

Coronavirus timeline: Welsh and UK Government's response

Research Briefing

The table below highlights key developments in Wales and the UK in response to coronavirus (Covid-19).

<p>Enhanced international travel measures introduced</p> <p><i>13 February 2021</i></p> <p>Following advice from the Joint Biosecurity Centre and to take a four nations approach, <u>Wales' Health Minister announces enhanced international travel measures</u> will be introduced from 15 February 2021. Under the measures, people cannot travel directly to Wales from a '<u>red list country</u>'. Travellers from red list countries will only be able to enter Wales via a designated port of entry (in England or Scotland) and after isolating for 10 days in a nearby managed quarantine facility. Travellers arriving in Wales from amber list countries will need to isolate for 10 days and book a COVID-19 test on day 2 and day 8 of their isolation period.</p>
<p>First vaccination programme milestone achieved</p> <p><i>12 February 2021</i></p> <p><u>First Minister, Mark Drakeford, announces</u> that the first milestone in Wales' vaccination programme of offering everyone in the first four priority groups vaccination has been reached.</p>
<p>Senedd passes the Welsh Elections Bill</p> <p><i>10 February 2021</i></p> <p>Members of the Senedd <u>pass the Welsh Elections (Coronavirus) Bill</u> which introduces a range of measures relating to the upcoming Senedd election in May. The Bill makes it possible to delay the date of the poll if it's deemed not</p>



safe to hold the election due to the coronavirus pandemic. The Welsh Government says that "the election should go ahead on 6 May 2021 as intended".

Return to school announced for 3-7 year olds

5 February 2021

Wales' Education Minister announces that a phased return to face to face learning for 3-7 year olds will begin from 22 February 2021. The next 21 day review of coronavirus restrictions on 19 February 2021 will consider whether a phased return to school for any other year groups is possible. Schools are still expected to provide education for vulnerable children and children of critical workers, and special schools and pupil referral units should continue to remain open where possible.

Twice weekly testing in schools

5 February 2021

The Health Minister announces that daily contact testing in schools and colleges will be paused "whilst we learn more about the new variants and how this impact on transmission". Instead there will be twice weekly testing using lateral flow tests - the Minister says this provide "a much clearer picture of what is really happening in our schools".

More testing in care homes

4 February 2021

Health Minister Vaughan Gething announces the introduction of an enhanced Covid-19 testing programme for care homes, which includes the twice-weekly testing of asymptomatic care home staff using rapid lateral flow test devices in addition to the weekly PCR test that is currently carried out.

Free PPE packs for taxi drivers

3 February 2021

Welsh Government launches a free PPE initiative for all licensed taxi and private hire vehicle drivers in Wales, including Uber drivers.

Users of NHS Covid-19 app can apply for self-isolation payment

1 February 2021

From this date, people on low incomes who are [asked to self-isolate via the NHS Covid-19 app](#) are eligible to apply for the £500 self-isolation support payment, alongside those who have been asked to self-isolate by the Test, Trace, Protect service and parents/carers whose child has been asked to self-isolate by their education setting.

Extra funding for children and young people's mental health

1 February 2021

[Wales' Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing announces](#) that an additional £9.4 million will be made available to support children and young people's mental health and wellbeing. £4 million of this will be used improve access to emotional and mental health support in schools, and £5.4 million will be for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) for young people who need more intensive support.

CMO special report on Wales' pandemic response

30 January 2021

A special edition of the [Chief Medical Officer for Wales' annual report is published](#), focusing on Wales' response to the first phase of the coronavirus pandemic.

Support for Welsh businesses

29 January 2021

[Economy Minister, Ken Skates, announces](#) further details of the £200 million support package for non-essential retail, hospitality, leisure and tourism businesses that continue to be impacted by the pandemic.

Review of coronavirus restrictions – possible February return for some primary school pupils

29 January 2021

[First Minister, Mark Drakeford, confirms](#) that Wales will remain at alert level 4 following the latest review of the lockdown restrictions. However, primary

schools could see a 'phased and flexible' return for the youngest pupils from 22 February if rates of coronavirus continue to fall. Two small changes will also be made to the current level 4 restrictions: two people from different households will be able to exercise outdoors together (with social distancing), and; if a support bubble arrangement has broken down, a new one can be formed as long as there is a gap of 10 days before doing so. These changes come into effect on 30 January 2021.

Extension of advice to the clinically extremely vulnerable

29 January 2021

Minister for Health, Vaughan Gething, announces that the advice given to people who are clinically extremely vulnerable (previously 'shielding') that they should no longer attend work or school outside the home is extended to 31 March 2021.

Updated testing strategy

28 January 2021

Health Minister, Vaughan Gething, announces the publication of an updated coronavirus testing strategy. A community testing framework is also published, which builds on pilot schemes in Merthyr Tydfil and Lower Cynon to test asymptomatic people to halt the spread of the virus.

Welsh Elections (Coronavirus) Bill

27 January 2021

Minister for Housing and Local Government, Julie James, introduces the Welsh Elections (Coronavirus) Bill, which will be treated as a government Emergency Bill. Given the uncertain trajectory of the pandemic, the Bill proposes to introduce contingency measures solely for the purposes of the 2021 Senedd election. Senedd Research has published background information about the Bill.

Funding for NHS Wales digital services

26 January 2021

Health Minister, Vaughan Gething, announces additional funding of £25m to support the move to more digital services across the Welsh NHS.

Carers Support Fund increased by a quarter of a million pounds

21 January 2021

Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services, Julie Morgan, announces that a further £250,000 has been made available to help unpaid carers in Wales cope with the financial pressures of the coronavirus pandemic. Open to carers across Wales, the Carers Support Fund will see grants of up to £300 being made available for a range of essentials, including; food, household items such as furniture or white goods, or electronics such as a laptop for access to support and services. The Carers Support Fund will be available up to 31 March 2021.

Recovery app launched to help support people with long COVID

20 January 2021

Health minister, Vaughan Gething, announces the launch of a bilingual COVID-19 recovery app as part of wider support on offer for people experiencing the longer term effects of coronavirus. With more than 100 videos and links to advice, app users will be able to record their symptoms, track their progress and learn to manage their condition at home with support. It includes advice from therapists, psychologists, dietitians and consultants.

£40 million extra to support students

18 January 2021

Education Minister, Kirsty Williams, announces an additional £40m for universities to support students facing financial hardship, helping those most affected by the pandemic with expenses such as accommodation costs. Universities will be asked to prioritise funding towards the most vulnerable students, as well as strengthening advice and support services. The funding will also be used to address 'digital poverty' among students, to enable better access to online learning, and costs incurred due to the need to self-isolate.

Changes to regulations for supermarkets and workplaces

15 January 2021

The First Minister for Wales, [Mark Drakeford](#), [announces](#) that amendments will be made to the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (No. 5) (Wales) Regulations 2020 early next week. He said that the changes will “make sure people are safer when they go shopping and to strengthen protections in the workplace”.

