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

This statement will be updated daily at 2pm

Statement: Friday 11 December 2020

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

"Public Health Wales is concerned at the high levels of Coronavirus in nearly every part of Wales and we note that the Welsh Government will be publishing an updated Coronavirus Control Plan next week.

"If we are to have meaningful and safe interactions within the permitted exclusive Christmas 'bubble', then everyone should immediately start to limit their interactions with other as much as possible in the lead up to the festive period.

"This means staying out of other people's homes, limiting the times and the numbers of people that you meet, maintaining social distancing and hand hygiene, working from home if you can, and self-isolating if you show symptoms of coronavirus or are asked to do so by contact tracers.

As the number of cases continues to accelerate in Wales, we would also advise people to consider their plans for Christmas from the perspective of what they 'should' do, rather than what they 'can' do, in order to protect their families and communities.

"The festive period is important for people across Wales who want to be with loved ones during the holidays, particularly after a very difficult year, but we would remind everyone that we must each continue to take personal responsibility to limit the spread of the virus and protect our loved ones, particularly if they are vulnerable or extremely vulnerable. For many, this will mean that it isn't possible to celebrate Christmas in the way you normally would.

"On Friday 11 December there will be planned maintenance of the NHS Welsh Laboratory Information Management System (WLIMS) to allow for essential service upgrades to take place.

"This will affect our daily reporting of Coronavirus figures, and therefore there will be no release of daily figures on Sunday 13 December. There will be a period of data reconciliation and validation that will affect our daily reporting figures for several days after this downtime.

"Public Health Wales is also making some changes to the way we publish information on our website and data dashboard.

"From Monday 14 December, we will be changing the daily 'data correct as of' from 1pm the previous day to 9am the previous day for operational reasons.

"From Monday 14 December, we will be bringing forward the publication time for our data dashboard and our daily statement from 2pm to the earlier time of 12pm.

"From Monday 14 December, we plan to extend the lag period for seven day case rate reporting from two to four days. This will further improve the accuracy of Coronavirus cases per 100,000 population by local authority area for the most recent 7 day incidence.

"Welsh Government has announced that Coronavirus regulations relating to self-isolation periods have changed in Wales.

"Under the revised regulations, people who have tested positive or have come in to close contact with someone who has had a positive test for Coronavirus will be required by law to self-isolate for 10 days. Previously, close contacts were required to self-isolate for 14 days.

"This change has been made to reflect the latest evidence around transmission of the virus.

"These regulations will apply retrospectively, so anyone on days 11-14 of self-isolation will be immediately released. This applies to all settings, so will mean that school bubbles can return.

"This new 10 day requirement also applies to people who are isolating after travelling from a non-exempt country."

"We would like to wish all those celebrating Hanukkah a very safe and happy celebration. Throughout this year we have all found different ways to mark special occasions and this Hanukkah we can once again find new ways to stay connected. Visit Chabad.org for some great ideas for safely enjoying your favourite Hanukkah traditions at home.

"This week we welcomed the news that the first Coronavirus vaccine rollout had begun. We stress that the effects of this vaccine may not be seen nationally for many months and it is therefore extremely important that everyone continues to follow the advice on keeping Wales safe; keep contacts with other people to a minimum, keep a 2 metre distance from others, wash hands regularly, wear a face covering where required, and self-isolating when asked to do so.

"Public Health Wales urges everyone to follow the rules, to avoid transmission of Coronavirus and to protect everyone in our communities, including the most vulnerable.

"The rising rate of Coronavirus in parts of Rhondda Cynon Taff is causing significant concern and a mass testing exercise in the Lower Cynon Valley area started on Saturday and will run until 20 December.

"Public Health Wales is encouraging everyone who lives, studies or works in the area (Abercynon, Penrhiwceiber, Mountain Ash West, Mountain Ash East, and Aberaman South) to attend either the Cynon Valley Bowls Club or Abercynon Leisure Centre between 9am and 7pm for a free test.

"Anyone aged 11+ without any symptoms can have a test, but children under 18 will need parental consent. The more people who get tested, the more chances we have to reduce the spread of the virus.

"We understand that people will want to do their Christmas shopping at this time of year. We would suggest to try to visit shops during off-peak times, to always maintain social distancing and to wear a face covering if you can. Options such as 'click and collect' or online purchasing may also be something to consider.

"If you or a member of your household develop symptoms of the Coronavirus, such as a cough, fever or change in sense of taste or smell, you must self-isolate immediately and book a free Coronavirus test either by calling 119 or by clicking [here](#).

"We recognise that many people may be finding life more challenging, resulting in difficulties with mental health. There are many agencies which provide help and support, including the C.A.L.L. helpline on 0800 132 737, which will refer callers to the most appropriate organisation according to their needs.

"If you are in severe mental distress or are having suicidal thoughts, please contact Samaritans Cymru free on 116 123. You can also find sources of advice and guidance on our website if you need some help or are worried about a loved one.

"NHS Wales is still here to help you if you need care, and it's important you continue to attend appointments and seek help for urgent medical issues. You should phone beforehand and follow any guidance your local surgery, dentist, optometrist or health service has put in place to protect you and

staff, including the need to keep 2m away from other patients.

“Helpful advice and support is available via the NHS COVID-19 app. As well as providing alerts if you have been in contact with someone with Coronavirus, the app will also tell you the current risk level in your area.

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

Datganiad: Dydd Gwener 11 Rhagfyr 2020

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