

Dear colleague

Phew! What a week! I don't know about you, but this week has certainly been one heck of a rollercoaster ride. Lots of twists and turns, many challenges but also lots of achievements made along the way.

So, we have a way forward regarding schools, following the Minister's announcement yesterday. Officers across the Council have worked really hard to make this happen, to ensure our teaching staff have the clarity and support needed in order to prepare for the September return, as much as possible, before they take a well-earned break over the summer months.

We've also just received the First Minister's announcement – I've captured the key messages for you, below –

The scientific and medical advice shows coronavirus is continuing to decline across Wales. The number of new confirmed cases has fallen, even though there have been recent localised increases linked to the two outbreaks at meat and food processing plants in Wrexham and Anglesey, as well as the incident in Merthyr Tydfil.

From Monday 13 July the following sectors and businesses will be able to open, subject to following guidance about how to operate safely:

- *Hairdressing salons and barbershops, including mobile hairdressers.*
- *Pubs, bars, restaurants and cafes (outdoors only).*
- *Outdoor cinemas.*
- *Indoor visitor attractions, with the exception of a small number of underground visitor attractions, which must remain closed for the time being because of the higher risks associated with those environments.*
- *Places of worship. Faith leaders can begin to gradually resume services when they are ready to do so safely.*

Changes to regulations will now allow larger gatherings outdoors of up to 30 people where these are organised and supervised by a responsible person. This will allow sports and leisure activities, such as fitness and dance classes, to take place outdoors, as well as collective worship. This will include charities, businesses, and sports clubs and a risk assessment will need to be carried out.

From 20 July, current restrictions on playgrounds and outdoor gyms will be removed. These will be able to reopen gradually as and when safety checks and other measures are put in place. WG will also publish guidance to support community centres to restart more public services at the discretion of local authorities.

WG will look again at the latest health advice and evidence and consider the following areas for reopening from 27 July. A final decision will depend on the health conditions at the time and the necessary preparations being in place:

- *Close contact services, including nail and beauty salons and businesses providing tanning services, massages, body piercings, tattooing, electrolysis or acupuncture*
- *All remaining tourist accommodation, which has been closed because of the additional risks of shared facilities, such as camping sites.*
- *Indoor cinemas, museums, galleries and archive services.*

In advance of the next review there will be work with local authorities and other operators to understand how gyms, leisure centres, fitness studios and swimming pools can make mitigations for a future opening.

The advice from the Chief Medical Officer for Wales is that the evidence for 2m social distancing is clear maintaining a 2m distance provides more protection than 1m – approximately two to five times the protective value in the absence of any other measures to protect a person.

A number of measures can be put in place to reduce the risk of coronavirus being transmitted in those places where maintaining a 2m distance is not always practical, such as on public transport or where a business is not viable with 2m distancing.

Guidance will be published next week as to what these additional measures are so that in those exceptional circumstances where 2m distancing cannot be maintained, it is clear what is expected of people. This guidance must be adhered to and will be referenced in the regulations.

So, the steady “unlocking of the lockdown” continues, whilst keeping a very firm eye on a potential second peak of the virus in the Autumn. We still have much to do, preparing the return of many of our services, whilst ensuring we continue to operate safely. We still need to strike a balance between delivering these services, and retaining the new services we have introduced over recent weeks. If you think about tourism and leisure services as an example, you will be aware that many of those staff, have been redeployed into our “buddy scheme”, supporting our most vulnerable in our communities and other members of staff have been redeployed to the Track, Trace and Protect, contact tracing service, which will be needed for many months to come. Equally as important, is the role of our Environmental Health team who have been really busy from the 1st day of the pandemic, ensuring all the regulations are enforced so our businesses operate safely and our public remain safe when using the premises. Their work is not going to relax for some time yet!

It is clear the Council will look very different as we move into the recovery phase but, the changes we have put in place already, are making a real difference. We have a better understanding of our communities and they have a better understanding of us. We also have seen first-hand, the difference that can be made when we work together – so it’s more of that we will be doing in future. Keep an eye out on the Cabinet agenda for the next two meetings (details available on the intranet) as there are some key policy changes that we will be proposing to the Cabinet that will help embed some of the great learning we have gleaned over the last few months.

I'll sign off today with the quote below from Martin Luther King, which captures the essence of our thinking and general positive approach – we are shining brightly together guys – so much so we need our shades!



Take care,
Christina