

Current public health restrictions to continue until 5th April

From [Department of the Taoiseach](#)

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The Government has today decided to facilitate the safe return of in-school education and childcare services on a cautious and phased basis during March and April.

This will be alongside the scaling up of the vaccination programme in line with supply, ensuring that all vaccine doses are administered to target groups as soon as possible.

The current public health restrictions will remain in place until 5th April 2021, when a further review will be conducted.

Measures to support business and those unable to work due to the pandemic will be extended further with the EWSS, PUP and Covid enhanced illness benefit applicable to June 30th.

The impact of these restrictions on the economic, physical and mental well-being of our communities is considerable. An additional €10 million in funding will be made available to meet the increase for mental health services, and a further top-up of €10 million will be made available to enable critical services to continue being delivered to vulnerable groups.

The revised plan for managing the virus – COVID-19 Resilience & Recovery 2021: The Path Ahead sets out how in-school education and childcare services will be reinstated in a phased manner from 1st March, with staggered return throughout March to be concluded after the Easter break on 12th April. (Detail in notes to editors).

The decision to extend Level 5 restrictions is difficult and will have considerable impact on all parts of our economy and society. However, we continue to have an unacceptably high level of disease in the community, so we must continue to suppress the disease. The higher transmissibility of new variants requires all other restrictions to remain in place while these initial services reopen.

This cautious, measured approach is being taken in order to:

- Make steady progress, starting with childcare and schools, while avoiding a further wave of disease and re-imposition of restrictions
- Protect the most vulnerable by an efficient rollout of the vaccination programme
- Remain vigilant and agile regarding the uncertainties in the face of new variants and to capitalise on emerging evidence on available vaccines

- Lay the foundations for the full recovery of social life, public services and the economy

If the transmission of the virus reaches acceptable levels, the vaccination programme progresses as planned and public health advice allows, further options that will be considered from April 5th are:

- Some easing of restrictions on outdoor activities and meetings beyond 1 other household;
- Consideration of extending the current 5km limit;
- Staggered start of easing of other areas of restriction with a focus on outdoor activities including sport and some areas of construction.
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Any further easing of restrictions after 5th April will need a further three to four week period to allow for assessment of the impact of changes.

The requirement to work from home will continue throughout this period, unless work is an essential health, social care or other essential service or activity that cannot be done from home.

Government's community support and well-being programmes will continue and employment and business supports will be extended, many of them to June.

The Government is committed to developing a clear roadmap for a return of activities in the hardest hit sectors including tourism, culture and sport.