

SL(6)069 - The Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (No. 5) (Wales) (Amendment) (No. 19) Regulations 2021

Background and Purpose

From 11 October 2021, the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (No. 5) (Wales) Regulations 2020 (“the principal Regulations”) have required certain premises to take reasonable measures to ensure that adults (and this means a person aged 18 years or over) are only present if they have what is commonly referred to as a “COVID pass”.

These [Regulations](#) amend the principal Regulations by adding cinemas, concert halls and theatres to the list of premises where a COVID pass is required. The changes take effect from 7.00 a.m. on 15 November 2021.

Procedure

Draft Affirmative.

The Welsh Ministers have laid a draft of the Regulations before the Senedd. The Welsh Ministers cannot make the Regulations unless the Senedd approves the draft Regulations.

Technical Scrutiny

No points are identified for reporting under Standing Order 21.2 in respect of this instrument.

Merits Scrutiny

The following points are identified for reporting under Standing Order 21.3 in respect of this instrument:

1. Standing Order 21.3(ii) – that it is of political or legal importance or gives rise to issues of public policy likely to be of interest to the Senedd.

We note the Welsh Government’s justification for any potential interference with human rights. In particular, we note the following paragraphs in the Explanatory Memorandum:

“Whilst the principal Regulations, as amended by these Regulations, engage individual rights under the Human Rights Act 1998 and the European Convention on Human Rights, the Government considers that they are justified for the purpose of preventing the spread of infectious diseases and/or the interference is permitted on the basis that it is in pursuit of a legitimate aim, namely of protecting public health, and are proportionate.”



Article 5 (right to liberty), Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life), Article 9 (freedom of thought, conscience and religion), Article 11 (freedom of assembly and association) and Article 1 of the First Protocol (protection of property) are engaged by the principal Regulations.

Each of these is a qualified right, which permits the Welsh Ministers to interfere with the exercise of the rights if necessary in a democratic society in the interests of public safety or for the protection of health. All such restrictions and requirements must be justified on the basis that they are in pursuit of a legitimate aim, namely of protecting public health, and are proportionate. Any interference with these rights also needs to be balanced with the state's positive obligations under Article 2 (right to life). The adjustment of the restrictions and requirements under the principal Regulations by these Regulations is a proportionate response to the spread of coronavirus. It balances the need to maintain an appropriate response to the threat posed by coronavirus against the rights of individuals and businesses, in a manner which remains proportionate to the need to reduce the rate of transmission of the coronavirus, taking into account the scientific evidence."

2. Standing Order 21.3(ii) – that it is of political or legal importance or gives rise to issues of public policy likely to be of interest to the Senedd.

We note there has been no formal consultation on these Regulations. In particular, we note the following paragraph in the Explanatory Memorandum:

"Given the ongoing threat arising from coronavirus and the need for a prompt public health response, there has been no public consultation in relation to these Regulations. However, engagement has taken place with various stakeholders including the Equalities Division of the Welsh Government."

3. Standing Order 21.3(ii) – that it is of political or legal importance or gives rise to issues of public policy likely to be of interest to the Senedd.

We note there is no equality impact assessment for these Regulations. We note the following paragraph in the Explanatory Memorandum in relation to a summary impact assessment:

"A regulatory impact assessment has not been prepared in relation to these Regulations due to the need to put them in place to deal with a serious and imminent threat to public health. However, a summary impact assessment was prepared and considered as part of the 21 day coronavirus review process in order to inform the decisions made. The summary impact assessment (which includes an Equality Impact Assessment and Human Rights Impact Assessment) will be published as soon as practicably possible."

Welsh Government response

A Welsh Government response is not required.



Committee Consideration

The Committee considered the instrument at its meeting on 8 November 2021 and reports to the Senedd in line with the reporting points above.



Senedd Cymru

Pwyllgor Deddfwriaeth, Cyfiawnder a'r Cyfansoddiad

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Welsh Parliament

Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee