



MOVING FORWARD: THE EXECUTIVE'S PATHWAY OUT OF RESTRICTIONS

SUMMARY DOCUMENT

**WE ALL
MUST DO IT
TO GET
THROUGH IT**



**LIMIT SOCIAL
CONTACTS**



**KEEP
DISTANCE**



**WEAR FACE
COVERING**



**WASH
HANDS**

Ministerial Foreword

We recently passed the anniversary of the first confirmed COVID-19 case locally. Over the past year, the Coronavirus pandemic has turned life as we knew it on its head. Thousands of families are grieving the loss of their loved ones. Wellbeing and livelihoods have been severely impacted.

Despite it all, in the worst of these times, people have united together in a huge societal effort to slow the spread of COVID-19. You have shown great resilience and resolve, following the public health advice, and your actions have saved many, many lives.

It is hard to believe that we have all endured a year of this deadly pandemic. All ministers in the Executive are fully aware of how hard the past 12 months have been on families, young people, the vulnerable, our heroic health care workers, the business community and many more. We know that not being able to have our families and friends at our homes has been particularly challenging.

The success of our vaccination programme, where more than 500,000 people have already received their first dose, is one of the ways that will help us get out of this pandemic and offers hope that there are better days ahead. It has been a positive development to date and is being delivered alongside our testing and contact tracing programmes.

The Executive has developed its planned pathway out of the current restrictions and the approach we will take as we move forward over the next few months.

The restrictions we introduced from Boxing Day and your adherence to the 'stay at home' message have flattened the curve of infection, driven down the Rt number to below 1 and taken the pressure off our health service.

But the numbers of people contracting COVID-19 are still too high and we are dealing with the complication of new variants of the virus that spread even more quickly from person to person. So our pathway out of the restrictions has to be a slow and cautious one because there is still a long way to go in the fight against the virus.

Consistent with the approach we set out last May, we have agreed that our strategic priorities remain the health and wellbeing of our citizens; our societal and community well-being and our economic wellbeing and revitalising the economy.

We have also agreed that we will be guided by four overarching principles when making decisions; that they will be evidence-based, necessary, proportionate and sustainable.

The Executive recently announced that there would be a phased return to school for some pupils with phase 1 from Monday 8 March and phase 2 from Monday 22 March. Subject to the levels of community transmission, the return of other pupils to school will commence immediately following the Easter holidays with the aim of all children returning to schools as soon as possible.

The number of people who can meet up outside from two households has also been relaxed and we have added to the list of retailers who can operate a click and collect service.

So as not to risk the progress we have made since Christmas and the success of our vaccination programme, the re-opening of society will be on a step-by-step basis. This gradual approach will be informed by a range of evidence and data.

We want a sustainable re-opening of the economy, because if we open too quickly, we risk going into another lockdown and we all want to avoid that possibility.

We will have difficult choices to make on the sequencing of how restrictions can be lifted. Everything cannot open at once and so we will need to prioritise what we can open. We will consider what will have the maximum positive impact to our citizens with the lowest possible risk of increasing the rate of the transmission of the virus.

The Executive understands the call for dates and certainty so plans can be made for business to reopen, for families to come together again indoors, to book a holiday, appointments made for the hairdressers or the chance to go out for a meal and a drink.

But we all know from our experiences over the past year that there are too many uncertainties with COVID-19 to be definitive.

We need to be sure that we are keeping the Rt number below 1; that there is capacity in the health service; that the vaccination programme remains on track; that our Test, Trace and Protect strategy continues to be effective and that there is good adherence to the public health advice.

We want to be honest and upfront with people. While there is the hope of better days ahead, putting in dates now for possible relaxations weeks away could not be done with confidence or certainty. As an Executive, we understand that businesses need time

to prepare to re-open. So we will continue to engage with all the sectors and work in partnership for a safe re-opening when the time is right. Each relaxation will need to be informed by the impact of the last on community transmission and the Rt number. The Executive is committed to a four-week review cycle, where we will monitor the data on a range of health and societal impacts, before considering what relaxations can be made safely.

The reality is that COVID-19 is going to be with us for some time and that means that we still need to take personal responsibility to protect ourselves and others.

