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

**This statement will be updated daily at midday**

**Statement: Updated at 12pm on Monday 11 January 2021**

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

"The number of positive Coronavirus cases remains extremely high in Wales and is cause for serious concern.

"All of Wales remains in lockdown. We ask that the public adopts the same mindset for this lockdown as they did in March 2020. We understand that people are fatigued but with a more transmissible variant of coronavirus circulating across Wales it is vital that we all keep to the lockdown restrictions in place.

"This means stay at home, exercise outdoors alone or with members of your household or support bubble and if possible, only once a day. Shop online but if you must visit shops do this alone.

"The Education Minister has announced that all schools and colleges will continue with online learning until at least 29 January, and will remain that way until the February half term unless there is a significant reduction in transmission.

"In addition, Welsh Government have confirmed that non-essential retail, hospitality venues, licensed premises and leisure facilities will remain closed. Measures in shops and workplaces which remain open will be strengthened, including closing all showrooms, although they will still be able to operate click and collect services.

"The roll-out of the Pfizer BioNTech and AstraZeneca Coronavirus vaccines continues in Wales with the the recently Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) approved Moderna vaccine to be incorporated into the programme soon.

"From today, daily vaccination data will be published on the Public Health Wales dashboard. Public Health Wales is working closely with the Welsh Government as they deploy Coronavirus vaccinations through local health boards. Welsh Government is leading on the deployment of the vaccine in Wales."

"Vaccinating the adult population of Wales, to protect people from severe disease, is a significant task, and the vaccine will take time to reach everyone. The epidemiology of COVID-19 throughout the UK in late 2020 showed a clear need for rapid, high levels of vaccine uptake among vulnerable persons.

"The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has issued a short [statement](#) outlining the case for optimising the existing vaccine programme within the UK to achieve maximum short term impact. The JCVI advises initially prioritising delivery of the first vaccine dose as this is highly likely to have a greater public health impact in the short term and reduce the number of preventable deaths from COVID-19.

"Given the data available, and evidence from the use of many other vaccines, Public Health Wales fully supports the JCVI advice to increase a maximum interval between the first and second doses of 12 weeks for both Pfizer BioNTech and AstraZeneca vaccines.

"Members of the public should not phone your GP, pharmacy or hospital asking when they will get a vaccine. When someone is in one of the groups eligible for the vaccine, they will be invited to attend a dedicated clinic which will have been set up to ensure patient safety and that of the healthcare professionals.

"The effects of the vaccines may not be seen nationally for some time, and with Wales at alert level four we must continue to follow the advice on keeping Wales safe. Stay at home, meet only the people you live with, maintain social distancing, wash your hands regularly, and work from home if you can.

"As indicated by the Welsh Government, the new restrictions were brought forward due to the identification of a new more transmissible variant of Coronavirus. Public Health Wales has been working with UK partners to investigate and respond to this variant.

"It is normal for viruses to undergo mutations, and we expect this to happen. Although the variant is easier to transmit, there is currently no evidence that it is more severe.

"We are reminding people that all current guidance relating to Coronavirus continues to apply to the new variant, including advice relating to symptoms, social distancing, self-isolation, and vaccination.

"The new variant shows up as positive in Public Health Wales' existing Coronavirus tests, and people must continue to seek a test in the usual way if they develop Coronavirus symptoms.

"Travellers who have been in or transited through the Republic of South Africa, Angola, Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, Zambia and Zimbabwe in the last 10 days are no longer allowed into the UK. We advise anyone returning to Wales from these countries to regularly check gov.uk for the latest guidance and advice on self-isolating.

"If you or a member of your household develop 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](#).

"If you are due to travel out of the UK, please be aware of the changing situation and keep an eye on the [FCO website](#) for up to date details.

"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."

***Datganiad: Diweddarwyd 12yh Dydd Llun 11 Ionawr 2021***

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