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

This statement will be updated daily at 2pm

Statement: Monday 5 October 2020

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

"Local restrictions are now in place in Bridgend, Caerphilly, Cardiff, Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Merthyr Tydfil, Neath Port Talbot, Newport, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Swansea, Torfaen, Vale of Glamorgan, and Wrexham local authority areas, and in Llanelli.

"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 are now also seeing an increase in cases in Gwynedd, and for that reason we urge people to continue to follow the public health guidance: self-isolate when asked to do so, stay two metres away from others, and wash your hands regularly. These actions 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.

Local restrictions

"Local restrictions mean that people living in the affected areas cannot enter or leave their local authority area without a reasonable excuse.

"They cannot meet indoors with anyone they do not live with for the time being, and extended households (sometimes called a 'bubble') are suspended.

"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 or outside the areas affected by local restrictions.

"Under local lockdown restrictions, households that include only one adult can now form a bubble with people from one other household in their lockdown area.

"Details of these rules for each local authority area can be found on the [Welsh Government website](#). 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 social distancing regulations to prevent further local restrictions.

"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.

"As well as observing local and national guidelines, I would also urge people to download the new NHS

COVID-19 app.

"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.

"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.

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](https://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.

"We are working with the Welsh Government and other partners following confirmation by the UK Department of Health and Social Care that positive and negative results from Lighthouse labs have suffered delays. The Welsh Government is seeking clarity from the UK Department of Health and Social Care on the extent to which the reported Lighthouse Lab test delays have impacted Wales. There is no current issue relating to delayed test results from Welsh labs."

International Travel

"Advice on travelling abroad, including the latest information on quarantine requirements on returning home, can be found on the [Welsh Government](https://gov.wales) and [FCO websites](https://www.gov.uk).

"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 be 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.

Flu vaccine

"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.curwchflliw.org or search Beat Flu or Curwch Flliw on Twitter and Facebook."

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