That means limiting our contacts; wearing a face covering, washing our hands, keeping our distance from others and when indoors, keeping rooms ventilated. This applies to everyone, whether you have had a vaccine or not. It also means we need to adapt how we interact in other situations and build resilience so that as restrictions ease leisure, hospitality, work places and businesses continue to take the necessary steps to remain COVID-secure to protect visitors, customers and employees. Improving fresh air flow, maintaining social distancing, hand hygiene and in some instances testing in certain sectors will all assist in us living more normal lives.

We have had many difficult days over the past 12 months, and there will be more difficult days ahead. But our vaccination programme and improved treatments mean there is now light at the end of the tunnel.

We will get to that end quicker if we take it one step at a time.



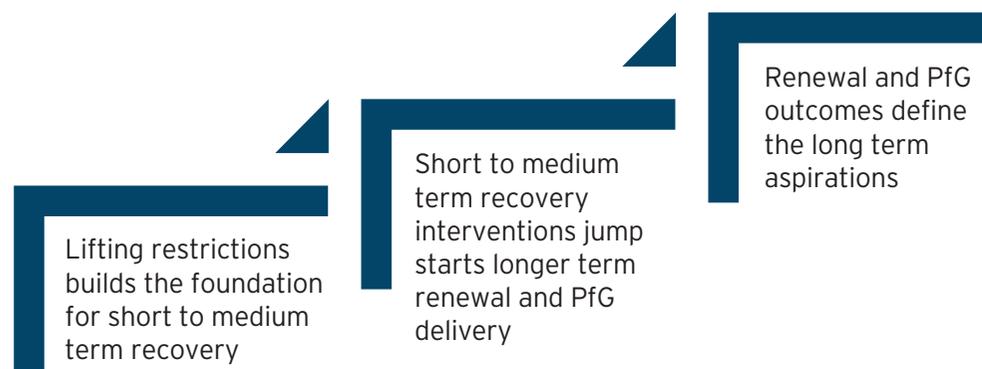
The Rt Hon Arlene Foster MLA
First Minister



Michelle O'Neill MLA
Deputy First Minister

Moving forward

The Executive is focused on building a careful and ambitious longer term plan for moving forward in 2021 and beyond. This consists of three key programmes of work which comprise our overall Roadmap to Recovery:



This document outlines the first step in the Executive's Roadmap to Recovery and sets out how the Executive will approach the relaxation of restrictions. All steps will be underpinned by the core themes of: **mitigation; adaptation; and resilience**. Mitigation of risk and harm, adaptation to reduce the risks to the recovery and longer term resilience to prevent future risk from the pandemic.

How we make our decisions

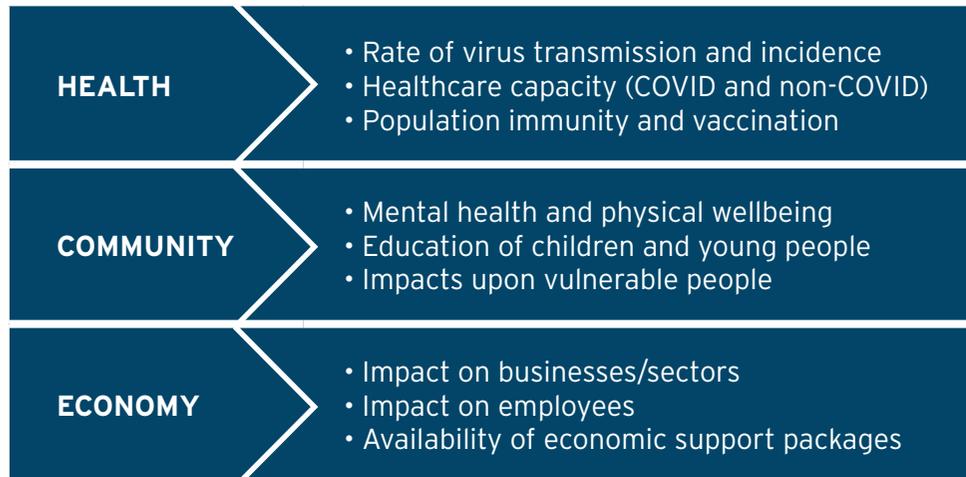
From the outset our **strategic priorities** have remained constant:

- The health and wellbeing of our citizens;
- Our societal and community wellbeing; and
- Our economic wellbeing and revitalising the economy.

