

SUMMARY OF RESTRICTIONS AND GUIDELINES FOR TOURISM & HOSPITALITY BUSINESSES

Valid from 16th August 2021

RECENT AMENDMENTS

Date	Section	Summary of Change
30 July 2021	6	The requirement for social distancing in shops and shopping centres has moved from 2m to 1m. For outdoor venues, there is no requirement in law for social distancing, however the guidance strongly advises a minimum of 1m and ideally 2m.
	12	Live music is now permitted in indoor venues such as function rooms of hotels or visitor attractions with no restriction to ambient level. This is in addition to the previous decision to allow the return of live music in concert halls and theatres.
16 Aug 2021	4	From 16 th August, people who are fully vaccinated will no longer need to self-isolate for 10 days if someone they have been in close contact with tests positive for COVID-19.
	6	The requirement to maintain social distancing on public transport at all times will be removed.
	10 & 14	There is no longer any limit to the number of people who can sit at a table. This includes post marriage celebrations.
	13	Conference centres can reopen, allowing conferences and exhibitions to return.

INTRODUCTION

The Executive has agreed to further relaxations of restrictions from 16 August 2021, including removal of the need to self-isolate for those who have received both vaccinations; to permit the return of conferences and exhibitions; and to remove the limits on numbers permitted at tables.

The Executive re-emphasized the importance of people getting fully vaccinated. **A 1% increase in vaccine uptake will reduce the number of cases and hospital admissions by around 10%.** This would have a significant impact in terms of saving lives, keeping our people well and reducing the pressure on our health service.

If we can get from 85% adults vaccinated to 90%, then the number of cases and hospital admissions would be reduced by around half.

ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

This document summarises restrictions and guidelines for tourism and hospitality businesses.

It contains other key considerations and best practice for businesses, and should be read in conjunction with the [full guidance document produced by Tourism NI and the Department for the Economy](#).

Businesses must stay up to date with regulations and how they impact their individual operations. This means completing a risk assessment and implementing appropriate controls. In all areas we encourage the use of Lateral Flow Testing, alongside all other mitigations, including maintaining social distancing, having good ventilation, washing hands and wearing face coverings.

1: RESPONSIBLE PERSONS

Responsible persons in terms of a business are defined in regulations and can include the owner, proprietor and manager. Any of these persons can be held accountable for non-compliance with regulations.

Failure to comply with legal requirements could result in enforcement action including premises improvement notices, fixed penalty notices and prosecution. If you are in doubt about whether your premises complies the Environmental Health department at your local council will be able to help.

2: RISK ASSESSMENT

As a business owner, you have a legal responsibility to protect workers, customers and others from risks to their health and safety. All businesses should complete a risk assessment which includes the risks posed by COVID-19. Further information about how to complete this can be found within the full guidance document.

HSENI has produced an example risk assessment which shows the kind of approach that can be taken to reduce the risks posed by COVID-19. This can be found [here](#).

Your risk assessment must address areas such as:

- All reasonable measures to limit the risk of transmission of COVID-19.
- The maximum number of people who can be seated in each part of the premises for the purposes of consuming food and drink. These numbers should be prominently displayed at each part of the premises.
- The volume at which any music will be played in indoor settings so as to enable visitors to converse without having to raise their voices.

The risk assessment must be retained on the premises and made available immediately for inspection by visitors to the premises or to a relevant person on request.

3: CURFEW AND CLOSING TIME

Businesses are no longer subject to curfew. They should operate according to the terms of their liquor licence, if applicable, or any other regulations affecting their specific business.

4: SELF-ISOLATION

From 16th August, people who are fully vaccinated will no longer need to self-isolate for 10 days if someone they have been in close contact with tests positive for COVID-19. Instead, they should get a PCR test on day two and day eight of the ten-day period.

People who are not fully vaccinated will still need to self-isolate for the ten days. Anyone who has symptoms should book a PCR test and anyone who tests positive must then self-isolate for ten days.

People are fully vaccinated if it is more than 14 days since they received the second dose of an approved COVID-19 vaccine.