Pilot of pharmacies administering the vaccine

15 January 2021

The first pharmacies in Wales begin to administer the COVID-19 vaccines through a pilot scheme starting in Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board. The Health Minister, [Vaughan Gething](#), [said](#) pharmacies are being piloted “to establish the quickest, safest way to deliver vaccinations in these specific settings”.

New travel rules for arrivals into Wales

15 January 2021

From 4am on Monday 18 January 2021, inbound passengers arriving into Wales from all international destinations will have to provide a negative coronavirus test result up to 72 hours before departing the country they're in. The [Welsh Government](#) [says](#) this is “to help protect against the new strains of coronavirus such as those seen in Brazil, Denmark and South Africa”. Passengers will be required to quarantine for 10 days when they arrive. This reflects the position across the UK.

COVID-19 vaccination strategy

11 January 2021

Wales' Minister for Health and Social Services, Vaughan Gething, publishes the [Welsh Government's strategy](#) for the rollout of COVID-19 vaccines. The [vaccination strategy](#) sets out three key milestones, the first being that by mid-February all care home residents and staff, frontline health and social care workers, everyone over the age of 70 and everyone who is clinically extremely vulnerable will have been offered a vaccine.

Third COVID-19 vaccine approved in the UK

8 January 2021

The COVID-19 vaccine developed by Moderna has been approved by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA). Doses will be available for the UK from spring 2021.

Restrictions in Wales continue

8 January 2021

First Minister, Mark Drakeford, announces that following a formal review of the alert level four lockdown restrictions, which were introduced at midnight on 19 December 2020, all the measures will remain in place. The Welsh Government is also reviewing whether major supermarkets and retailers need to put additional measures in place to protect people in store and what else employers need to do to protect people in the workplace and support people to work from home. Also, unless there is a significant reduction in cases of coronavirus before 29 January 2021 – the date of the next three-week review of the regulations – school and college students will continue to learn online until the February half term.

Stay at home orders for England and Scotland

4 January 2021

Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, announces that everyone in England must stay at home except for permitted reasons during a new coronavirus lockdown expected to last until mid-February 2021. All schools and colleges will close to most pupils and switch to remote learning from 5 January 2021. Scotland First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, orders the Scottish mainland to stay at home amid a fresh lockdown which will see schools remain closed to pupils until February 2021.

Return to schools and colleges

4 January 2021

Minister for Education, Kirsty Williams, announces that the Welsh Government, in consultation with the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) and Colegau Cymru, has agreed that all schools, colleges and independent schools should move to online learning until 18 January 2021. Schools and colleges will remain open for children of critical workers and

vulnerable learners, as well as for learners who need to complete essential exams or assessments.

UK COVID-19 alert level moved to level 5

4 January 2021

Following advice from the Joint Biosecurity Centre and in light of the most recent data, the four UK Chief Medical Officers and NHS England Medical Director recommend that the UK Alert Level should move from Level 4 to Level 5. This indicates that “there is a material risk of healthcare services being overwhelmed”.

Second COVID-19 vaccine given go-ahead

30 December 2020

The UK's Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) authorises the Oxford University/AstraZeneca vaccine as safe and effective. The Health Minister, Vaughan Gething announces that this vaccine will start to be rolled out across Wales from next week. In a subsequent announcement (31 December 2020) the Health Minister said that Wales will follow the advice of the UK's four Chief Medical Officers (CMOs) and prioritise first doses of vaccine – from 1 January 2021, second doses will be given within 12 weeks of the first dose. ‘The four CMOs agree with the JCVI that at this stage of the pandemic prioritising the first doses of vaccine for as many people as possible on the priority list will protect the greatest number of at risk people overall in the shortest possible time’.

New advice for the clinically extremely vulnerable

22 December 2020

The advice to people in Wales who are clinically extremely vulnerable (previously ‘shielding’) changes from this date. People within this group are advised to no longer attend school or work outside the home. Letters from the Chief Medical Officer for Wales (CMO) will be issued confirming this advice.

International travel restrictions

20 December 2020

The coronavirus rules across the UK place restrictions on overseas travel. In addition, a number of countries, including France, announced they are restricting travel from the UK in response to concerns about the spread of a new strain of the virus. The [Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office \(FCDO\)](#) provides advice about travel restrictions and entry requirements for different countries.

Rules tightened across the UK

19 December 2020

Following a meeting with the UK and devolved Governments regarding concerns about a new strain of coronavirus, the [First Minister announces](#) that alert level 4 restrictions will be brought forward and will come into force across Wales from midnight. The rules which allowed two households to form a Christmas 'bubble' over a five-day period will now apply on Christmas Day only. Detailed [guidance](#) about the alert level 4 restrictions in Wales has been published.

Restrictions are also being tightened across the UK, with the Christmas rules about households mixing now applying for one day only. See announcements from the [UK Prime Minister](#) for England and [Scotland's First Minister](#), and further information about the restrictions in [Northern Ireland](#).

Testing infrastructure developments

18 December 2020

Wales' Health Minister gives an update on coronavirus [testing infrastructure](#) across Wales.

Higher level restrictions for Wales

16 December 2020

The [First Minister announces](#) that Wales will move to alert level 4 (the highest level of restrictions under its Coronavirus control plan) from Christmas day. All non-essential retail, close contact services and leisure and fitness centres will close at the end of trading on Christmas Eve; all hospitality premises will close from 6pm on Christmas Day, and; tighter restrictions on household mixing, staying-at-home, holiday accommodation and travel will apply from 28 December 2020. The restrictions will apply across Wales. The Welsh

Government subsequently announced an [additional £110 million support package](#) for businesses affected by the alert level 4 restrictions.

Discharge arrangements

15 December 2020

Wales' [Health Minister announces](#) updated guidance on hospital discharge arrangements and duration of outbreaks in social care settings.

Care homes vaccination pilot announced

14 December

A [pilot for the roll-out of the Pfizer/BioNtech vaccine to Welsh care homes](#) will begin on 16 December 2020. A designated care home in Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board will be the first in Wales to receive the vaccine, with teams in additional Health Boards then taking the vaccine to care homes. 'At first the vaccine will be issued to care homes in proximity to hospital pharmacies, but it is planned for the vaccine to be available in other settings in coming weeks, once learnings from the care home pilot has been captured'.

Updated coronavirus control plan for Wales

14 December 2020

The Welsh Government publishes an updated [coronavirus control plan](#). This sets out four 'alert levels', aligned with the measures which will be put in place to control the spread of the virus and protect people's health. The plan states that the measures are 'designed to be as simple, fair and clear as possible and they will provide greater certainty for people and businesses about what legal restrictions will be put in place, depending on the level of risk, helping them to plan for the future'. It also states that 'should there be clear evidence of a sustained and ongoing variation between parts of Wales, the alert levels approach allows for regional and localised application'.

Plans for serial testing in schools

14 December 2020

The [Welsh Government announces](#) plans to roll out serial testing in schools and colleges from January 2021.