We will be guided by four overarching principles when making decisions:

- **Evidence-based.** Proposals for change or for the retention of a restriction or requirement should be informed by the best available evidence and analysis.
- **Necessary.** A specific restriction or requirement should be retained only as long as it is considered necessary to provide the right public health response to the incidence or spread of COVID-19.
- **Proportionate.** The detrimental impacts on health, education, society and the economy that can reasonably be attributed to the restriction or requirement should be tolerated only as long as the risks associated with withdrawal or modification are assessed to be more severe.
- **Sustainable.** We need to build our communities and economy back up in a way that builds resilience, is long term focused, and viable.

In applying these principles, we will consider the impact of our decisions across a range of factors, including:



A staged approach to relaxing restrictions

The Pathway outlines the phases through which we plan to reduce and remove the restrictions that are currently in place.

We have developed nine pathways each of which has five phases:



Progress through the phases will be based on a range of evidence and will seek to balance the benefits for us with the potential impact on the transmission of the virus. This means we may be in different phases across the nine pathways at any given time.

We will keep the suppression of the virus at the forefront of our considerations across all phases and beyond. If we move too quickly to relax restrictions, we will end up in a similar position to last autumn and the new year, with transmission rates rising fast and our health service often operating at or beyond maximum capacity. With the emergence of new variants, it is even more important that the approach is a cautious one.

Even though we are making rapid progress with the vaccination programme, we still need to regularly look at what measures are required in order to reduce transmission and keep people safe.

Keeping the Rt number below 1 and as low as possible, remains the most effective way of suppressing the virus on a longer term basis, including any new variants. This has been our commitment in the past and will continue to be so going forward.

How will we move along the Pathway?

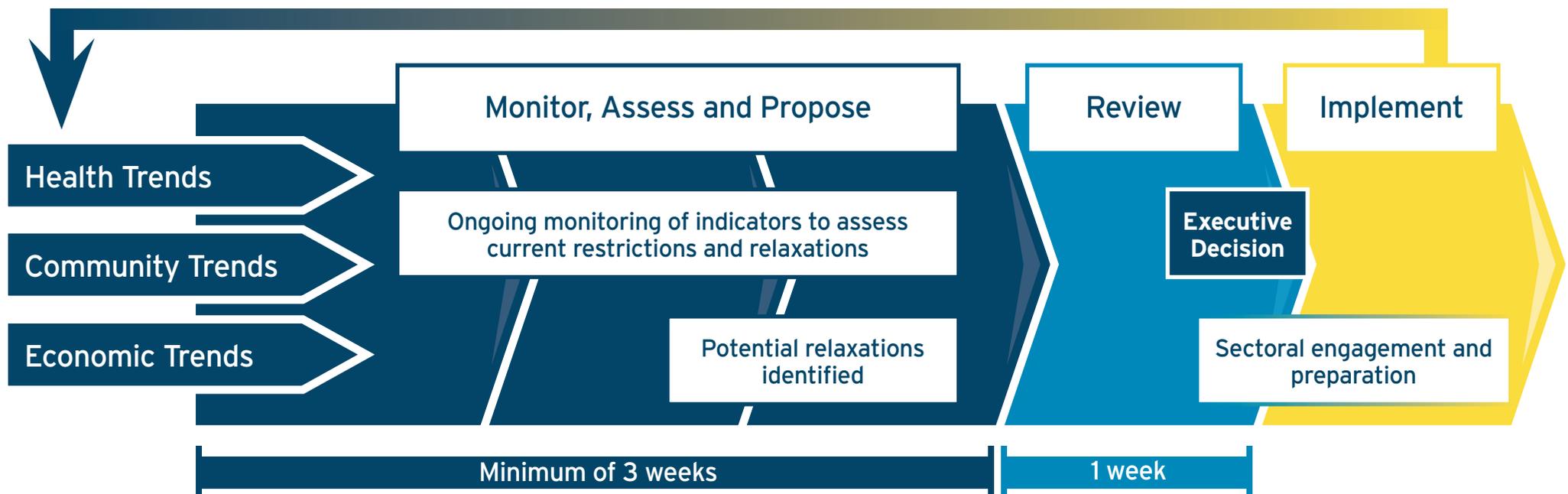
As we have seen already, the course of the pandemic has been highly unpredictable and is likely to be so for some time yet. That is why we do not favour setting dates at this stage. We want to prevent businesses, communities and sectors investing in planning for opening dates that may need to be flexible. It will require a minimum of three weeks to assess the impact of each significant relaxation before we decide on the next.

