

Entire sectors should not be penalised because some people are opting to remain unvaccinated – LVA

No guarantee there will be change in unvaccinated numbers post any delay

Speculation having an appalling impact on businesses, staff and suppliers

The Licensed Vintners Association (LVA) has said entire sectors should not be penalised because some people opting to remain unvaccinated. Following reports that the full easing of restrictions, due to take place on 22 October, is now under doubt, the LVA has said this issue will have to be grasped by Government as there is no guarantee the status of those who are unvaccinated will change no matter how long the reopening is delayed.

Most of the hospitality sector is still operating under severe restrictions which were due to end next week, while late night operators such as late bars and nightclubs are yet to reopen. By 22 October these businesses will have remained closed for 585 consecutive days.

Despite more than 90% of the adult population being vaccinated, the Deputy Chief Medical Officer Dr. Ronan Glynn has indicated that those who are unvaccinated are having a "disproportionate impact" on the profile of the virus. According to his figures approximately 300,000 adults have not come forward for a vaccine and a further 70,000 people have not received their second dose.

The LVA also cautioned that should the reopening be delayed then the Government's Budget calculations will have to be substantially reworked to take account of the changed economic status facing hospitality and other sectors impacted.

"The latest suggestion that there will be a further delay to the easing of restrictions has left us asking when will it all be enough?" said Donall O'Keeffe, Chief Executive of the LVA. "It doesn't seem in any way proportionate that entire sectors should be penalised because some people are choosing not to take the vaccine. Already this speculation is having an appalling impact on businesses, staff and suppliers who were all focused on reopening in a week's time.

"If the reopening is delayed, what indications are there that people who are unvaccinated will change their minds? The HSE has done a tremendous job with the rollout of the vaccine. By now any adult in this country who wishes to receive their full quota of the vaccine has had plenty of opportunity to do so. So if the Government does decide to kick this can down the road again do they really expect those who are unvaccinated to change their minds?

"Late night venues such as nightclubs and late bars are yet to reopen. The rest of our sector is still operating under severe restrictions, even though indoor service is limited to those who have been vaccinated. Yet we could face further delays because of a factor – the number of people unvaccinated – that is unlikely to change. That doesn't seem in any way proportionate.

"If there are any further delays the Budget arithmetic will also need to be reworked. The supports announced for our sector were based on the full resumption of activity. If the Government changes their mind about the reopening then this will have a really significant domino effect on the recovery of the hospitality sector and they will need to come back to the table with package that addresses the further uncertainty they are imposing on hospitality and other sectors that are still severely impacted by the restrictions," Mr. O'Keeffe concluded.