

Routine COVID testing ended in English hospitals, care homes, prisons and homeless shelters

Robert Stevens
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All routine testing for COVID-19 was ended in England at the end of August, even as the disease continues to claim hundreds of lives weekly with tens of thousands of new cases.

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) declared August 24 that all asymptomatic testing in high-risk settings including hospitals, care homes, prisons and homeless shelters would end on August 31. In line with its “Living with COVID-19 strategy, the government’s objectives in this phase of the coronavirus... response are to increasingly enable the management of COVID-19 in line with other respiratory illnesses...”

Free general testing for the entire population ended April 1, but asymptomatic testing remained in place for particularly vulnerable people. The continually evolving virus is now free to circulate in these settings as it is throughout the general population.

On August 31, the UK’s COVID alert level was downgraded from three to two, following a recommendation by the UK’s four chief medical officers. The Level Two alert means that “COVID-19 is in general circulation, but direct healthcare pressures and transmission are declining or stable”. The previous threat Level Three denoted that “a COVID-19 epidemic is in general circulation”. Under Level Two, there are “No or minimal social distancing measures; enhanced testing, tracing monitoring and screening”.

“The Department of Health said “Severe Covid cases, direct Covid healthcare pressures, direct Covid deaths and ONS [Office for National Statistics] community positivity estimates have decreased.”

The continued danger of COVID to public health was underplayed by the Chief Medical Officers. Even as they declared, “COVID remains present in the community and we may see an increase in cases with BA 4.6 and BA.2.75

circulating,” they concluded, “but do not expect this to lead to an immediate increase in hospital pressures.”

This was said in the week that National Health Service bosses warned that already understaffed/underfunded hospitals would be unable to cope with the ill-health implications of the “humanitarian crisis” they face within weeks due to the massive increase in household energy bills.

Due to vaccinations, the number of deaths has fallen since the height of the pandemic, but hundreds are still dying from COVID with many left debilitated by Long COVID.

The *Guardian* noted August 24 that all testing was being halted “despite a near doubling in UK deaths from the virus this summer compared with the same period last year.” It reported, “The latest official figures indicate that deaths caused by the latest Covid wave are on the wane. But more than 5,700 Covid deaths have been registered since 8 June – a 95% increase on same period last year when there were 2,936 deaths involving Covid across the UK.”

It added, “Covid cases for the last seven days are running at 40,027, when there were 744 deaths and 6,005 hospitalisations.”

According to the ONS, in the week to August 16, one in 40 people in Scotland were infected with COVID; one in 45 people in England; one in 45 people in Wales; and one in 70 people in Northern Ireland. Things are likely much worse. The recording of daily COVID death tallies and infection numbers was done away with months ago in Britain, with government data on deaths and cases updated infrequently and often with incomplete data.

The UK hit the terrible milestone of 200,000 COVID deaths in July, with more than 3,000 dying in less than two months since. Latest ONS data shows 203,159 deaths,

where COVID is mentioned on a victim's death certificate. This catastrophic loss of life is almost identical per capita to the 1 million plus deaths recorded in the United States under the Trump/Biden administrations. The US population is approximately 333 million now, almost five times that of the UK's 67.5 million.

Yet COVID is being treated as no worse than a mild seasonal cold, despite its long-term severely debilitating impact. An in-depth piece published by the *Financial Times* Wednesday was headlined, "The growing evidence that Covid-19 is leaving people sicker" and warned, "The potential impact on heart and brain disease poses challenges to healthcare systems globally."

It cited the comments of Dr. David Strain, a geriatrician based at the University of Exeter. He had read a study published in *Nature* in March, which the FT noted, "identified significant brain shrinkage in a cohort of about 400 people aged between 51 and 81 who had recovered from coronavirus."

Dr. Strain had treated a 64-year-old patient "Less than six months earlier... for Covid-19." "Now, his deterioration was painful to witness. 'He came in with a stroke and really bad delirium, a precursor of dementia,' Strain says. 'I saw the patient, recognised him [and] recognised the fact that his brain had dramatically aged.'"

The FT commented, "The encounter crystallised Strain's belief that Covid generated a kind of epidemiological aftershock by leaving people susceptible to a huge range of other conditions, threatening global health systems already struggling with insufficient resources and ageing populations. 'It made me realise that this is something that we're going to be facing in a really big way in the near future,' he says."

In a stark comparison, Dr Strain said, "The level of damage that's been done to population health [during COVID], it would be as if everybody suddenly decided to take up smoking in one go."

Prime Minister Boris Johnson's government carried out one of the most brutal COVID policies of any government, epitomised by his infamous statement, at the height of the pandemic in October 2020, "No more f***ing lockdowns, let the bodies pile high in their thousands!"

With Johnson about to be replaced as prime minister by Liz Truss or Rishi Sunak, both have made it known to the Tory Party's right-wing membership that they never wanted lockdowns and that Johnson badly erred in supposedly kowtowing to scientists!

Truss declared, "I didn't actually sit on the Covid

committee during that time, I was busy striking trade deals around the world.

She added, "My view is we did go too far, particularly on keeping schools closed. I've got two teenage daughters and know how difficult it was for children and parents and I would not have a lockdown again... I was very clear in cabinet, I was one of the key voices in favour of opening up."

Sunak said that lockdowns could have been "shorter, different, quicker... We shouldn't have empowered the scientists in the way we did."

He added, "you have to acknowledge trade-offs from the beginning. If we'd done all of that, we could be in a very different place." Asked to elaborate, he replied, "We'd probably have made different decisions on things like schools, for example." He told the *Spectator* that at one cabinet meeting his opposition to closing schools was voiced and he got "very emotional about it."

Prominent scientists opposed Sunak's lies that Johnson slavishly "followed the science."

Clinical epidemiologist Dr. Deepti Gurdasani tweeted: "we weren't empowered. The govt (which you are a part of) continued to make policies which had no basis in science, and killed >200,000 people & disabled hundreds of thousands while we screamed helplessly at every step."

She described Johnson's decision to delay the first lockdown for weeks as "an action that very likely cost tens of thousands of lives. That's on you. Do you think SAGE [Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies] were 'empowered' then? They were dismissed. By you [Sunak].

"You can try to revise history all you like – because the dead can't speak. But there are many who won't let them be forgotten."

As infections mount and the full, devastating, long-term impact of COVID emerges, the ruling elite in Britain and their counterparts internationally celebrate "living with COVID" as they rip up every significant pandemic protection measure they were forced to enact. The interventions by Truss and Sunak are a sharp warning as to the savage anti-working class agenda of the incoming government.



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