We are committed to giving you as much notice as possible, on a regular and ongoing basis, so that you can prepare for any changes we will be making. We will maintain a strong focus on relaxing restrictions as soon as it is possible and advising you of our forward plans.

We have therefore put in place a cycle of regular review and action to ensure we maintain momentum and progress along the Pathway.

We will continually monitor and assess the impact of relaxations and after taking each decision, we will pause and reflect on the health, societal and economic impacts before reviewing and moving to the next decision. In particular, we will look for linkages and consistency across each of the pathways, as not all sectors will move at the same pace.

The Executive's Approach to Easing Restrictions



We will continually monitor a broad range of data, information and statistical indicators to inform our decisions on whether to relax restrictions, or whether we need to return to strengthening them.

Health trends will be based on the World Health Organisation's conditions for adjusting restrictions and will include:

- Maintaining the Rt number below 1
- Health service capacity for COVID and non-COVID
- Test, trace and protect data and intelligence
- Population immunity, including vaccination programme progress
- Emergence of new variants

Community factors reflect the fact that we have all been living with the pandemic for some time, so we will be monitoring the impact of decisions on areas such as:

- Mental and physical health
- Isolation
- Resilience
- Education impact
- Equality impacts
- Homelessness placements and use of temporary accommodation

Economic data and indicators are critical to ensuring that decisions will have the best impact on starting the road to economic recovery, and will include:

- Overall and sectoral economic health (including "scarring")
- Labour market performance
- Viability and financial vulnerability of businesses
- Availability of job support and business support
- Number of benefit claimants

Our next steps

The Executive's next review of the Coronavirus Regulations will take place on 16 March and we do not expect the current picture to change significantly before Easter. We recently announced that there would be a phased return to school for some pupils with phase 1 from Monday 8 March and phase 2 from Monday 22 March. Subject to the levels of community transmission, the return of other pupils to school will commence immediately following the Easter holidays with the aim of all children returning to schools as soon as possible.

The Executive has committed to a four-week review cycle, where we will monitor the data on a range of health and societal impacts, before considering what relaxations can be made safely.

Our next consideration of potential relaxations will therefore take place in mid-April.

While the Executive will formally review and make decisions on restrictions every four weeks, our monitoring cycle provides us with the ability to move more rapidly on emerging priorities should the need arise before the next review point.

Guided by our health, scientific, and policy advisors, each review cycle will consider what capacity there is for the Executive to make any relaxations across the nine different themes.

Our approach to further relaxations will likely focus on those activities which are of most benefit to our health and wellbeing, community and the economy and considered to be a lower risk of increasing transmission. In practice, this is likely to include families first, outdoor activities/venues where it is possible to implement effective mitigations and practice social distancing, before those indoor activities/venues, where there is a high risk of transmission.

Dates for Comprehensive Formal Reviews by the Executive:			
16 March	15 April	13 May	10 June



LOCKDOWN

1 Lockdown Restrictions

- Contact limited to own household and support bubble
- Up to 6 from 2 households can meet outdoors not at a private dwelling

2 By the end of this Cautious First Steps phase...

- Up to 6 from 2 households can meet outdoors at a private dwelling
- Up to 10 from 2 households can meet outdoors not at a private dwelling
- Stay at Home messaging relaxed

3 By the end of this Gradual Easing phase...

- Up to 6 from 2 households can meet indoors in a private dwelling
- Increased numbers allowed for organised outdoor gatherings not at a private dwelling
- Restricted numbers allowed indoors not at a private dwelling

