

Johnson declares, “We can find a way to live with this virus” as UK reports one-day record 218,000 COVID infections

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Britain passed the horrific milestone of 200,000 COVID cases in a single day Thursday, as Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced in a Downing Street press conference that he would do nothing to combat the pandemic.

No further restrictions will be imposed to prevent the spread of the virus, he said. On the contrary, “We have a chance to ride out this Omicron wave without shutting down our country once again. We can keep our schools and our businesses open and we can find a way to live with this virus.”

The almost 220,000 cases (218,724) were up more than 60,000 on the previous day. Due to the unhindered circulation of the Omicron variant, over 1.2 million have been infected in Britain in just the last seven days—an increase of 60 percent week-on-week.

Britain is second globally only to the United States (3,264,875) in the number of officially recorded infections over the last week. However, the US population is five times as large. The UK’s 17,751 cases per million over the last seven days is almost double that of the US, with 9,777 per million.

Fully 20 percent of Britain’s population have been infected with a disease which has killed over 173,000 people. The 909 people who have died in the last seven days was up by 51.8 percent on the previous week.

Even Johnson’s number-one yes man, Chief Medical Office Sir Chris Whitty, felt obliged to point out, “The idea that this is a mild disease as opposed to less likely to be hospitalised I think is easily demonstrated to be incorrect.”

While 200,000 plus cases is the new daily benchmark, this is likely only the tip of the iceberg as the UK’s track-and-trace system is in chaos. Statistician Sir David Spiegelhalter, a member of the government’s Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE), told BBC

Radio on New Year’s Eve, “We should take (daily case data) with a pinch of salt because we don’t actually count reinfections... and testing is limited—people are finding it more difficult to find tests. Normally the number of cases are around half the number of infections, so we could be talking about half a million new infections per day.”

According to new data, it is estimated that up to 15 percent of all new Omicron infections were among people who had already been infected with another variant, which are not recorded in the official statistics.

The surge is bringing the under-resourced and understaffed National Health Service (NHS) to its knees. Nearly one in 10 NHS staff were off sick over the New Year, with 50,000 at home either sick with COVID or self-isolating. This is as 14,126 people were in hospital with COVID on December 31, up 5,600 on the previous week. Thousands more are likely to have been admitted since then.

On Tuesday, another two NHS Trusts, Morecambe Bay and Blackpool teaching hospitals, which provide services for hundreds of thousands of people, joined at least six others who have declared “critical incidents” in the last few days. A Morecambe Bay Trust internal memo spoke of “relentless and sustained pressure” caused by “unprecedented staff absences” that would see operations and appointments cancelled and staff redeployed, reported the *Guardian*.

With public sector managers told to prepare for a scenario in which up to 25 percent of the 5.6 million-strong public sector workforce are at home isolating, Johnson offered only to “prioritise” just 100,000 “key workers” who will take daily lateral flow tests to catch infections earlier, but not until January 10.

The government will officially review its Plan B measures today, but the Downing Street press conference

was organised to reassure the corporations that nothing would change. As Johnson said in the press briefing, “Lockdowns are not cost-free.”

Everyone in ruling circles, including the Labour Party and trade unions who endorse these murderous policies, is singing from the same sheet.

A *Financial Times* editorial Tuesday spelled out, “The world must learn to live with Covid this year”.

It declared, “Whatever slim chance we might have had at the beginning of 2020 to eliminate Covid-19 has long gone. Efforts to control the pandemic have been justified so far in the context of a global health emergency but they cannot continue indefinitely.”

The *Daily Telegraph*, which functions as the Conservative government’s house organ, congratulated Johnson in its New Year’s Day editorial for his refusal to implement any restrictions to stop the spread of the disease:

“One thing is clear: the country cannot be trapped for ever in a damaging cycle of repeated lockdowns, in which it is considered legitimate for governments to shut down society and the economy whenever they or their scientific advisers consider it to be necessary. As many have been arguing since early 2020, at some point we will have to find an accommodation with the virus and learn to live with its effects.”

The *Guardian* employed the services in an op-ed of Dr. Raghieb Ali, a clinical epidemiologist who wrote, “Sadly Covid is not going away permanently, but we can be optimistic that 2022 will be the year the pandemic ends and it becomes an endemic disease here and in most countries thanks to the very high levels of population immunity we now have—through a combination of vaccination and natural infection.” He concluded, “there is a realistic prospect that 2022 will be the year we can begin to live with the virus—and without the fear of both Covid and lockdowns that has haunted us for the past two years.”

In its article, the FT advised that booster jabs be abandoned as “we cannot expect to keep jabbing people every four to six months for very long in the face of new variants. We will have to rely on the immunity provided by annual inoculations... and by repeated exposure to what will sooner or later become an endemic infection.”

Within a day, Professor Sir Andrew Pollard, chairman of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), told the *Telegraph* that he did not presently support a further, fourth, booster shot for the entire population. “It depends if your goal is to stop all

infections... But that is wrong. The goal is to prevent severe disease and protect health systems around the world.”

“We can’t vaccinate the planet every four to six months. It’s not sustainable or affordable,” he blurted out.

No measures that in any way hinders the profit accumulation of big business can be tolerated by the ruling elite. Any mitigation, no matter how minor and ineffectual, must be done away with in the pursuit of a policy of endemic COVID.

This week, as millions of schoolchildren and hundreds of thousands of staff return to classrooms, the most right-wing sections of the Tory Party are railing against the “tyranny” of wearing masks in corridors and classrooms and calling for the slashing of the period of self-isolation.

The government has already reduced the isolation period from 10 to seven days for those with COVID, if they test negative on a lateral flow on day six and seven. Robert Halfon, the Tory chairman of the education select committee, said this week, “The most important priority the Government should have is to keep children in school... If that means reducing the quarantine period from seven days to five days so more teachers can be in school, it’s absolutely something they should consider. And the Government should seriously consider applying this to children so they can get back to learning again.”

Tory MP Miriam Cates called for the “ridiculous” mass testing of 12–15-year-old children as they return to class to be abandoned, as it “totally lacks common sense”.

Omicron is hospitalising more children than at any previous stage in the pandemic. On Tuesday, SafeEdforAll (Safe Education for All) group member @TigressEllie posted data showing that an additional 114 children were admitted to hospital overnight. The majority (75) of these aged were aged 0-5 and therefore totally unvaccinated. This takes total child COVID hospital admissions to 14,115.



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