Young people under the age of 18 who are not fully vaccinated and are identified as a close contact should self-isolate and book a PCR test. If the test is positive they should isolate for ten days, but if the test is negative they can end their self-isolation. Should they develop symptoms after the negative PCR test they should self-isolate and take another PCR test.

Further information can be found at: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-self-isolating>.

5: WORKFORCE TESTING

In Northern Ireland, anyone who cannot work from home is encouraged to participate in the asymptomatic testing programme.

Employers with more than ten employees are encouraged to submit an [expression of interest form](#) to the Department of Health. Alternative arrangements are in place for smaller businesses.

6: COLLECTION OF VISITOR INFORMATION

To help with the *Test, Trace and Protect* contact tracing programme, venues must collect the following details from every visitor over the age of 16. Where the information is not provided in advance, it must be obtained at the time of the visit.

- Name
- Telephone number
- Date of visit
- Time of arrival

This information must be provided to a relevant officer as soon as is reasonably practicable, and no later than 24 hours of a request.

This information must be recorded and retained for 21 days, commencing on the date of the person's visit. Once the 21 days has passed, the data must be destroyed securely, as soon as is reasonably practical, or in line with data protection regulations.

This regulation applies to hospitality businesses, attractions, tourist accommodation, wedding venues, close contact services, indoor sporting and leisure facilities.

Please note that if you run a tourist accommodation business, you are already required by law to keep a record of all overnight guests over the age of 16. This can take the form of a registration form, or can be recorded electronically. You must keep each guest's details for at least 12 months and have the register available for inspection by police or other authorised persons at all times. This includes the guests' full name, address, nationality and date of arrival and departure.

7: SOCIAL DISTANCING

Social distancing is an important measure in reducing the spread of COVID-19.

Both staff and visitors must observe social distancing of at least 1m in venues including indoor hospitality settings, indoor attractions, theatres, concert halls, shared areas of tourist accommodation, shops and shopping centres.

From 16th August, the requirement to maintain social distancing on public transport at all times will be removed.

For outdoor venues, there is no requirement in law for social distancing, however a distance of 1m is strongly recommended, with a distance of 2m advised whenever possible.

In all cases, businesses must consider risk mitigations and these should be detailed in risk assessments. This will include:

- Ensuring that staff and visitors observe appropriate social distancing.
- Providing information on how to minimise the risks of COVID-19.
- Altering the layout to assist staff and visitors in maintaining social distancing. This can include the layout, visitor flow, table positioning, and points of entry and exit.
- Managing any queues to ensure that social distancing is maintained.
- Controlling the use of points of entry and exit, toilets, and any shared facilities.
- Maintaining good cleaning and hygiene procedures, in particular at high touch points.
- The use of lateral flow tests.

Where it is not reasonably practicable for social distancing to be maintained, the responsible person must take reasonable steps to ensure that close face-to-face contact is limited; barriers or screens are in place; and personal protective equipment is used, where appropriate.

8: FACE COVERINGS

Face coverings must be worn in indoor areas of the establishment unless seated at a table. They must be worn when leaving the table for any reason, for example, when accessing toilet facilities or when leaving the premises.

Businesses should actively manage this by ensuring that all visitors are aware of when face coverings should be worn. This could be achieved through signage, website information, information given at booking and information on arrival.

Staff who work in these settings must also wear a face covering unless they are separated from members of the public by a partition.

Some circumstances make it difficult for some people to wear face coverings. In these cases people may have a 'reasonable excuse' not to wear a face covering. Further information about the use of face coverings can be found [here](#).

9: HYGIENE CONTROLS

The premises should be regularly cleaned, with hygiene maintained and high touch points such as doors, gates and card terminals regularly sanitised.

Further advice on hygiene controls can be found in the overarching guidance document. This includes information about cleaning and disinfection; what to look for when choosing cleaning products; and cleaning after a case of COVID-19.