4 By the end of this Further Easing phase...

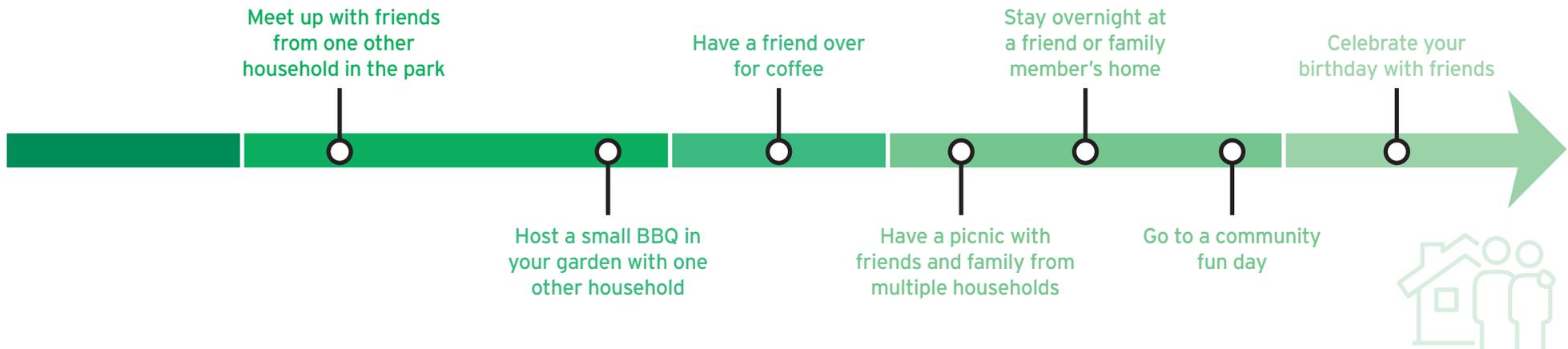
- Up to 10 from 2 households can meet indoors and outdoors in private dwellings
- No household limits on meeting outdoors not at a private dwelling
- Overnight stays allowed
- Increased numbers allowed indoors not at a private dwelling

5 Preparing for the Future

- Household limits lifted in private dwellings
- Organised outdoor gatherings are limited only by risk assessment and mitigations

RELAXATIONS

EXAMPLES OF WHAT THIS MIGHT MEAN FOR YOU





LOCKDOWN

1 Lockdown Restrictions

- School buildings closed except for vulnerable and key workers' children
- HE & FE students and apprentices essential face-to-face learning permitted
- Special schools, EOTAS and childcare open
- Targeted youth services and interventions

2 By the end of this Cautious First Steps phase...

- Partial return to classroom teaching
- Remote and online learning remains an option
- Partial return to practical face-to-face learning for FE students and apprentices
- Partial re-opening of generic youth services

3 By the end of this Gradual Easing phase...

- Full return to classroom teaching for schools
- Wider range of outdoor learning has resumed
- Extended Schools activity has resumed
- Further re-opening of generic youth services

4 By the end of this Further Easing phase...

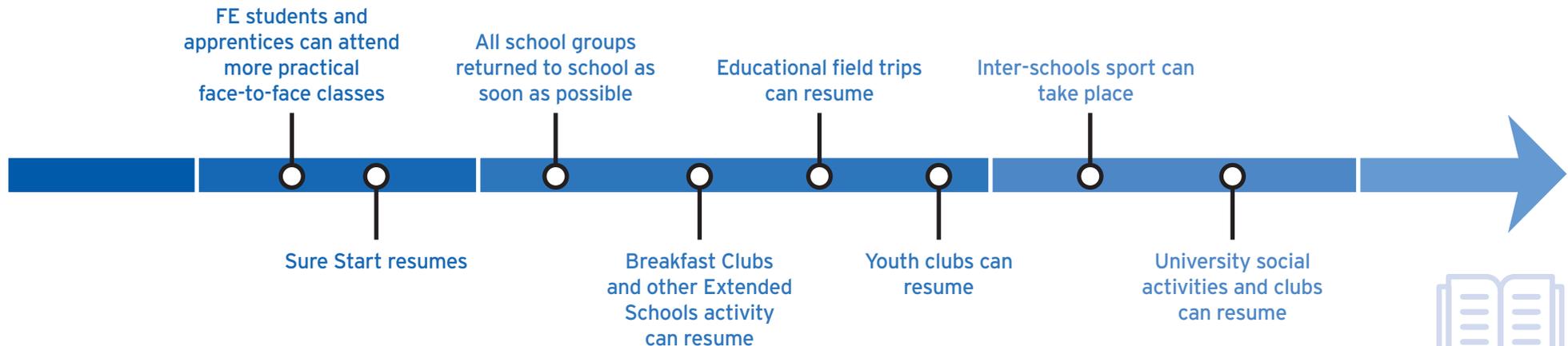
- Increased face-to-face teaching for HE & FE students, and apprentices
- Inter-schools sport allowed
- School clubs, FE colleges & university student extracurricular and support activities and youth services resumed

