

Covid pass: Wales' law for cinemas and nightclubs ends

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Covid passes have been required for large events such as football matches since last October

People no longer have to show a Covid pass by law to get into large events, cinemas and nightclubs in Wales as rules are scrapped.

Venues are no longer required to ask customers for proof of two Covid jabs, or a recent negative lateral flow test result, as of Friday.

Ministers had said the pass would help businesses to stay open, but critics had raised ethical concerns.

A theatre director said it was the right decision at the right time.

Introduced in October, anyone over the age of 18 was legally required to show a pass to prove they are either fully vaccinated or have had a negative lateral flow test result within the past 48 hours, to get into certain events, cinemas and nightclubs.

Opponents had questioned the effectiveness of the scheme, which was one of Wales' last remaining Covid rules, and the Welsh Conservatives said they have "never shown any sign of success".

It comes after a civil liberties group said Welsh ministers told them in 2021 the passes might have a "small, and probably unmeasurable" impact on serious Covid cases.

- [What is a Covid pass and how do I get one?](#)
- [Lateral flow test rule for Covid pass tightened](#)
- [Should all coronavirus restrictions end in Wales?](#)

What is the plan to scrap Wales' Covid rules?

The Covid pass law expired at 0000 GMT on Friday morning.

While they will no longer have to be shown as a legal requirement, events and venues can still ask for them if they choose to.

Scrapping Covid passes is the first step in a three week plan to further ease Wales' coronavirus rules.

On 28 February, facemasks regulations will be reduced so they are only required in shops, including hairdressers and salons, on public transport and in health and social care.

They will no longer be required in other venues - including museums and cinemas - from that date.

Welsh ministers could scrap the remaining regulations, including self-isolation restrictions and the mask rules, [by the end of next month](#).

No precise date has been fixed, although ministers are expected to make their decision on or around 3 March.

Mask rules have already been repealed in England and self-isolation restrictions [could end there this month](#).

John S Turner/Geograph

Theatr Clwyd's executive director said it was the right decision at the right time

Liam Evans-Ford, the executive director of Theatr Clwyd, in Mold, said his staff were "overjoyed" as policing the passes had become more challenging.

"Audience members have become a little less accepting of having to do it," he said.

"I think it's the right decision at the right time."

Scrapping the passes is "a huge operational relief" that gets rid of extra costs, he said.

Covid passes have split opinion

Liam Watkins, Marketing Manager at Sin City in Swansea, said the team were "completely relieved" that Covid passes had been scrapped.

He said in one session the nightclub and gig venue could see up to 900 people passing through its doors, and that they had to create a separate queues for people renewing Covid passes.

He explained that "the lines have been longer, the waits have been longer" and this had slowed down drinks sales and put pressure on staff.

Almost two years on from the start of the pandemic, Liam said getting back to normality would be "huge".

"Six, seven months leading up to the whole pandemic we would be rammed every single session.

"We're hoping to get back to that point where we are back to being the golden ticket in town."

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Cinemas were among the venues where the passes were required

Silke Carlo of Big Brother Watch questioned how lawful the passes were if they had "no noticeable effect on public health".

The civil liberties group claimed that last November Welsh ministers said the scheme "might make only a small, and probably unmeasurable, contribution to reducing (or slowing the growth in) serious cases of Covid-19, hospitalisations and deaths".

The campaigners said ministers made the comment in a letter responding to their proposed legal action against the passes, which is not now going ahead.

But the Welsh government disputed the group's interpretation.

It said it was given advice last December that it would be "challenging" to identify the specific impact of the scheme.

Cinema owner told to close for not requiring Covid passes said the scheme was discriminatory

In their response to the legal challenge ministers argued that this was the reason the effect may be unmeasurable, not because the impact would be too small to be detectable.

In a statement the Welsh government said the Covid passes were "one

measure - among many - to help keep businesses open while also helping to control the spread of the virus and protect the NHS.

"The venues where the Covid pass is required have been chosen because they are mostly indoors and they see large numbers of people congregating closely together for prolonged periods of time.

"As we know, the longer large numbers of people are close together, especially indoors, the greater the risk of transmission."

The Welsh government has in the past pointed to a [one study](#) of Italy, Germany and France, which introduced Covid certificates, suggested they increased take up of the vaccine, prevented economic losses and reduced pressure on intensive care.

The move to scrap Covid passes comes as cases continue to fall.

One in 25 people in Wales had Covid in the week to 7 February, or 112,600 people, according to ONS stats provided by the infection survey,

Hospital figures also continue to fall and less than 100 a day are primarily being treated for Covid.

The average number of patients with confirmed Covid in hospital is 455 a day, down 15% in a week. It was nearly twice as high this time a year ago.

'Coercive, ineffective'

Welsh Deputy Minister for Arts and Sport, Dawn Bowden, said: "With increasing numbers of people vaccinated and boosted and thanks to the hard work and efforts of everyone across Wales, we are confident that coronavirus rates are falling and we can look forward to brighter times ahead."

Welsh Conservative health spokesman Russell George said: "I am

delighted to finally see the back of these totally failed, coercive, ineffective, costly, and unproven vaccine passports."

Rhun ap Iorwerth, Plaid Cymru's health spokesman, urged Welsh Government to move forward "as swiftly as possible" to publish a plan for moving to "the next, endemic phase".

"But the pandemic isn't over, and in talking about rapidly lifting all measures at once UK Government appears to be looking to forget the seriousness of Covid, rather than sensibly learning to live with it."

Covid passes came into force after [a knife-edge vote](#) in the Senedd last year, which was described by hospitality industry leaders as a "shambles".

Opposition from the Conservatives, Welsh Lib Dem Jane Dodds and, at the time, Plaid Cymru could have stopped them coming into force, but a single Tory Member of the Senedd away at party conference failed to vote.

A Covid passport scheme [remains in Scotland](#).

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