Hand hygiene is a vital component in ensuring that the risk of transferring the virus is minimised. Controls should include:

- Providing hand sanitation facilities at all points of entry to the premises (outdoors and indoors) as well as high traffic areas and in particular at restrooms and service points.
- Making staff and visitors aware of the requirements for good hand hygiene.

10: VENTILATION

Ventilation can be used as a control measure to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19. Airborne particles can travel further than droplets and in poorly ventilated spaces this can lead to viral particles spreading between people.

Ventilation into any building should be optimised to ensure a fresh air supply is provided to all areas of the facility and increased wherever possible.

- Consider how best to maximise ventilation in your facility. There are different ways of providing ventilation including mechanical ventilation, natural ventilation, or a combination of the two.
- Open doors, windows and air vents where possible, to improve natural ventilation.
- Keep toilet and changing facilities well-ventilated, for example by opening doors, windows and air vents where possible and ensuring extractor fans work effectively.
- Air rooms as frequently as possibly when not in use.
- Take additional steps to minimise risk. Ventilation will not reduce the risk of droplet or surface transmission, so other control measures such as cleaning and social distancing are also required.

11: TABLES, TABLE SERVICE AND LIMITATIONS ON TABLE NUMBERS

TABLE SIZES

From 16th August there is no longer any limit to the number of people who can sit at a table. This will also apply to post marriage celebrations.

TABLE SERVICE

In areas of venues where food and drink is served, movement is restricted to the following:

- Entry and exit.
- For one person from the party to make payment if it cannot be made at the table.
- Use of toilet facilities.
- Use of baby changing or breast-feeding facilities.
- Access to smoking areas.

ORDERS FOR FOOD AND DRINK

In **licensed premises**, orders for food and drink must be placed when visitors are seated at the table. Alternatively, orders could be made before arriving at the venue. The only exception is for the operation of buffets and carveries. Please note that it is not a requirement to have a meal with alcohol.

In **unlicensed premises** such as cafes, coffee shops and unlicensed restaurants, the requirement for table service is now removed.

In both types of premises, food and drink must not be consumed on the premises unless a person is seated at a table and no seating or service is permitted at any bar.

For **carveries and buffets**, while customers are permitted to queue, food service should be performed by staff. Businesses should remind customers to minimise movement around the venue, and that they must remain seated unless for the purposes laid out earlier in this section.

SOCIAL DISTANCING

Tables should be spaced at least 1m apart and the table cannot be part of the bar.

Where it is not reasonably practicable for a distance of 1m to be maintained, face-to-face contact must be limited; barriers or screens should be in place; and personal protective equipment should be used, where appropriate.

Venues should take steps to prevent queues from forming. If they are unavoidable then they should be managed appropriately with relevant control measures including the use of face coverings, social distancing of 1m, and good hand hygiene.

12: TOURIST ACCOMMODATION

OVERNIGHT STAYS

The number of people that can stay together in each separate accommodation unit (e.g. a hotel bedroom or a self-catering unit) is ten people from three households. This number does not include children aged 12 and under.

If one household comprises ten or more people, they can stay together up to a maximum of 15 persons. Again, this number does not include children aged 12 or under.

GYMS AND SPAS

Gyms, swimming pools and indoor leisure facilities are permitted to open, including changing rooms, showers and shared facilities.

13: ENTERTAINMENT

INDOOR

From 5th July, live music is permitted in licensed and unlicensed premises. Music must be at ambient levels that permit normal conversation, and with suitable mitigations in place. Dancing is not permitted in licensed or unlicensed premises, with the exception of a first dance at a wedding or civil partnership event.

From 27th July, audiences are permitted to return to performances in venues such as theatres and concert halls.

From 30th July, live music is permitted at events in other indoor facilities contained within larger premises, for example in function rooms of hotels or visitor attractions. Social distancing of 1m is required and if the event is taking place in a venue that is part of larger premises, it must be sufficiently isolated to make sure the volume of music in the venue does not breach ambient levels in other parts of the premises.

Entry to performances for audiences is by ticket only. Tickets must be purchased in advance of the performance. Audiences for indoor events must have allocated seating, remain seated (unless attending an exhibition or using facilities) and are not permitted to dance.

