Public Health Wales statement on Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak

This statement will be updated daily at 2pm

Statement: Wednesday 30 September 2020

Dr Robin Howe, Incident Director for the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak response at Public Health Wales, said:

"Public Health Wales supports the introduction of new coronavirus restrictions in four local authority areas in North Wales – Denbighshire, Flintshire, Conwy and Wrexham – following a rise in cases. The new measures will come into force at 6pm on Thursday 1 October, to protect people's health and control the spread of the virus in the four areas.

"These arrangements are necessary in order to bring transmission of the virus under control in these areas. It is very important that we abide by the regulations in the areas in which we live and that we do not travel between local authority areas without a reasonable excuse.

 "We thank the public in advance for sticking to these new restrictions, which are essential in reducing spread of the virus, protecting older and vulnerable people, and keeping Wales safe.

"Following the introduction of restrictions in the borough of Caerphilly, our data is beginning to show a downward trend, and although we cannot categorically say this trend is a result of lockdown, we are cautiously optimistic and we are looking at a number of alternative sources to validate these results.

"We remind people living in areas of Wales where there are currently no restrictions in place to remember, at all times, the importance of adhering to the regulations to prevent further local restrictions.

"The new restrictions mean that people living in the affected areas will not be allowed to enter or leave their local authority area without a reasonable excuse.

"They will not be able to meet indoors with anyone they do not live with for the time being – extended households (sometimes called a 'bubble') are suspended for the time being.

"Pubs, restaurants and other licensed premises must stop selling alcohol at 10pm, and offer table service only. Off licenses, including supermarkets and other retail outlets, must also stop selling alcohol at 10pm.

"People who can work from home must do so. Those who cannot reasonably work from home can continue to travel to a place of work, whether that is within our outside the areas affected by local restrictions.

"Details of these rules for each local authority area can be found on the Welsh Government website.

"Approximately 2,000 test results (which will include both positive and negative results) from the UK Department of Health and Social Care's Lighthouse labs have been delayed. This means that today's test numbers will be an underestimate of the true picture of Coronavirus in Wales. This is beyond our control, and we apologise for any inconvenience this may cause. The number of tests will in likelihood increase disproportionately over the coming days as the backlog of test results are incorporated into our reporting."

"Public Health Wales continues to work with the Royal Glamorgan Hospital where teams are working at pace to implement robust measures to manage an outbreak. Given the extent of this outbreak, and on advice of Public Health Wales, the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board is taking a number of urgent and significant actions to ensure the safety of staff, patients and communities.

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"Significant temporary service restrictions will be put in place at Royal Glamorgan Hospital from 14.00 Wednesday September 30th as increased action is taken to contain a COVID-19 outbreak within the hospital.

 "The multidisciplinary Incident Management Team (IMT) for the Gwent area is encouraging anyone living in Blaenau Gwent and who has symptoms of COVID-19 to get a test, following a rapid rise in cases.

"A mobile testing unit has been set up in the area. Local residents can book a test by calling 0300 303 1222.

"The symptoms of COVID-19 are a new, continuous cough, a fever and a change in taste or smell (anosmia), but as these can be preceded by more minor symptoms, so the IMT is encouraging people with any flu-like symptoms, or that are feeling generally unwell, to book themselves in for a test.

"As well as observing the current and new restrictions coming into place, I would also urge people to download the new NHS COVID-19 app which launched last week.

"The app forms a central part of the NHS Wales Test Trace Protect programme. We would encourage as many people to download and use the app as possible, to help prevent the spread of Coronavirus. The app also informs users of the current risk level in their postcode district.

"The 'rule of six' means that only six people from the same extended household can meet indoors. This applies throughout Wales, although there are additional measures in place in the areas affected by local restrictions.

"In addition, the Welsh Government has announced strengthened regulations and support for employees and employers who are required to self-isolate.

 "We are continuing to see a steady increase in cases in many communities across Wales, and our investigations show that many of these have been transmitted due to a lack of social distancing.

 "We are also seeing an increase in the number of people who are seriously ill and have been admitted to hospital with COVID-19.