5 Preparing for the Future

- FE colleges and universities full return to face-to-face teaching
- Spectators allowed at school performance events

RELAXATIONS

EXAMPLES OF WHAT THIS MIGHT MEAN FOR YOU





LOCKDOWN

RELAXATIONS

1 Lockdown Restrictions

- Indoor and some outdoor visitor attractions closed
- All indoor seated venues closed
- Theatres and concert venues open for rehearsal and recording

2 By the end of this Cautious First Steps phase...

- All outdoor visitor attractions reopen

3 By the end of this Gradual Easing phase...

- Indoor visitor attractions, including heritage sites reopen
- Libraries reopen
- Low-risk activities including organised rehearsal and practise can take place

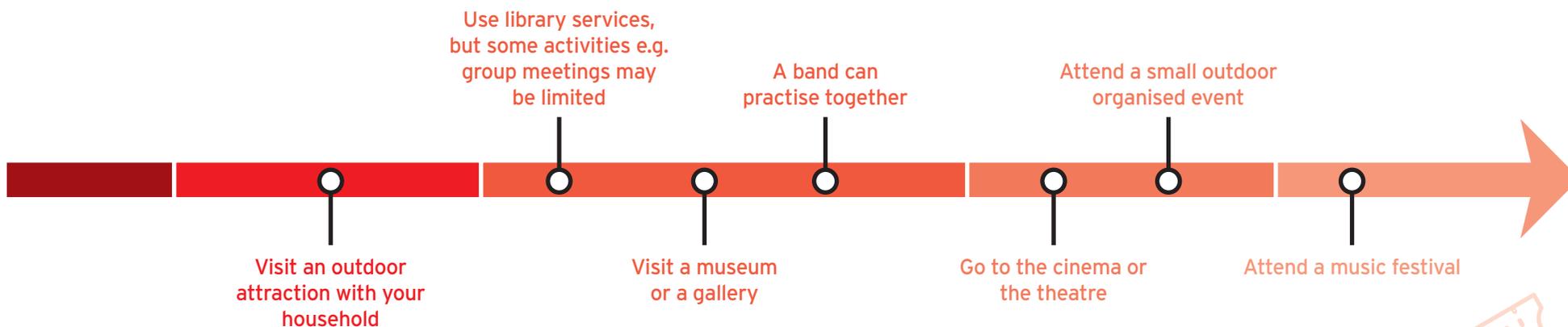
4 By the end of this Further Easing phase...

- Seated venues, including theatres, concert venues and cinemas reopen
- Amateur and youth performance activity can take place, with mitigations
- Outdoor organised events can take place, with limited numbers

5 Preparing for the Future

- Larger outdoor organised events, concerts and festivals can take place

EXAMPLES OF WHAT THIS MIGHT MEAN FOR YOU





LOCKDOWN

1 Lockdown Restrictions

- Outdoor exercise with own household or one other person - stay in local area
- Training and competition for elite athletes permitted

2 By the end of this Cautious First Steps phase...

- Outdoor sports facilities re-open for training and organised group activities
- Outdoor competitive sport can resume with no spectators
- Outdoor sport for children can resume with accompanying responsible adults allowed to attend

3 By the end of this Gradual Easing phase...

- Leisure centres and all indoor sports facilities reopen, including swimming pools and gyms
- Indoor group activities and classes resume
- Leisure activity venues reopen, including soft play
- Indoor activities for children can resume with accompanying responsible adults allowed to attend