Outdoor attractions to close

11 December 2020

First Minister announces that from 14 December, all outdoor attractions in Wales, including funfairs, will be required to close. Trampoline parks and indoor skating parks must also close.

Secondary schools and colleges to move to online learning

10 December 2020

The Education Minister announces that secondary schools and colleges in Wales will move to online learning from 14 December 2020. The Welsh Government is however, encouraging primary and special schools to remain open – ‘We recognise, as we did during the firebreak, that it is more difficult for primary and special school age children to undertake self-directed learning’.

Changes to self-isolation period

9 December 2020

The Health Minister announces amendments to Wales’ coronavirus restrictions regulations so that a person required to isolate as a result of having had close contact with someone who has tested positive for coronavirus must isolate for 10 days instead of 14. The international travel regulations are also amended, reducing the period for which a person is required to isolate from 14 days to 10 days.

Vaccine roll-out begins in Wales

8 December 2020

Health boards start administering the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine to care home staff, people aged over 80, and frontline health and social care workers who are most at risk. The Welsh Government says that despite the specific storage and preparation challenges associated with this vaccine, ‘work continues to ensure a safe deployment of effective vaccine to care home residents’.

New year plans for Welsh students’ return

7 December

Education Minister, Kirsty Williams, announces plans for the 'safe return' of students to Welsh universities after the Christmas break. Students will be invited to return to campus over a four week period, beginning 11 January 2020. Healthcare students are among those who will be prioritised for early return. There will be a phased return to in-person teaching, and lateral-flow tests for students returning to their university accommodation.

£500 payment scheme now open to parents/carers

7 December 2020

The First Minister, Mark Drakeford, announces that the Self-Isolation Support Scheme will now be extended to parents and carers on low incomes with children who are self-isolating because of a coronavirus outbreak in their school or childcare setting.

Restrictions in hospitality and leisure sectors now in force

4 December 2020

New restrictions on pubs and restaurants in Wales come into effect at 6pm on this date. Under the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions and Functions of Local Authorities) (Amendment) (Wales) Regulations 2020, hospitality businesses in Wales must close by 6pm each day and are not permitted to serve alcohol at any time. Indoor entertainment and visitor attractions must also close, as announced on 30 November. The period of closure will be reviewed by the Welsh Ministers by Thursday 17 December, and at least once in every three week period after that date.

UK coronavirus travel restrictions

3 December 2020

The First Minister announces that travel between Wales and areas of the UK with high rates of coronavirus will not be allowed from 6pm on 4 December 2020. Wales' coronavirus regulations will be amended to prohibit travel to and from tier three areas in England; level three and four areas in Scotland and the whole of Northern Ireland, which is currently in lockdown. People in Wales will be strongly advised not to travel to other parts of the UK with lower levels of coronavirus (tier one and two areas in England or level one and two areas in Scotland) to help control the spread of the virus. There are no restrictions on travel within Wales. All travel restrictions within the UK will be suspended

between 23 and 27 December 2020 to allow people to meet members of their Christmas bubble. The travel restrictions are likely to remain in place until at least January 2021 but will be kept under constant review.

Virtual group health clinics to be rolled out

3 December 2020

The Health Minister announces that virtual consultations across NHS Wales services are to be expanded to include virtual group clinics, for outpatients across primary, secondary and community care. The virtual group clinics will deliver care to groups of people with similar health needs, including diabetes, musculoskeletal conditions, rheumatology and dermatology.

Vaccine Deployment in Wales

2 December 2020

Wales' Health Minister welcomes the news that the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has granted the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine temporary authorisation for use based on evidence of safety and effectiveness. The vaccine will be deployed based on advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), which recommends that the vaccine be offered in the first instance to care home residents and health and social care workers, alongside people aged 80 and over. Wales is ready to deploy the vaccine in phases, starting with hospital sites and then community settings. People will automatically be sent appointments. The vaccine will not be mandatory.

New targeted restrictions in hospitality and leisure

30 November 2020

The First Minister announces that from 4 December 2020, pubs, bars, restaurants and cafes will have to close by 6pm and will not be allowed to serve alcohol. After 6pm they will only be able to provide takeaway services. Indoor entertainment and visitor attractions must also close. The Welsh Government is making a further £340m available through the Economic Resilience Fund to support businesses affected by the new changes to the regulations. This will include a specific fund to support hospitality and tourism businesses.

Hospital visiting guidelines reviewed

30 November 2020

Revised guidance on NHS Wales [hospital visiting during the coronavirus outbreak](#) is published. The guidance sets out the 'baseline' for visiting in Wales during the pandemic, but allows health boards, trusts and hospices to have some flexibility. Visiting in maternity services will now be based on a risk assessment approach by health boards, and the updated guidelines also recognise that some people may need specific additional support e.g. a support worker or interpreter.

Mass testing extended to the lower Cynon Valley

27 November 2020

Wales' Health Minister, [Vaughan Gething](#), says that from 5 December 2020 the mass testing pilot will be extended into the lower Cynon Valley. The pilot began on 21 November in Merthyr. All residents in the area, regardless of symptoms, will be offered COVID-19 testing "to help find more positive cases and break chains of transmission".

Free flu vaccine available for over 50s

25 November 2020

[Minister for Health and Social Services, Vaughan Gething](#), announces that from 1 December 2020, NHS Wales' free flu vaccination will be available for anyone aged 50 or over. Those aged 50 and over should expect to be contacted by their GP practice or can contact their local pharmacy to arrange a vaccination.

UK-wide rules for Christmas agreed

24 November 2020

[First Minister, Mark Drakeford](#), announces that a broad set of UK-wide measures to help people come together during the festive period, in a way that is as safe as possible, have been agreed by the governments of the UK's four nations. [These include](#) relaxing travel restrictions across the four nations and between tiers to provide a window for households to come together between 23 and 27 December 2020 and up to three households can form an exclusive 'bubble' to meet at home during this period. Each Christmas bubble can meet at home, at a place of worship or an outdoor public place, but existing, more

restrictive rules on hospitality and meeting in other venues will be maintained throughout this period.

Pilot of testing visitors to care homes

23 November 2020

Welsh Ministers announce that new rapid-testing technologies will be used to pilot a programme of Covid-19 screening for visitors to a small number of care homes across Wales from 30 November 2020. This is intended to pave the way for a wider roll-out to more Welsh care homes from the week commencing 14 December 2020.

As part of the pilot, care homes across all parts of Wales have volunteered to offer testing to care home visitors using Lateral Flow Devices, which offer a result in roughly 20 minutes. Appropriate infection prevention and control procedures, such as hand hygiene and PPE, and appropriate social distancing must continue to be followed.

Changes to face covering policy in schools and colleges

23 November 2020

Education Minister, Kirsty Williams, announces that the Welsh Government has updated its guidance on the use of face coverings in schools and colleges. The guidance now states that face coverings should be worn: in all areas outside the classroom by staff and learners in secondary schools and colleges; on dedicated school and college transport for learners in year 7 and up; and by visitors to all schools and colleges, including parents and carers dropping off and picking up children. The Welsh Government's policy for face coverings in classrooms remains the same.

