



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

PUBLICATION

# Together for a safer future: Wales' Covid-19 transition from pandemic to endemic (March 2022) - impact assessment

Summary Statement of Impacts Together for a safer future:  
Wales' Covid-19 transition from pandemic to endemic (March  
2022).

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## Introduction

This document aims to capture an assessment of the impact of the proposed removal of restrictions as set out in Together for a safer future: Wales' Covid-19 transition from pandemic to endemic (March 2022).

As these proposals relate to the removal of restrictions a full Summary Impact Assessment (SIA) has not been undertaken. The below findings have been informed by previous SIAs which can be found here: [Impact assessments: coronavirus](#).

## Legislative background

The Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (Wales) Regulations 2020 came into force on 26 March 2020, and were subsequently replaced by The Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (No. 2), (No. 3), (No. 4) and (No. 5) (Wales) Regulations 2020. A [consolidated version of the most recent](#)

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**Regulations** can be found on GOV.WALES.

This Summary Statement of Impacts relates to the expiration of The Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (No. 5) (Wales) Regulations 2020 on the 28 March 2022.

## Review of the restrictions regulations

The Regulations must be reviewed every 3 weeks in line with the latest evidence and intelligence. With high levels of vaccination in the population and fewer hospitalisations and deaths from Covid the restrictions may no longer be proportionate and so may not be renewed, meaning the core provisions would no longer be a legal requirement. Many protective actions would however still be advised.

## Impact assessments

- i. Removal of legal requirements to use face coverings in specific settings
- ii. Removal of legal requirement to self-isolate
- iii. Removal of legal requirement for businesses and organisations to undertake risk assessments in line with article 16 of the Regulations and for business, organisations and election campaigners to take reasonable measures to control the spread of Covid

## Wellbeing impacts

Removal of remaining legal restrictions is expected to have a positive wellbeing impact for some individuals who may feel negatively impacted by current provisions relating to the wearing of face coverings. Or who may have suffered from loneliness if required to self-isolate.

Conversely some individuals may suffer from concerns and anxiety if they view the removal of restrictions as happening too soon and putting health at risk. This

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may negatively impact their wellbeing, and they may choose instead to withdraw from society.

The removal of specific requirements for election campaigning may cause anxiety for campaigners and voters who may be unsure about whether campaigning is being undertaken safely. Public health advice should help allay concerns.

Face coverings in particular are a very visible mitigation. The removal of the legal requirement is likely to lead to a reduction in their use which may negatively impact wellbeing. Individuals may also be concerned that Covid-19 positive individuals who are no longer required to isolate are continuing to spread the virus.

The continued guidance and advice may mitigate some of these concerns, however, individuals are likely to be concerned the removal of legal requirements will change behaviours.

Following the end of the legal requirement to self-isolate individuals may be concerned that Covid-19 positive individuals and unvaccinated close contacts who are no longer legally required to isolate are continuing to spread the virus. However, the continued guidance and advice to self-isolate and stay at home if positive and take lateral flow tests before exiting self-isolation may mitigate some of these concerns. Particularly because this approach will be coupled with the continuation of the self-isolation support scheme as positive cases who need to self-isolate will still be supported to do so. Lateral flow tests will detect those who remain infectious and therefore can continue to take steps to prevent onwards transmission and therefore protect the vulnerable. Furthermore, all contacts will still be provided with advice to stay vigilant for symptoms and how to reduce the chance of passing Covid-19 onto others, such as paying extra attention to hand washing.

Negative impacts from the 'stay at home' measures in respect of women and children experiencing abuse; exacerbated feelings of loneliness and isolation for many sections of the population; and disproportionate impacts on the lives of disabled people, BAME people and women may also be alleviated if they need flexibility over where they self-isolate.

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As a result of the removal of article 16 requirements some individuals may feel forced back into their workplace. This may cause stress and anxiety negatively impacting wellbeing. They may also feel unsafe at work if all of the reasonable measures which have been put in place are removed. Others may benefit from greater access to a workplace, decreasing isolation and benefiting their wellbeing.

Legal duties under health and safety law will apply to manage occupational risks from coronavirus which are created in the workplace or by work activities, for example staff working with those infected with Covid-19 in health and social care, or through research activities. In these settings, health and safety control measures will continue to be a legal requirement. Health and safety law also requires employers to ensure premises are well-ventilated and sufficiently clean.

Public health advice will be provided, however it will not replace business and employer statutory responsibilities under Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992, Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015 or employment laws.

The purpose of the public health advice will be to aid businesses, employers and event organisers to identify suitable and effective public health control measures to mitigate against communicable disease risks (including flu, coronavirus and norovirus) going forwards.

## **Economic impacts**

No economic impacts are expected with the removal of the legal requirement to use face coverings. Any economic impacts from the removal of article 16 are likely to be minimal due to the ongoing legal requirements under existing health and safety legislation.

The removal of the legal requirement to self-isolate may have a positive impact for businesses who have been struggling with staff absences. However, the duty to self-isolate was designed to disrupt further transmission at the workplace, leading to less sickness absence. If individuals decide to attend the workplace

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when symptomatic, this could lead to a cluster of cases and may have a larger impact. This may be mitigated by the retention of guidance to self-isolate and the continuation of the self-isolation support scheme.

## Environmental impacts

No specific impacts are foreseen from the removal of legal requirements in relation to face coverings, self-isolation or article 16 requirements.

Officials in Environment and Rural Affairs are monitoring the impacts on air quality over the course of the pandemic. External consultants have been commissioned to analyse the impacts and this work will inform future policy with a view to retaining air quality improvements for the future, as far as possible.

## Impact assessments

### Equality impacts

Impacts on the following protected characteristics or groups were considered:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment (the act of transitioning and Transgender people)
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion, belief and non-belief
- Sex/Gender
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Children and young people up to the age of 18
- Low-income households

The following impacts were identified:

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- Individuals who are at higher risk of serious illness from Covid-19 may be particularly concerned about increased risks due to the removal of these restrictions. This may impact older and disabled people who may be more likely to be clinically vulnerable.
- In relation to the changes in self-isolation requirements, the removal of the requirement to self-isolate and the may mean that some individuals will need to choose between continuing to work when infected with Covid-19. However, negative impacts from the 'stay at home' measures in respect of women and children experiencing abuse; exacerbated feelings of loneliness and isolation for many sections of the population; and disproportionate impacts on the lives of disabled people, BAME people and women.

Given the narrow focus of the remaining restrictions no other impacts were identified.

The following mitigations will be put in place:

- Protective actions will still be strongly advised, and guidance will be made available to help businesses and organisations understand their obligations under the Health and Safety legislation, as well as core advice for the general public.
- The continuation of the guidance to self-isolate and the self-isolation support scheme may provide mitigation, particularly for low income households.

## Human Rights and UN Conventions

The overriding purpose of the restrictions and requirements associated with the response to the pandemic have been to protect everyone's right to life. This has led to constraints on rights such as on private and family life and the freedom of assembly and association on justifiable health grounds. Public health is described as an acceptable reason to curtail these rights, as long as it is necessary and proportionate.

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# United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

No impacts on children's rights identified.

## Welsh Language

The proposal does not have any identified negative impact on the Welsh language.

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This document is a copy of the web page [Together for a safer future: Wales' Covid-19 transition from pandemic to endemic \(March 2022\) - impact assessment](#) downloaded.

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