4 By the end of this Further Easing phase...

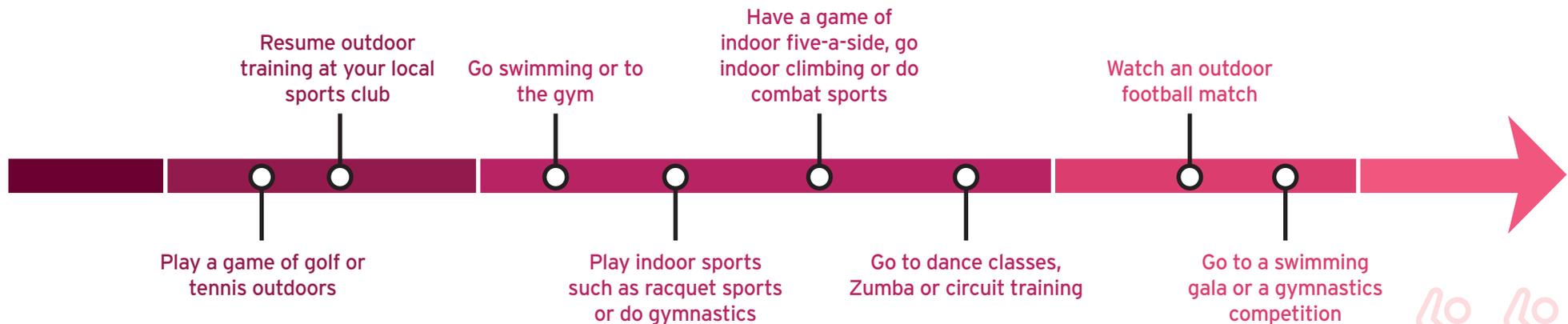
- Limited number of outdoor spectators allowed
- Limited number of indoor spectators allowed

5 Preparing for the Future

- Further outdoor spectators allowed
- Further indoor spectators allowed

RELAXATIONS

EXAMPLES OF WHAT THIS MIGHT MEAN FOR YOU





WORSHIP AND CEREMONIES

LOCKDOWN

1 Lockdown Restrictions

- 25 guest limit at civil partnerships, marriages and funerals
- Pre- and post-gatherings not permitted

2 By the end of this Cautious First Steps phase...

- Return to services in places of worship with a risk assessment
- Increased numbers at indoor and outdoor civil partnerships, marriages and funerals with a risk assessment

3 By the end of this Gradual Easing phase...

- Receptions can take place with mitigations and limited numbers
- Pre- and post-funeral gatherings can take place, with mitigations and limited numbers

4 By the end of this Further Easing phase...

- No upper limit on numbers for pre- and post-gatherings for civil partnerships, marriages and funerals - determined by venue risk assessment
- Limited live music at receptions

5 Preparing for the Future

- Further mitigations relaxed for pre- and post-gatherings for civil partnerships, marriages and funerals
- Live music, entertainment and dancing at reception

RELAXATIONS

EXAMPLES OF WHAT THIS MIGHT MEAN FOR YOU





LOCKDOWN

1 Lockdown Restrictions

- Public transport with safety measures in place
- All tourist accommodation closed, with exceptions
- Essential travel only

2 By the end of this Cautious First Steps phase...

- Public transport capacity increases in line with demand, within limits of social distancing requirements

3 By the end of this Gradual Easing phase...

- Caravan sites open, but shared facilities remain closed
- Hotels, guest houses and B&Bs reopen, with mitigations
- Public transport returns to full service, with mitigations

4 By the end of this Further Easing phase...

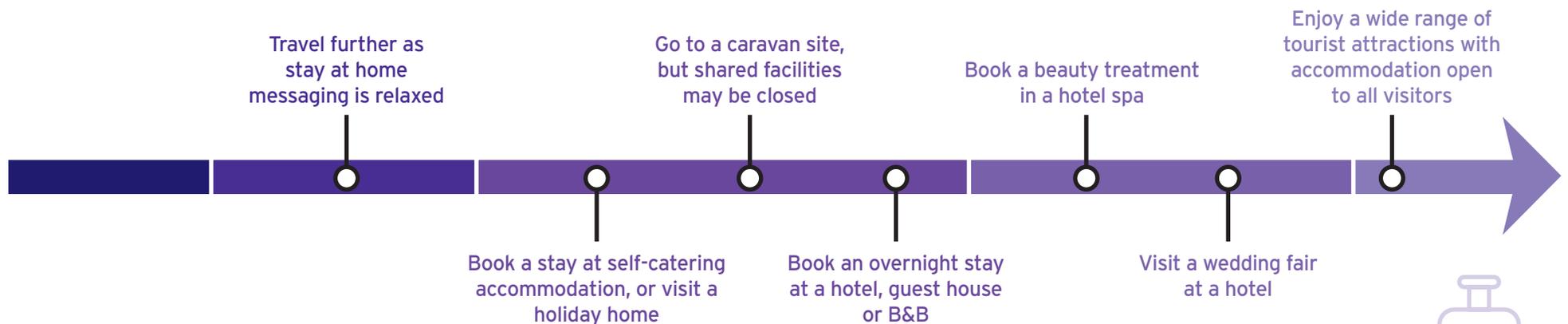
- Hostels, bunkhouses, campsites and other accommodation with shared facilities open
- Campus accommodation for tourism purposes open
- Hotels can offer wider range of services beyond accommodation & meals