Visitor pods for care homes pilot

23 November 2020

The Health Minister announces that temporary 'pods' will be provided to care homes across Wales to help facilitate visits over the winter months. The £3 million pilot will cover the procurement, installation and lease of 100 units, with an initial 30 being installed and ready to use before Christmas.

UK-wide approach to Christmas rules

21 November 2020

UK Government and devolved administrations meet to discuss shared arrangements for the festive period. 'Ministers endorsed a shared objective of facilitating some limited additional household bubbling for a small number of days, but also emphasised that the public will be advised to remain cautious, and that wherever possible people should avoid travelling and minimise social contact'. Work is continuing to finalise the arrangements.

NHS Wales waiting times

19 November 2020

Publication of **NHS Wales performance statistics** is resumed. The **Health Minister says** 'Since the last planned care statistics were published in February, the number of people on the waiting list has increased, as they have elsewhere in the UK. This is due, in part, to the additional measures, which have been put in place to reduce the risk of coronavirus spreading and to ensure people can be seen and treated safely. Everyone on the waiting list is being reviewed by their clinician and seen in order of clinical priority'. A new set of **experimental measures** for emergency departments is also being **published**.

Merthyr Tydfil to be first whole area testing pilot in Wales

18 November 2020

Minister for Health and Social Services, Vaughan Gething, announces that everyone living or working in Merthyr Tydfil County Borough will be offered Covid-19 testing, whether they have symptoms or not, as part of the first mass testing of a whole area in Wales. All residents and workers will be offered repeat Covid-19 testing from 21 November 2020 to help find more positive cases and break the chains of transmission. The first site will open at Merthyr Tydfil leisure centre with further sites due to open throughout the county borough later in November. The mass testing programme will also see the use of Lateral Flow Devices (LFDs) in Wales for the first time.

Plans for 'Covid secure' Senedd elections

17 November 2020

First Minister, Mark Drakeford, sets out plans to ensure the people of Wales can vote safely at the 2021 Senedd elections, and that they take place as

planned on 6 May 2021. An Elections Planning Group has agreed on a number of measures, including greater flexibility around the nomination of candidates, as well as postal and proxy voting, and measures to ensure the safe operation of polling stations and count venues. The Welsh Government is also making contingency plans in the event that the pandemic presents such a serious threat to public health that it is not safe to hold the election in May 2021.

Self-isolation payment scheme opens

16 November 2020

First Minister, Mark Drakeford, announces that people on low incomes who have coronavirus or have been told to self-isolate by the NHS Wales Test Trace Protect service are now able to apply for a £500 payment. The scheme is open to anyone receiving Universal Credit and other specified benefits. There will also be a discretionary element for those who do not meet the criteria but who face financial hardship as a result of self-isolating. People will be able to apply for the self-isolation payment via their local authority website from 16 November 2020 and payments will be backdated to 23 October 2020. A new top-up payment has also been introduced for people working in social care, to raise statutory sick pay to the level of their normal wages if they have to take time off because of coronavirus or because they have been in close contact with someone who has coronavirus.

Funding to increase the number of contact tracers

13 November 2020

The Health Minister, Vaughan Gething, announces an extra £15.7 million to increase the number of contact tracing staff in Wales for the “expected rise in demand in December through to the end of March”.

Support for those self-isolating

13 November 2020

The Welsh Government publishes the details of its two support schemes for those who need to self-isolate due to COVID-19. Further details on the statutory sick payment enhancement scheme for care workers, including on eligibility, can be found here.

More information on the self-isolation support scheme to help with loss of earning on eligibility and how to apply can be found here.

COVID-19 vaccine development

11 November 2020

The [Chief Medical Officer for Wales](#) welcomes the news that a COVID-19 vaccine could be ready by the end of 2020 but warned “that these are very early days”. Dr Frank Atherton said it could be towards the end of 2021 before a vaccine was rolled out fully to all the eligible population and in the meantime it is essential that everyone continues to observe social distancing, limit meeting in indoor spaces, wear face coverings where appropriate and practice good hand and cough hygiene.

Students travelling home for Christmas

11 November 2020

[Minister for Education, Kirsty Williams, announces](#) that two main measures have been agreed to enable the university sector to manage the movement of students at the end of term as safely as possible. Firstly, universities will conclude the majority of in-person teaching in the week leading up to 8 December 2020. Students who are planning to travel are encouraged to make arrangements to move from term time accommodation by 9 December at the latest. Secondly, students who wish to return home at the end of term will be asked to follow a simple set of guidelines. This will mean every student must make responsible choices to protect other people, including the option to take an asymptomatic lateral flow test.

Exams cancelled for 2021

10 November 2020

The Education Minister, [Kirsty Williams, announces](#) that there will be no GCSE, AS and A Level qualification exams in 2021. The Minister says “the primary reason for my decision is down to fairness; the time learners will spend in schools and colleges will vary hugely, and in this situation, it is impossible to guarantee a level playing field for exams to take place”.

Welsh firebreak ends

9 November 2020

The firebreak lockdown in Wales comes to an end and a new set of national measures come into force. [Welsh Government guidance](#) describes the rules

for different settings and activities, with a key message to 'think about what is the most sensible thing for you to do to protect your family, friends and your community, rather than thinking primarily about what you are allowed to do'.

Furlough scheme to be extended

5 November 2020

UK Chancellor, Rishi Sunak, announces that the furlough scheme will be extended across the UK until the end of March 2021. The scheme will pay up to 80 per cent of a person's wage up to £2,500 a month. The UK Government will review the policy in January 2021. Wales' Finance Minister, Rebecca Evans MS, welcomes the extension, but urges the Chancellor to backdate support for Welsh businesses and workers for the entirety of Wales' 17 day firebreak.

England enters lockdown

5 November 2020

National restrictions come into force in England for a period of four weeks up to 2 December 2020. The Welsh Government has issued a reminder on cross-border travel. Elsewhere in the UK: a five-tiered system of local protection levels is in place in Scotland this was introduced on the 2 November 2020); national restrictions in Northern Ireland were introduced on 16 October 2020 for a four week period.

Funding to support vulnerable mental health service users

4 November 2020

Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing, Eluned Morgan, pledges additional funding of nearly £3 million to support some of the most vulnerable mental health service users in Wales during the pandemic. Support will be available for those looking for work, permanent accommodation, or who may be struggling with mental health or substance misuse problems. 'The additional funding will provide early, targeted support, for the most vulnerable individuals in a preventative capacity to reduce the escalation of often complex needs'.

National measures to follow Wales' firebreak

2 November 2020

The First Minister announces that from 9 November a new set of national measures will replace the firebreak. These include: two households being able to form an extended household (or bubble); up to 15 people can take part in organised events indoors and up to 30 people can outdoors; and all premises that were closed can reopen.

England to enter a national lockdown

31 October 2020

The UK Prime Minister announces new national restrictions for England from 5 November 2020.

