

Covid cases surge in Britain with accompanying flood of hospitalisations

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The UK continues to record tens of thousands of COVID infections each day and around 1,000 deaths a week. In the last week, a further 256,910 cases were announced, up 6 percent on the previous week. A further nearly 30,000 cases were recorded on Saturday, along with 156 deaths.

Nationwide 983 people died over the last week due to COVID, an increase of 198 (25 percent) on the previous week.

COVID infections are being allowed to spread like wildfire, with over 7.2 million people having been infected since the start of the pandemic. According to Office for National Statistics data published Friday, one in 70 people across Britain are testing positive in England. Infection and deaths are being fuelled by the Delta variant, with more than 669,000 cases of the variant now recorded in the UK, with over half a million (556,542) of these in England. While Delta is the dominant variant, there are at least 16 variants of COVID still in circulation in Britain.

Internationally only the United States, with a population five times that of Britain, recorded more cases over the last week. However, the number of cases per million population in Britain last week (3,761) was significantly higher than in the US (2,830).

With the economy fully opened on July 19, with schools returning across the UK in the weeks since August 11, the result has been a significant increase in hospitalisations.

Hospital bed occupancy due to COVID is at its highest levels since March 10, with daily admissions passing the 1,000 mark last week for the first time since the Delta variant became dominant in May. On September 6, 1,063 patients were admitted to hospital with COVID on a single day.

The surge in hospitalisations is evident from data from an 11-day period from August 19-29, when the number of COVID patients increased by 590 (9 percent). In the 11 days to September 11, the number of people in hospital with COVID shot up by more than 1,000, going from 7,091 to 8,098, and increase of 14 percent and the highest level for six months.

It is estimated that if hospitalisations reach 1,500 a day, the National Health Service (NHS) faces being overwhelmed. This is only a matter of time. The *Independent* reported Saturday, “New analysis from the science analytics company Airfinity shows that the hospitalisation threshold that has led to previous lockdowns in the UK could be met in mid-November if admissions continue to rise unabated. It’s estimated that daily infections will need to surpass 50,500 to reach this point—37,622 daily infections were recorded on Friday.”

The *Mirror* newspaper revealed in its own analysis of NHS data on Saturday that since all coronavirus restrictions were abandoned on July 19, 154 of 217 NHS Trusts recording an increase in the number of beds taken by people with the virus. Among some of the “sharpest rises” being reported were at hospitals in some of the UK’s largest cities including London, Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester, Nottingham, and Leicester.

A growing number of hospitals nationwide are reporting red and black alerts. On Friday, the Royal Cornwall Hospitals NHS Trust announced the suspension of routine and urgent surgeries due to pressures intensified by a “peak” in Covid admissions.

A red alert means that hospitals are facing a 'significant impact' and a black alert (now known as 'Opel 4' means that a hospital is 'unable to deliver comprehensive care' and patient safety could be compromised. On Saturday, two hospitals in Derbyshire—Royal Derby Hospital and the Chesterfield Royal Hospital—announced Opel 4 alerts. BBC News reported Saturday that “The accident and emergency teams at Chesterfield Royal, Royal Derby Hospital and Queen's Hospital, Burton-upon-Trent [in Staffordshire], saw 1,038 patients on Monday alone. The number of patients with COVID across the three sites rose to 77, an increase from 65 last week with 11 being in the most critical condition.”

Just days earlier Ami Jones, an Intensive care consultant at the Aneurin Bevan Health Board in Wales tweeted that the Board had “‘flipped’ the largest part of the unit from Amber

(non-Covid) to red (Covid). Covid patients now make up the majority of our patients on the unit.” He added, “Vaccination has certainly weakened the link between infections and hospitalisations. But it hasn’t broken it and the unvaccinated are featuring heavily in hospitalised patients.”

The reopening of schools is fuelling the surge of cases. Schools opened in Scotland from August 11, a few weeks before they began to open in England. By the end of the month cases in Scotland had tripled. Almost 40 percent of the new cases are in children, accounting for 2,729 out of the 6,836 cases recorded last Thursday. Last week, around one in 45 people tested positive for COVID in Scotland (around 117,300 people). The previous week infections were recorded in around one in 140 people.

Mehring Books, the publishing arm of the Socialist Equality Party (US), is proud to announce the publication in epub format of Volume 1 of *COVID, Capitalism, and Class War: A Social and Political Chronology of the Pandemic*, a compilation of the *World Socialist Web Site's* coverage of this global crisis.

While cases have been rising among young people for months—with the highest rate still among 10 to 19-year-olds—new data shows that infections among older generations are rising again. The *Independent* noted research from Colin Angus, a senior research fellow and health inequalities modeller at the University of Sheffield, showing that most COVID hospital admissions in July were among those aged 25-34. This has shifted since early August with the “highest admission rates have been recorded in the 75-84 age bracket. Angus said that cases are “clearly rising” among over-65s and “a [there was a] definite shift towards cases being older now compared to six weeks ago.” Angus’ conclusion was that this was not down to waning immunity levels but “It’s probably more to do with greater exposure to the virus.”

Such widespread infection is laying the basis for an even more devastating phase of the pandemic in which variants can emerge that are resistant to existing vaccines. In the face of this, the ruling elite is fixated on its herd immunity agenda and “saving the economy’ i.e., the profits of the corporations.

According to media reports this weekend, Prime Minister Boris Johnson is to repeal powers from the Coronavirus Act applying to England which could in any way hinder big business piling up their profits. The *Telegraph* reported, “These include the ability to close down sectors of the economy, such as pubs and restaurants, and to restrict access to education by closing down schools, colleges and childcare.” Under the measures to be announced, “Infectious people can also no longer be legally detained, and

restrictions on events and gatherings cannot be imposed.”

All manner of mass gatherings is allowed, which are proven super-spreader events. From September 16-19, an estimated 50,000 people will attend the Isle of Wight festival under conditions in which COVID infection is raging among its small population of just over 141,000. Last Thursday, local newspaper the *County Press* reported that 34 acute beds were being occupied by COVID patients, up from 30 the previous week. This represents 20 percent of all acute beds on the island being occupied by a Covid patient. A second intensive care unit at the island’s only hospital, St Mary’s, has had to open, which the trust’s chief operative officer, Joe Smyth, said is already “very, very full.”

The newspaper reported, “Government figures show between the last week of July and September 1, 2,289 covid cases were recorded on the Island—nearly a fifth of the Island’s entire cases since the pandemic began.”

An exponential growth of COVID is threatened as mass public transport systems report record numbers of travellers. Last Monday, London Underground recorded its busiest morning since the start of the pandemic—with school run trips understood to be playing a major role. Just under a million rush-hour trips on the Underground were recorded—nearly a 20 percent increase from the previous week and the highest level since the first lockdown in Britain in March 2020.

A propaganda offensive is being waged by the privately owned rail network to get even more passengers back on trains, with the Rail Delivery Group (RDG) complaining that train commuting remains at just 33 percent of its pre-Covid rate. Central to its appeal is protecting the profitability of the rail firms, along with those of the major corporations who own most High Street businesses. The BBC reported, “Research carried out by WPI Economics for the RDG indicated that these commuters spent a total of £30bn a year on food and drink, shopping, entertainment and culture, boosting local businesses.”



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