

Key points discussed with Hospitality Stakeholders - 9th November

Steffan Roberts - update

- Updates on the 21-day review cycle and outlined the position as it stands.
- Next review on the 18th November and officials continue to feed into that process.
- Health Minister is due to speak at lunchtime around the wider public health context.
- Cases are high (beyond 500 per 100,000) and point to a challenging period ahead.
- Vaccine programme has been positive.
- Alert level zero, but we are in a precarious position. If cases continue to raise and situation worsens, reintroduction of restrictions and going back to the alert levels is possible.
- FM and Ministers have emphasised the need to try keep activities and businesses open. The Covid pass is an additional mitigation aimed to keep us at alert level zero.
- Focus of today's session is to inform and receive feedback. Covid pass has been introduced at events and night-time economy and will be extended to cinemas, theatres and concert halls, subject to a Senedd vote.
- FM did say at the last review it could be extended to other sectors such as hospitality if the public health situation does not improve.
- There are some options when it comes to potentially extending the pass to hospitality. There will be the need to define 'hospitality' (with options ranging from an all-encompassing definition, a narrower definition around licensed premises, or defined by scale). There are wider considerations too around the knock-on impact this change would have on events thresholds and the exemptions for weddings/wakes.

Chris Jones presents the group with an explanation of how the Covid pass will work in a hospitality settings and how customers can demonstrate their Covid-19 status at a venue or event.

- NHS Covid pass
- PCR test
- Paper based certification of full vaccination
- Confirmation of negative test results by text or email

CJ explains that it's up to the venue to see what's reasonable with checking all customers, or doing a spot check and this will vary for different times and venues.

This should tie in with the decisions presented in their risk assessment and discuss with Enforcement Officers and Local Authorities taking assurance they are content with the measures in place.

Summary of Key Feedback

- Request for the presentation to be shared externally.
- Resource around paper passes, some of the population aren't able to download to smart phones which means that there are a lot of people phoning up the NHS number for help. Are there additional resource to facilitate this with the predicted expansion to hospitality settings.
- Need confidence in the verifier app – people are nervous as the Welsh Government are not seen to be using it.
- Concerns on how things have been implemented in the Principality Stadium with the rugby. Some reports that passes were not being checked, but stadia not required to check at 100% as it's down to wider risk assessment. Issues around staff having hassle from customers which could be a reason with the implementation at the Principality Stadium.
- Need to take into consideration higher staff costs with issues spread across the industry.
- Is the Covid pass likely to be introduced next review for the preparation time of 3 weeks or operated immediately? WG has always allowed time for preparation. Early notice as possible to put plans and preparations in place. Pre-planning prevents bad performance.
- 97% of cases are contributed to outside of hospitality, what are you expected to get by introducing Covid pass to the hospitality industry?
- Will other measures be introduced to the other 97% to help us get in a position of reducing the chance of further restrictions.
- Acknowledgment of the Ministers time from Stakeholders.
- Concerns around the brewers that supply pubs as they are already having quite a substantial effect from the high-time economy and this is influencing their turnover.
- Concerns around the impact on resource, enforcement and footfall. Already having an impact on footfall with consumer confidence and this could be a disaster to the Christmas season.
- Seeing the reasons and evidence hard to justify with the large-scale transmission being pretty thin.
- Presume if the Covid pass was introduced it would be subject to a Senedd vote, like cinemas and theatres. This was confirmed.
- Concerns around legislation and businesses e.g. staff being threatened with dismissal whilst waiting for a PCR test.
- Small areas easy to manage.
- Importance of clear messaging from WG.
- Need to work as an industry and unit to manage it well.
- Least bad way forward would be introducing the Covid pass, alert 1 would be catastrophic.
- Question on who's going to undertake the checks if the schemes is expanding to hospitality? Local Authorities have been liaising with SIA on clarification, any engagement on this with WG? This will be followed-up.

Minister's key messages

- Challenges ahead with 1 in 40 having Covid and the increase on Health and Social Care.
- Hospitality and retail need as normal trading period to Christmas as possible. Also looking at schools, health and social care and retail.
- Uncommon reality if we don't do anything the rates won't get to a sensible place.
- What is the best way forward in the least bad way to cause the least problems with some challenges but still allowing businesses to trade as a normal.
- Emphasise that we don't want to go back to the worse part of the pandemic.
- Discusses how Ministers will have to vote, preferably before the measures come to place. If there is an emergency point, will have to do after.
- Need to bring the issues up with the Principality Stadium.
- Discusses the importance of comms to give people confidence to carry on
- Vaccination has allowed us to get away from where we were last year. How do we maintain the gains that we've made, to carry on trading as successful as possible. The more unified the message is the better.
- Points out how we get through and make choices for staff to be treated with respect. Comms needs to be effective in this way.
- Thanks the group for the conversations. Respectfully, clearly made and not aggressive, understand this isn't straight forward.