Help for people self-isolating

30 October 2020

The Welsh Government announces two new schemes of financial support for people who need to self-isolate due a positive coronavirus test result or who are asked to do so by NHS Wales Test, Trace, Protect. Those on low incomes can apply for a £500 payment if they're unable to work from home and would lose income due to self-isolating. There is also a new statutory sick pay enhancement scheme for social care staff to increase the statutory sick pay to their normal wages if they need to self-isolate.

Essential and non-essential items

29 October 2020

The Welsh Government has updated its frequently asked questions on the firebreak to clarify the rules around the purchase of essential and non-essential items during this period. A list of items that supermarkets and other food and drink retailers are allowed to sell is published.

Support for vulnerable families and children

29 October 2020

Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services, Julie Morgan, announces a £12.5m package of funding to support vulnerable children and families. It will support a range of services for children and families whose lives have been affected by the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. The funding is part of the

Welsh Government's Covid-19 Reconstruction: Challenges and Priorities agenda.

Firebreak begins

23 October 2020

The firebreak begins at 6pm when national restrictions will come into effect until the end of the day on 8 November 2020. The Welsh Government has published [frequently asked questions for the firebreak](#) and you can [read our blog post](#) for more information on what led to it.

New letter to those who were shielding

22 October 2020

[Letters from the Chief Medical Officer for Wales](#) to those who are extremely vulnerable and were previously shielding, are currently being issued. There is no requirement for shielding to re-start but the letter contains the latest advice to people on how to take extra care and best protect themselves.

£1 million fund for carers

20 October 2020

The [Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services, Julie Morgan, announces](#) a new fund of over £1m to help Wales' unpaid carers cope with the financial pressures of COVID-19. Open to carers across Wales, the Carers Support Fund will see grants of up to £300 made available for a range of essentials, including; food, household items such as furniture or white goods, or electronics such as a laptop for access to support and services. The Fund will be available up to 31 March 2021.

£300 million for Welsh businesses

20 October 2020

The [Economy Minister, Ken Skates, announces](#) that the Welsh Government is doubling the third phase of its Economic Resilience Fund, making nearly £300 million available to support businesses that continue to be affected by COVID-19. The firebreak, which will begin on Friday 23 October and continue until Monday 9 November, will require a range of businesses to temporarily close

their doors or reduce their operations. The latest round of the fund will aim to ensure further help for businesses across Wales.

Circuit break announced

19 October 2020

Wales' First Minister announces a 17 day 'circuit break' lockdown from 6pm Friday 23 October until the start of Monday 9 November 2020. People must stay at home, except for very limited purposes, and must not visit or meet people they do not live with. Certain businesses and venues, including bars, restaurants and most shops will close. Primary schools and childcare settings will remain open; secondary schools will be open for children in years 7 and 8 only, and will provide online learning for other years in the week after half-term. Universities will remain open and continue to provide a blend of in-person and online learning. Following the end of the circuit break, the Welsh Government says a new set of national rules will be introduced.

Travel restrictions to prevent the spread of coronavirus

14 October 2020

First Minister Mark Drakeford announces that under new regulations being prepared by Welsh Ministers, people living in areas with a high-prevalence of coronavirus in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland will not be able to travel to Wales for the time being. The regulations to provide for this will come into force at 6pm on Friday 16 October 2020.

Three-tiered alert system in England

12 October 2020

The UK Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, announces a new, three tiered system of local COVID-19 alert levels in England. From 14 October 2020, Liverpool City Region will be placed on the 'very high' alert level (the highest).

Local restrictions in Bangor

9 October 2020

Local coronavirus restrictions are introduced in response to an outbreak in Bangor. 'The targeted local health protection area in Bangor is being created in response to a significant cluster of cases, which has developed in the city - the

incident rate stands at around 400 cases per 100,000 people. Cases appear to be closely associated with young people and the student population'. Senedd Research has published an [interactive map and further information](#) about the restrictions in place across Wales.

New Welsh Minister for Mental Health

8 October 2020

The [First Minister appoints](#) Eluned Morgan as Minister for Mental Health, Wellbeing and the Welsh Language, in recognition of the impact the coronavirus pandemic has on people's mental health and wellbeing. Eluned Morgan will work alongside the Minister for Health and Social Services, Vaughan Gething, who will continue to lead the Welsh Government's coronavirus response.

Walk-through testing near universities

8 October 2020

The Minister for Health and Social Services and Minister for Education confirm that more walk-through Local Testing Sites (LTS) will open this month near universities in Swansea, Cardiff, Bangor and Aberystwyth. (The first LTS opened in September in Pontypridd near the University of South Wales.

Care homes review

7 October 2020

An independent, rapid [review of care homes'](#) operational experience between July and September 2020, commissioned by the Welsh Government is published. The report highlights best practice and considerations for health and social care partners when planning for winter. The Welsh Government also publishes a [progress update](#) on its care home homes action plan.

Covid 19 reconstruction plan

6 October 2020

The Counsel General and Minister for European Transition, Jeremy Miles, publishes the report [Covid-19 Reconstruction: Challenges and Priorities](#) which sets out the Welsh Government's approach to reconstruction. It highlights priority areas where Welsh Government will focus resources and efforts to

maximise the benefits to Wales. Eight key priorities for reconstruction are set out and a [£320 million package](#) will be invested in projects and schemes in each of the priority areas over the next 6 months.

Changes for those living alone in areas under local restrictions

2 October 2020

The [First Minister announces](#) that “adults living alone, including single parents, in areas under local coronavirus restrictions will be able to form a temporary bubble with another household in their local area” from 3 October. The Welsh Government says this change is “designed to help protect people living alone from the risk of experiencing loneliness and isolation”.

Restrictions extended in Caerphilly

2 October 2020

Following a [review of the regulations](#) underpinning the coronavirus restrictions the First Minister, Mark Drakeford, says that “we need to see rates come down further before restrictions are relaxed” in Caerphilly. The Welsh Government said it will use the next 7 days “to agree a phased route out of these restrictions” with Caerphilly County Council and other local authorities.

Local restrictions across north Wales

29 September 2020

The [Health Minister announces](#) that the measures which are in place in the other twelve local authority areas of Wales will come into force in Denbighshire, Flintshire, Conwy and Wrexham from Thursday 1 October.

Prioritising COVID-19 tests

29 September 2020

Wales' Minister for Health and Social Care, Vaughan Gething, sets out the [prioritisation for Covid-19 testing](#) in Wales as the Welsh Government moves into a new phase of its response. The Minister set out six priorities for testing, the first being tests for NHS clinical care (hospital patients) followed by those living and working in care homes. The third priority is to test NHS staff including GPs and pharmacists and then testing to manage outbreaks. Those working in education or childcare settings are the fifth priority group with all symptomatic individuals being sixth.

Restrictions for three more counties

27 September 2020

The First Minister, Mark Drakeford, announces that the same measures which are in place in the other nine local areas of Wales will come into force in Neath Port Talbot, Torfaen and the Vale of Glamorgan from Monday 28 September.

