the last word. In addition to all the work which partners and stakeholders are already engaged in to develop the protocols which will enable society to function more normally, we invite your views and comments on the approach we have outlined and in particular your reflections on the way in which to prioritise between measures to move out of the lockdown.