5 Preparing for the Future

- Public transport running at full service with reduced mitigations
- Preparing for the full return of leisure travel

RELAXATIONS

EXAMPLES OF WHAT THIS MIGHT MEAN FOR YOU





LOCKDOWN

1 Lockdown Restrictions

- Remote working is the default position
- Those who cannot work from home can attend work

2 By the end of this Cautious First Steps phase...

- Relaxation of restrictions on workplace attendance
- Working from home where possible remains recommended approach

3 By the end of this Gradual Easing phase...

- Phased return to on-site work and office spaces
- Seminars and meetings can take place

4 By the end of this Further Easing phase...

- Revised risk assessments allow more workplaces to reopen
- Work conferences can resume

5 Preparing for the Future

- Workplaces fully reopen

RELAXATIONS

EXAMPLES OF WHAT THIS MIGHT MEAN FOR YOU





RETAIL AND SERVICES

LOCKDOWN

1 Lockdown Restrictions

- Essential retail only
- Non-essential retail is closed, including Click & Collect
- All close contact services closed
- Curfew on alcohol off-sales

2 By the end of this Cautious First Steps phase...

- Click & Collect for non-essential retail allowed
- Driving lessons and tests can resume

3 By the end of this Gradual Easing phase...

- All non-essential retail now open
- Off-sales curfews lifted
- Close contact services can resume, with mitigations

4 By the end of this Further Easing phase...

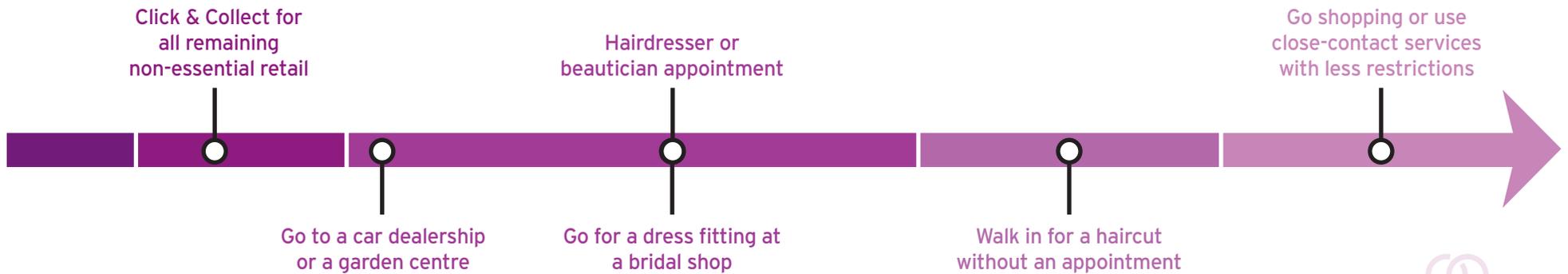
- All close contact services open without appointments, with remaining mitigations
- Increased in-store capacity in all retail

5 Preparing for the Future

- All retail and close contact services open with reduced mitigations

RELAXATIONS

EXAMPLES OF WHAT THIS MIGHT MEAN FOR YOU





LOCKDOWN

1 Lockdown Restrictions

- All hospitality closed, except for takeaway sales
- 11pm takeaway curfew

2 By the end of this Cautious First Steps phase...

- Curfews lifted on takeaway
- Premises where alcohol cannot be consumed open with table service, 6 people from 2 households

3 By the end of this Gradual Easing phase...

- Premises where alcohol can be consumed, excluding wet pubs, open with table service, 6 people from 2 households

4 By the end of this Further Easing phase...

- Wet pubs open with table service, 6 people from 2 households
- Limited entertainment relaxations

5 Preparing for the Future

- Bar service permitted in wet pubs
- '6 from any' relaxed
- Live entertainment in hospitality venues
- Nightclubs open

RELAXATIONS

EXAMPLES OF WHAT THIS MIGHT MEAN FOR YOU