Call to 'protect the NHS'

27 September 2020

The Welsh Government are asking people "to help protect vital services for those in most need by accessing alternative services rather than their Emergency Department when their complaint is neither life-threatening nor serious". The Health Minister said: "we all need to remember that our NHS staff and services are still under huge pressure".

Restrictions for Cardiff, Llanelli and Swansea

25 September 2020

The Health Minister, Vaughan Gething, announces restrictions will come into force in Llanelli from 6pm on Saturday 26 September and in Cardiff and Swansea from 6pm on Sunday 27 September. The following measures will apply to all three areas: no one will be allowed to leave or enter their area without a reasonable excuse; and people can't meet indoors with anyone they don't live with including their extended household.

Review of the restrictions in Caerphilly

24 September 2020

Following a review of the local coronavirus restrictions in Caerphilly the Health Minister, Vaughan Gething, says that "after discussing the situation with the local authority, we have decided to leave the restrictions in place for at least a further seven days".

NHS COVID-19 app launches

24 September 2020

People aged 16 and over across England and Wales can download the NHS COVID-19 app. The Welsh Government says it "forms a central part of the NHS Wales Test, Trace, Protect programme identifying contacts of those who have tested positive for coronavirus".

Wales wide measures

22 September 2020

The First Minister, Mark Drakeford, attends a COBR meeting with the Prime Minister, First Ministers of Scotland and Northern Ireland and the deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland. Mark Drakeford announces new measures for Wales which will come into effect at the same time as the rest of the UK. These include that from 6pm on Thursday 24 September: hospitality businesses (pubs, cafes, restaurants and casinos) will close at 10pm and will only be able to provide table service; off licenses, such as supermarkets, will stop selling alcohol at 10pm.

Increase in COVID-19 alert level

21 September 2020

The four Chief Medical Officers for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland recommend that the COVID-19 alert level should increase to Level 4. This means that that the virus is in general circulation and transmission is high or rising exponentially.

Further local coronavirus restrictions

21 September 2020

The Minister for Health and Social Services, Vaughan Gething, announces that restrictions will be introduced in Blaenau Gwent, Bridgend, Merthyr Tydfil and Newport. From 6pm on 22 September the following restrictions will be in place: people will not be able to leave or enter the local authority area without a reasonable excuse (such as for work or education); people will only be able to meet outdoors and not meet inside with members of their extended household; and licensed premises will have to close at 11pm. These measures will also be extended to Caerphilly borough at the same time.

Briefing from the UK Government's advisors

21 September 2020

The Chief Medical Officer for England, Chris Whitty, and the Chief Scientific Advisor, Patrick Vallance, provided a update on COVID-19. They highlighted that cases in the UK are doubling every 7 days and if this continues without any action there could be around 49,000 new cases per day by mid-October. Chris

Whitty said it's a "six month problem that we have to deal with collectively" and that "this is all of our problem".

Testing update

17 September 2020

In a statement, the [Health Minister provides an update](#) on Wales' response to the current challenges with coronavirus testing.

Sport and leisure recovery funding

17 September 2020

Wales' [Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism announces](#) a £14 million 'sport and leisure recovery fund'. The funding package aims to support the sector with the ongoing challenges resulting from the pandemic and provide longer-term sustainability. The fund will be [delivered by Sport Wales](#), and will be in addition to the Emergency Sport Relief Fund and the Be Active Fund, also administered by Sport Wales.

Rhondda Cynon Taf restrictions

16 September 2020

The Health Minister announces that [coronavirus restrictions will be tightened in Rhondda Cynon Taf](#) following a sharp increase in cases in the area. From 6pm on 17 September: people will not be allowed to enter or leave the Rhondda Cynon Taf Council area without a reasonable excuse; people will only be able to meet outdoors; people will not be able to meet members of their extended household indoors, or form an extended household; all licensed premises must close at 11pm.

Winter protection plan

15 September 2020

The Welsh Government publishes its [winter protection plan](#) for health and social care, setting out how services will manage the added challenge of coronavirus during the coming winter period. The Health Minister also made a [statement](#) in Plenary about the plan.

Newport is told to 'be vigilant'

14 September 2020

Residents of Newport are advised about the "need to stick to social distancing" as there are a rise in cases. Seven bars are listed which have seen confirmed cases of coronavirus and people are advised to look out for symptoms of COVID-19 if they have visited these premises recently.

New Cardiff coronavirus facility

14 September 2020

Wales' Health Minister announces £33 million funding for a new facility in Cardiff to manage any potential increase in coronavirus cases this winter. "The new facility, providing 400 extra beds, will be built next to the University Hospital of Wales in Cardiff following the decommissioning of the Dragon's Heart hospital at the Principality Stadium".

Working from home in Wales

13 September 2020

The Welsh Government states its long-term ambition to see around 30% of Welsh workers working from home or near to home, including after the threat of coronavirus lessens. "The intention is to develop a hybrid workplace model, where staff can work in the office, at home, or in a hub location. The aim is that this will enable 30% or more of workers to work remotely, helping reduce congestion and pollution and improving work-life balance for employees and employers".

The 'rule of six' and compulsory face coverings

11 September 2020

In response to the increase in coronavirus cases across Wales, a tightening of the rules on meeting socially in Wales is announced, along with compulsory face coverings. From 14 September 2020, a maximum of six people can meet indoors at any one time (this does not include children under 11). They must be from the same exclusive household group/bubble. The rule of six does not apply to outdoor meetings in Wales. Social gatherings of more than six people are also prohibited in England from this date (indoors or outdoors). In Scotland,

a maximum of six people from two households can gather together indoors or outdoors.

Also from 14 September, all Welsh residents over the age of 11 (apart from those who are exempt) will be required to wear face coverings in indoor public spaces, such as shops. This does not extend to pubs and restaurant at the present time.

Actions in Merthyr and Rhondda Cynon Taff

10 September 2020

“Enhanced public health actions” are announced in the Rhondda Cynon Taff and Merthyr Tydfil local authority area “to limit the spread of coronavirus”. This included that employers should “encourage staff to work from home where possible”.

Further changes to quarantine list

10 September 2020

The Welsh Government announces that, from 12 September, people arriving in Wales from Hungary and Reunion must self-isolate for two weeks. Sweden will be removed from the quarantine list. This followed earlier amendments to the coronavirus international travel regulations adding the Greek islands of Santorini, Serifos and Tinos to the quarantine list effective from 10 September 2020.

Interventions in Caerphilly

7 September 2020

The Welsh Government announces local restrictions to control the Caerphilly outbreak. From 6pm on 8 September 2020: people will not be allowed to enter or leave the Caerphilly County Borough Council area without reasonable excuse; over 11s will be required to wear face coverings in shops; meeting indoors with other people and extended households will not be allowed.