Live music is permitted for rehearsals and performances, with no restriction to background or ambient levels of volume.

OUTDOOR

From 5th July live music is permitted at outdoor events without restriction to background or ambient levels. Dancing is not permitted in licensed or unlicensed premises, with the exception of a first dance at a wedding or civil partnership event.

14: GATHERINGS AND EVENTS

There is a gathering when two or more persons are present together in the same place in order to engage in any form of social interaction with each other, or to undertake any other shared activity with each other.

From 2nd July 2021, the Northern Ireland Executive has agreed to permit outdoor gatherings and sporting events to the maximum allowed in the risk assessment for the venue. Note that this does not including domestic settings. Any gatherings of over 30 people outdoors require a risk assessment, including an assessment of maximum capacity. Organisers are advised to consider the use of Lateral Flow Tests for any planned larger events.

From 5th July 2021, the Northern Ireland Executive has agreed to permit indoor gatherings to the maximum allowed in the risk assessment for the venue. Note that this does not including domestic settings. The risk assessment will need to include an assessment of the maximum capacity that the venue can accommodate bearing in mind social distancing requirements. An indoor gathering of 15 people or less does not require a separate risk assessment.

From 16th August 2021, conference centres can reopen, allowing conferences and exhibitions to return.

The person responsible for organising or operating the gathering must carry out a risk assessment and take all reasonable measures to limit the risk of transmission of the virus. They must, if requested to do so by a relevant person, provide a copy of the risk assessment

and an account of the reasonable measures taken. Guidance on [carrying out a risk assessment for gatherings and events](#) can now be found on NI Direct.

15. POST WEDDING AND CIVIL PARTNERSHIP EVENTS

For venues that can host post-marriage events, all requirements in this document apply, as well as the following:

- A risk assessment must be carried out to determine the maximum capacity of the venue; and this capacity must not be exceeded.
- One dance is permitted for the couple and music is permitted so long as the music is at an ambient level.

There is no longer any limit to the number of people who can sit at a table.

16: FURTHER INFORMATON

In addition to this document, the following websites may be helpful for those seeking further information:

- The most up-to-date information on *The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021* can be found [here](#).
- Tourism NI and the Department for the Economy has produced full guidance for tourism and hospitality businesses entitled '[Working safely during COVID 19](#)'.
- Guidance on restrictions across all areas of the economy can be found on [NI Direct](#).
- There is a wealth of information about the advice and support available to businesses on the nibusinessinfo.co.uk website.

PREVIOUS AMENDMENTS

Date	Section	Summary of Change
2 July 2021	12	The cap on the numbers permitted to attend an outdoor gathering is removed. Any event with more than 30 participants requires a risk assessment, and the total numbers permitted will be determined by that risk assessment.
5 July 2021	11	<p>Live music is permitted at licensed and unlicensed hospitality businesses that provide food and/or drink for consumption on the premises. Music should be played at an ambient level and with suitable mitigations in place such as screens.</p> <p>Music is permitted at outdoor events with no restriction to background or ambient levels of volume.</p>
2 July 2021	n/a	Close contact services no longer require an appointment.
27 July 2021	10 11	<p>The number of people that can stay overnight in tourist accommodation is ten people from three households, with some exceptions which are detailed in section 10.</p> <p>Audiences are permitted to return to performances in theatres and concert halls. Entry is by ticket only, with allocated seating and tickets must be purchased in advance.</p> <p>Live music is permitted for rehearsals and performances, with no restriction to background or ambient levels of volume.</p>
30 July 2021	5 11	<p>The requirement for social distancing in shops and shopping centre will move from 2m to 1m.</p> <p>For outdoor venues, there is no requirement in law for social distancing. However the guidance strongly advises a minimum of 1m and ideally 2m.</p> <p>Live music is now permitted in indoor venues such as function rooms of hotels or visitor attractions. This is in addition to the previous decision to allow the return of live music in concert halls and theatres.</p>