



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

TITLE **Coronavirus fire-break**

DATE **October 19, 2020**

BY **First Minister Mark Drakeford MS**

The Cabinet has today decided to introduce a two-week fire-break to help bring coronavirus under control in Wales.

This period will begin at 6pm on Friday October 23 and will end on Monday November 9. This includes the half-term holiday for many children in Wales.

We are facing a very serious situation in Wales as coronavirus has risen rapidly and spread in every part of the nation. The clear advice from our medical and scientific advisers is that a short, sharp fire-break will give us an opportunity to reset and ensure the NHS has the capacity to respond to pandemic, emergency and winter pressures.

The scientific advice from the Technical Advisory Cell, which informs the Cabinet's decision, is published today at: <https://gov.wales/technical-advisory-group-fire-breaks>

We have made the fire-break as short as possible but this means the measures we are taking need to be sharp to have a maximum impact on the virus.

From 6pm on Friday October 23:

- People must stay at home, except for very limited purposes, such as for exercise.
- People must work from home wherever possible;
- People must not visit other households or meet other people they do not live with either indoors and outdoors;
- No gatherings will be allowed outdoors;
- All non-food retail, hospitality businesses, close contact services and events and tourism businesses, such as hotels must close;
- Community centres, libraries and recycling centres will be required to close.

As the virus has taken hold, we have said many times that children would be our top priority if further restrictions are needed and that education must continue.

As a result, childcare will stay open. Primary and special schools will re-open as normal after half-term. Secondary schools will re-open after the half-term for children in years seven and eight. Pupils will be able to come in to take exams but other pupils will continue their learning from home for an extra week.

Universities will continue to provide a blend of in person and online learning.

To support those businesses, which must close, we will make available a package of almost £300m, which will complement wage-support schemes available from the UK Government.

- Every business covered by the small business rates relief will receive a £1,000 payment.
- Small and medium-sized retail, leisure and hospitality businesses, which have to close will receive a one-off payment of up to £5,000.
- There will also be additional discretionary grants and support for smaller businesses, which are struggling.
- The £80m fund announced last week to help businesses develop in the longer term, will be increased to £100m, which includes £20m ring-fenced for tourism and hospitality.
- Businesses will also be able to access the support available through the existing Job Retention Scheme or the new expanded Job Support Scheme.

Further details about the support package will be available this week and we will ensure the funding is available as quickly as possible for those who need it.

An initial set of frequently asked questions are available online at <https://gov.wales/coronavirus-circuit-break-frequently-asked-questions>

We propose to bring forward a debate tomorrow in government time about the need for a short fire-break period.