UK cases rise

6 September 2020

2,988 new coronavirus cases were reported across the UK on 6 September, an increase of 1,175 cases from the previous day. 98 of these cases were in Wales, an increase of 21 cases from the previous day.

Caerphilly cluster

4 September 2020

A 'significant rise' in coronavirus cases in Caerphilly is believed to result from people not adhering to social distancing. A temporary testing centre is set up at Caerphilly leisure centre.

UK policy divergence on quarantine requirements

3 September 2020

The Health Minister announces that from 4 September 2020, people arriving in Wales from mainland Portugal, Gibraltar, French Polynesia and the Greek islands of Mykonos, Zakynthos, Lesbos, Paros and Antiparos and Crete will be required to self-isolate for 14 days. The Scottish Government also announced quarantine requirements for Greece (from 3 September) and Portugal from 5 September). The UK Government makes no changes to its quarantine list for England.

Quarantine changes

29 August 2020

Further changes are introduced to the list of countries and territories which are exempt from the quarantine rules. From this date people arriving in Wales from the Czech Republic, Jamaica and Switzerland will have to self-isolate for 14 days when they return. Passengers returning from Cuba and Singapore will no longer have to.

Holidaymakers urged to quarantine

28 August 2020

Following a number of positive cases being reported in Wales from people returning from holidays and not self-isolating, the Welsh Government urges people to "follow the quarantine rules".

Visits to care homes indoors to resume

28 August 2020

The Minister for Health and Social Services, [Vaughan Gething, confirms](#) that indoor visits to care homes can resume from this date as well as visits to hospices and secure accommodation for children and young people. The Minister says it is for each institution to decide exactly when they begin these visits again.

Fines for unlicensed music events

27 August 2020

The Welsh Government [announces higher fines for the organisers of unlicensed music events](#) where there are more than 30 people attending. It says this comes after discussions with the police and provides them with similar powers to those being introduced in England.

Face coverings in schools

26 August 2020

[Welsh Government recommends](#) that face coverings are worn by “all members of the public over 11 years in indoor settings in which social distancing cannot be maintained, including schools and school transport”. Schools will be required to carry out “risk assessments of their estates to determine whether face coverings should be recommended for their staff and young people in communal areas”. The Technical Advisory Group has published its [review of face coverings in schools](#).

Quarantine changes

22 August 2020

Further changes are made to the [coronavirus international travel regulations](#). From this date, people arriving in the UK from Austria, Croatia and Trinidad and Tobago must now self-isolate for 14 days. The quarantine requirement for travellers from Portugal is removed.

Meeting with family and friends

21 August 2020

Following the latest [review of the coronavirus restrictions regulations](#), the First Minister confirms that from 22 August 2020, up to four households will be able to join together in Wales to form a bigger, extended household. The First Minister emphasised that conditions do not yet allow the easing of general

restrictions on people meeting indoors. 'This still means that we must not visit someone else's home indoors unless we are part of an extended household with them or providing care. It also means we can only visit a business or premises indoors, such as a pub or restaurant, with members of our own household or extended household. It is, of course, possible to meet different people outdoors as long as social distancing is maintained'. Also from 22 August, limited indoor celebrations following a wedding, civil partnership, or funeral for up to 30 people may be permitted. The First Minister also indicated that over the next few weeks some limited outdoor events for up to 100 people will be piloted.

Report on coronavirus legislation

19 August 2020

The Welsh Government publishes its first [report to the Senedd](#) on the making of Coronavirus-related legislation and use of powers under the Coronavirus Act 2020.

Coronavirus control plan

18 August 2020

The Welsh Government [publishes a coronavirus control plan](#), setting out how people and organisations across Wales should work together to manage the risks of coronavirus as we head into autumn and winter.

Further investment in testing

18 August 2020

Welsh Government announces £32 million [funding to improve coronavirus testing](#) performance. This investment aims to speed up the processing of tests and ensure that testing and contact tracing systems are robust enough to deal with the next phase of the pandemic.

Extra funding for councils

17 August 2020

Welsh Ministers announce a [£260 million support package for local authorities](#) in Wales. The funding is intended to help cover increased costs, manage loss of income pressures, and fund additional cleaning requirements

for schools. 'With the real possibility of further peaks during the autumn and winter months this investment will provide local authorities with the confidence to prepare their budgets for a potential second wave. The funds will be allocated on a claims basis'.

Public transport 'essential travel' restriction lifted

17 August 2020

'Essential travel' restriction on public transport is lifted in Wales. The essential travel message was introduced to prioritise the travel of key workers, as well as those with no alternative means of transport. The requirement to wear a face covering on public transport in Wales remains in place.

More countries added to quarantine list

14 August 2020

The Welsh Government further amends the coronavirus international travel regulations to require anyone arriving in Wales from Aruba, France, Malta, Monaco, the Netherlands and Turks and Caicos to self-isolate for 14 days. The same approach has been taken across the UK.

More family members can meet

14 August 2020

First Minister announces changes to allow more families to meet up in Wales. The intention is that from Saturday 22 August: up to four households will be able to join together to form a single, extended household; a meal following a wedding, civil partnership or funeral will be allowed for up to 30 people indoors if social distancing can be maintained. The Welsh Government will not be making any changes to the rules on people meeting indoors with others who aren't part of their household or extended household.

Winter protection plan

7 August 2020

The Minister for Health and Social Care, Vaughan Gething, announces the development of a winter protection plan. The Welsh Government says the plan will "set out expectations for health and social care" and "will provide us with

greater certainty on a number of critical areas". The plan will be published in September.

Gyms and swimming pools to reopen

7 August 2020

The First Minister for Wales confirms that swimming pools, indoor fitness studios, gyms and leisure centres will be able to reopen from Monday 10 August along with children's indoor play areas. The Welsh Government says it's continuing to explore whether changes can be made to enable people to meet indoors with other people who aren't part of their extended household.

£800m for the Welsh NHS

5 August 2020

The Welsh Government announces a £800 million stabilisation package to help the Welsh NHS "to prepare for the anticipated challenges that winter will bring". This includes "responding to a potential second wave of [coronavirus], alongside normal winter pressures".

More restrictions to be eased in Wales

31 July 2020

Following the latest review of the coronavirus restrictions, the Welsh Government sets out its plans for the further easing of lockdown restrictions in Wales over the next three weeks. From 3 August, pubs and restaurants will be able to re-open indoors, as will bowling alleys, bingo halls and auction houses. The restrictions on meeting outdoors will also be relaxed from 3 August, so that up to 30 people can meet outside provided social distancing is adhered to. From 10 August, if conditions allow, swimming pools, spas, gyms, leisure centres and children's indoor play areas will be able to re-open. The Welsh Government says it is exploring whether changes to the rules about people meeting indoors can be made from 17 August.

North of England restrictions

31 July 2020

The UK Government announces local restrictions to be put in place in areas in the north of England in response to an increase in coronavirus cases.

Care homes action plan*30 July 2020*

The Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services sets out an **'action plan' for care homes** in Wales. This focuses on six key areas: infection prevention and control; personal protective equipment; general and clinical support for care homes; residents' wellbeing; social care workers' wellbeing, and financial sustainability.

