

UK COVID-19 deaths surge to more than 1,100 over last week

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23 October 2020

Friday's death toll of 224 took COVID-19 fatalities in the UK over the last seven days past the grim milestone of 1,000, to 1,142.

The virus is spiralling out of control, with official figures showed 141,741 new cases over the same one-week period, with the rolling 7-day average for daily new cases eclipsing 20,000 for the first time.

The *R* (Reproduction) rate of the virus remains above 1 nationally, with an estimated daily growth rate range of 3 to 6 percent.

Large areas of the UK were placed under local lockdowns over the last 24 hours, including six million people placed under the highest tier restrictions. Despite the massive resurgence of the deadly disease, the government, which rules on behalf of big business, is yet to enforce a national lockdown comparable with that put in place from March 23—which saved hundreds of thousands of lives. It was the premature ending of the national lockdown from June onwards, and the opening of schools, colleges and workplaces to facilitate the profitmaking of big business, that produced this disastrous situation.

The “firebreak” lockdown announced by the Welsh government this week came into operation last night at 6 p.m., covering its population of 3.1 million. People in Wales are to stay indoors unless they need to travel for an essential reason. Non-essential retail is closed, and those shops that are open can only sell essential goods. Workers are to work from home wherever possible, with exceptions for essential workers. Pubs and restaurants will close, as will places of worship.

Yet these restrictions will only be in place for 17 days. Children from years 9-13 cannot attend school but pupils in years 7 and 8 are allowed to return after the half-term break. Those who are taking exams can also attend, as can children who attend special schools or pupil referral units.

Scottish National Party First Minister Nicola Sturgeon

announced a five-level system for restricting movements and limiting physical contact. The highest level of the five entails more restrictions than the highest of England's three tiers already in place.

Greater Manchester, in the north of England, was moved from Tier 2 “high” restrictions to Tier 3 “very high” by central government. The move, covering a population of nearly 3 million people, was imposed after local Labour Party mayor Andy Burnham was unable to reach a deal with Prime Minister Boris Johnson over the financial support available to local business.

The county of South Yorkshire in England, with a population of over 1.4 million and including the cities of Sheffield, Rotherham, Barnsley and Doncaster, was also placed in Tier 3. The cities of Coventry and Stoke and the town of Slough enter Tier 2 today. These moves are an indication of catastrophe that is being allowed to unfold.

Hospitals are already being overwhelmed, with ICU units full in several areas. The government announced that 997 COVID-19 patients were admitted to hospitals in England on Wednesday, well above the 706 a week earlier. A total of 6,518 COVID-19 patients were in hospital in England yesterday, up from 4,647 a week ago. The number of people requiring ventilation is surging, with 601 in ventilation beds, up from 482 a week ago.

Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust said Friday that the increase in COVID-19 hospitalisations is “similar to April”. More than 200 of their patients have tested positive for coronavirus, and 16 are in a critical condition. The *Guardian* reported that the trust said “a full ward of people” were being admitted daily with coronavirus infections and that an average of seven people were on mechanical ventilation a day. The Trust has been forced to postpone some non-urgent operations.

In Liverpool, in northwest England, it was reported Thursday that the city's three main hospitals—Royal, Aintree and Broadgreen—were treating 398 COVID-19

patients, compared with 390 during the height of the pandemic in April.

The scale of cases in the northwest mean the first of the government's emergency Nightingale field hospitals, on standby for months, will reopen next week in Manchester.

Two MPs contracted COVID-19 this week. On Friday, Bolton Labour Party MP Yasmin Qureshi was discharged from hospital where she was treated for pneumonia after testing positive for COVID-19. At the same time, it was announced that Conservative MP for Rushcliffe, Ruth Edwards, was infected.

Such is the dysfunctionality of the UK's test, track and trace system that the real number of cases is likely to be much higher than the total officially recorded each day.

Just over a month ago, Chief Scientific Officer Sir Patrick Vallance announced at a Downing Street press conference that without further action and at the then current rate of infection, "you would end up with something like 50,000 cases in the middle of October per day". He warned, "Fifty-thousand cases per day would be expected to lead a month later, so the middle of November say, to 200-plus deaths per day."

As this week's fatalities reveal, the 200 deaths a day is already a reality weeks ahead of Vallance's grim prediction. And Vallance revealed yesterday that the prediction of 50,000 cases a day could have already also been massively eclipsed.

Vallance showed a slide dated two days previous from the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) sub-group, the Scientific Pandemic Influenza Group on Modelling (SPI-M). He said: "The modelling consensus suggests that between 53,000 and 90,000 new infections per day may be occurring... The number of infections overall across the country continues to increase."

He warned "It's worth remembering the number of infections leads to hospitalisations a week or two later and that in turn has the effect of increasing intensive care unit numbers and of course, unfortunately, the number of people who die as a result of that."

The explosion of COVID-19 infections and deaths exposes as a total failure the government's ineffectual "rule of six" restriction on socialising and policy of localised lockdowns, which have done nothing to arrest the spread of the disease.

This week, after coming under relentless pressure from business figures, Chancellor Rishi Sunak announced a new £3 billion-a-month business bailout scheme for companies in local lockdown areas. This amounts to offering businesses in Tier Two areas a paltry maximum

of £2,100 per month—which in many cases will only pay the salary of one or two workers.

Speaking alongside Vallance at Thursday's press conference, Johnson declared, "I want to thank Rishi for measures that will protect people's livelihoods and protect jobs and which will help us to deliver our overwhelming objective of getting the virus under control while keeping pupils in education and keeping the UK economy moving forward. I know that there are some people who will say that this economic objective is so important that we should stop all measures to control the virus and stop restrictions of any kind on our social lives or on the way we run our businesses.

"We can't do that because alas the maths is inescapable. We would face many thousands more deaths ... So that's why we reject that extreme laissez-faire approach."

This is a pack of lies. Johnson's government is responsible for well over 60,000 deaths, after declaring it was pursuing a herd immunity policy at the outset of the pandemic, before a public backlash forced it to impose March's lockdown. Despite Johnson's claims to the contrary, his "keeping pupils in education and keeping the UK economy moving forward" will result in thousands more deaths.

Among the main vectors for spreading coronavirus are schools and universities. The infection rate in secondary schools is now 17 times higher than on September 1, when they reopened. According to the Tory Fibs Twitter account, which is collating the figures, the total number of schools where an infection or multiple infections have occurred now stands at more than 6,000.

Almost all universities have reported infections, with the UniCovid website reporting cases at 116 higher education institutions. It reported, "As at 6pm 22 October 2020, our data puts the number of confirmed cases for students at 25,530, for staff 523, in total 26,053."



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