"We are concerned that much of the good work conducted over the past few months is at risk of going to waste. If the situation continues to worsen, we may find ourselves at the same levels of infection that we experienced earlier this year in March and April, and with that comes the potential for more extended restrictions to be imposed nationally.

"Coronavirus has not gone away. It remains the responsibility of everyone to help prevent the spread of this virus to protect older and vulnerable family members and friends. They should do this by self-isolating when asked to do so, staying two metres away from others, and by washing hands regularly.

"Public Health Wales is urging all eligible people in Wales to have their free flu vaccine as NHS Wales begins its largest ever national flu vaccine programme.

"Flu (also known as influenza) can be serious, particularly for those who are older or have a health condition and are more vulnerable to complications as a result of the flu. Having a flu vaccine every year is one of the most effective ways to protect against flu.

"Those eligible for a free NHS flu vaccine include people with long term health conditions, people aged 65 and over, pregnant women, children aged two to ten years old, carers, domiciliary carers and care home staff with regular client contact as well as care home residents, people with a learning disability and those

on the NHS shielded patient list or who are a household contact of someone who is on the NHS shielded patient list.

"For the latest information, visit www.beatflu.org or www.curwchffliw.org or search Beat Flu or Curwch Ffliw on Twitter and Facebook.

Symptoms

"If you or a member of your household develop symptoms of cough, fever or change in sense of taste or smell, you must book a test for Coronavirus promptly to help control the spread of infection.

"You and your household must self-isolate while waiting for the result of your test. If you test positive for Covid-19 should continue to self–isolate for 10 days. Other household members, including those who do not have any symptoms, must stay at home and not leave the house for 14 days.

"We urge you to only get a test if you have one of these symptoms, unless otherwise professionally advised – for example those regularly tested by their employer)."

Stay at home guidance for households with possible coronavirus is available on Gov.wales

Our role in testing and sampling

"The coronavirus test is reliable, and its reliability is comparable to other tests for respiratory conditions. The false positivity rate according to our analysis is 0.1 percent – or one false positive per 1,000 tests.

"Public Health Wales does not run any drive-through or walk-in sampling centres. These services are delivered either by local health boards, or by the UK Department of Health and Social Services.

"Public Health Wales does have a role in processing tests and delivering test results, but the majority of tests for Welsh residents are processed by the Lighthouse Labs run by the UK Department of Health."

International Travel

"Advice on travelling abroad, including the latest information on quarantine requirements on returning home, can be found on the Welsh Government and FCO websites.

"Anyone returning to Wales from countries which have been identified as high risk must quarantine in accordance with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office regulations even if they are not experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms or have had a negative test result.

"Anyone with suspected symptoms of COVID-19 infection - a high temperature, a new, continuous cough, or a loss of smell or taste (anosmia) - must self-isolate and seek an urgent test.

"Getting a coronavirus test is free. Visit www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test or call the free number 119.

"Confirmed cases must isolate for 10 days, with members of their household isolating for 14 days until the risk of passing on further infection has gone. Combined, these simple but effective actions will ensure the virus does not spread.

Contact tracing and general information

"Contact tracing continues as part of the Welsh Government's Test, Trace, Protect strategy. Anyone who has a positive Coronavirus test will be contacted by a team of contact tracers, and asked for details of everyone they have had close contact with while they have had symptoms.

"Please keep a note of your activities so you can easily remember your whereabouts on a given day, along with who you were in contact with.

"If you are asked to self-isolate, you should do so to prevent further spread of the virus.

"Tracers are trained staff and personal information that you provide will handled in line with data

protection regulations and will not be shared widely.

"Information about the symptoms of Coronavirus is available on the Public Health Wales website, or via the NHS 111 Wales symptom checker.

"Anyone experiencing Coronavirus symptoms can apply for a home testing kit by visiting www.gov.wales/coronavirus, or by calling the national 119 phone service.

"Anyone with suspected coronavirus should not go to a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital. They should only contact NHS 111 if they feel they cannot cope with their symptoms at home, their condition gets worse, or their symptoms do not get better after seven days.

"Only call 999 if you are experiencing a life-threatening emergency, do not call 999 just because you are on hold to 111. We appreciate that 111 lines are busy, but you will get through after a wait.

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