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

This statement will be updated daily at 2pm

Statement: Tuesday 15 December 2020

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

"We are very concerned at the alarming rise in rates of Coronavirus in nearly every part of Wales which is putting NHS Wales under extreme pressure, and shows no signs of abating.

"If at all possible, we would advise the public not to mix with other households now, and to consider carefully if it is still safe to form a Christmas 'bubble' with other households. Coronavirus spreads fastest when we are indoors with others, and gathering together for Christmas represents a significant risk of transmission, and increased cases will result in increased pressures on already stretched NHS services.

"We would advise the public that if they still want to have meaningful and safe interactions within the permitted exclusive Christmas 'bubble', then it is vital that you plan ahead, consider the risks involved and decide what would be safest for you and your loved ones.

"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.

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

"This is affecting our daily reporting of Coronavirus figures, and the data today is not a true reflection of the picture in Wales. There will be a period of data reconciliation and validation that will affect our daily reporting figures for several days.

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

"We have changed the daily 'data correct as of' from 1pm the previous day to 9am the previous day for operational reasons.

"We have brought forward the publication time for our data dashboard and our daily statement from 2pm to the earlier time of 12pm.

"We have extended the lag period for seven day case rate reporting from two to four days. This further improves 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](https://www.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.

"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 Maerth 15 14 Rhagfyr 2020

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