Self-isolation period extended*30 July 2020*

The four UK Chief Medical Officers make a **joint statement on extending the self-isolation period** from 7 to 10 days for people who are symptomatic or have a positive test result.

Coronavirus restrictions continue to be relaxed*27 July 2020*

Beauty salons, cinemas, and museums can **reopen in Wales** from today. House viewings can also take place in unoccupied properties. New rules making it compulsory to wear a face covering on public transport, including taxis, come into effect.

Quarantine for travellers from Spain re-imposed*25 July 2020*

Ministers from all four UK countries agree to **re-introduce quarantine measures for people arriving from Spain**, in response to an increased prevalence of coronavirus in parts of that country. From 26 July 2020, anyone arriving in the UK from Spain (including its islands) will need to self-isolate for 14 days. The **Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Wales) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2020** give effect to this in Wales.

Campsites and hotels re-open*25 July 2020*

Tourist accommodation with shared facilities, such as camping sites and all hotels are able to re-open in Wales. Underground attractions can also reopen from today.

Funding to support universities and colleges

22 July 2020

Welsh Government announces £50 million additional funding for universities and colleges - 'The support is part of the Welsh Government's actions to support students and Wales' major education institutions and provide the skills and learning in response to the economic impact of the coronavirus'. £27 million will be provided to higher education institutions, with £23 million to support students in further education colleges and sixth forms.

Reopening of playgrounds and funfairs

20 July 2020

From this date, playgrounds and outdoor gyms will be able to reopen in Wales, also funfairs (indoors and outdoors).

Report on coronavirus deaths in Wales

17 July 2020

First review of coronavirus deaths in Wales is published. The Technical Advisory Group's report found that during 1 March and 31 May, coronavirus was a factor in 24.1% of all deaths in Wales. The equivalent proportion of coronavirus related deaths in England was 42%. In Wales, mortality rates from coronavirus were highest in the Cardiff and Vale Health Board area, with death rates highest among older people, people from BAME communities, and deprived communities. Men have consistently higher mortality rates across all ethnic groups. It states that the most critical factors in reducing excess deaths in any future wave of coronavirus are likely to be: early recognition of a resurgence of infection in the community, and; a continued focus on identifying and protecting the most vulnerable people in society.

Update on shielding in Wales

16 July 2020

The Chief Medical Officer for Wales confirms that people in Wales who are shielding will no longer need to do so after 16 August.

New testing strategy

15 July 2020

A new Wales coronavirus testing strategy is released, setting out the Welsh Government's testing priorities for the next phase. 'This strategy sets out how testing will work alongside the easing of lock down measures to ensure that we can keep the number of daily cases low, but also sets out how we will continue to build capacity for the possibility of a second wave until an effective vaccine with long-term protective efficacy becomes available and widely used'.

Face coverings to be mandatory on public transport

13 July 2020

The First Minister announces that it will become mandatory in Wales to wear a three layer face covering on public transport, including taxis, from 27 July 2020. He also said that some businesses may ask people to wear a face covering before entering their premises.

Further lockdown restrictions to be lifted in Wales

10 July 2020

Following the latest review of the coronavirus restrictions regulations in Wales, the First Minister sets out plans to ease lockdown restrictions further. The Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (Wales) Regulations 2020 were revoked and replaced with Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (No. 2) (Wales) Regulations 2020. From 11 July 2020, self-contained holiday accommodation without shared facilities can reopen. From 13 July 2020, a number of services/businesses can reopen if they are able to do so safely, including hairdressers, outdoor areas of pubs and restaurants, outdoor cinemas, most indoor visitor attractions, and places of worship. The First Minister also announced the lifting of restrictions in other areas throughout July, including those relating to playgrounds and outdoor gyms (from 20 July 2020), other tourist accommodation (from 25 July 2020), 'close contact' services such as beauty salons, indoor cinemas and museums, and full reopening of the housing market (from 27 July 2020).

Welsh back to school plans

9 July 2020

Education Minister announces 'back to school' plans in Wales from 1 September 2020. Schools will return to full capacity, with only limited social distancing within contact groups. The Minister also announced £29 million funding to 'recruit, recover and raise standards' in Welsh schools. The Welsh Government has published the Technical Advisory Group's advice which recommended a September return to school.

Quarantine restrictions in Wales eased

9 July 2020

Welsh Government agrees to amend the *Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Wales) Regulations 2020* to exempt those travelling from a list of countries from quarantine requirements. The amended regulations will come into force on 10 July.

Travel restrictions lifted and 'extended' households allowed

6 July 2020

The requirement to 'stay local' is lifted from today, meaning people are allowed travel within Wales and into Wales. 'It will also mean outdoor visitor attractions can open and it will pave the way for the tourism sector to begin re-opening from 11 July, if conditions allow'. Also from this date, people from two separate households will be able to join together to form one exclusive, extended household. This easing of lockdown measures was confirmed by the First Minister in a statement on 3 July 2020.

English pubs and hairdressers reopen

4 July 2020

Pubs, restaurants and hairdressers reopen in England. Other changes from this date in England include two households will be able to meet up in any setting with social distancing, reopening of holiday accommodation sites and some leisure facilities and tourist attractions, as well as libraries, social clubs, places of worship and community centres. These changes were announced by the UK Prime Minister on 23 June 2020.

International travel restrictions eased in England

3 July 2020

The UK Government announces that from 10 July 2020, people will be able to travel to countries identified as 'lower-risk' without having to self-isolate on return to England. 'The Devolved Administrations will set out their own approach to exemptions [from self-isolation], and so passengers returning to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland should ensure they follow the laws and guidance which applies there'.

Phased reopening for hospitality and tourism sector

2 July 2020

Wales' International Relations Minister sets out a timetable for phased reopening of the tourism sector. Bars, restaurants and cafes with outdoor spaces will prepare to re-open outdoors from 13 July 2020. 'A final decision about outdoor re-opening will be made at the next review of the coronavirus regulations on 9 July and will depend on whether rates of coronavirus are continuing to fall. Future decisions about indoor re-opening will be made later and will depend on the success of the first phase of outdoor opening'. Also subject to the review of coronavirus regulations on 9 July, the date that bookings for self-contained holiday accommodation can be accepted is being brought forward to 11 July from 13 July, to help with the pattern of Saturday-to-Saturday bookings.

Quarantine for international travellers remains in Wales

30 June 2020

First Minister makes a statement that following a review of the Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Wales) Regulations 2020, the requirement for people arriving or returning from overseas to self-isolate for 14 days will remain in place in Wales. 'The Regulations may be amended in due course pending the outcome of ongoing discussions with the other UK administrations and full consideration of the medical and scientific advice underpinning any changes which may be proposed'.

Schools in Wales re-open

29 June 2020

Children return to school in Wales in a phased approach. Year groups will be split into cohorts with staggered start times and breaks. It is expected that, at most, a third of pupils will be present at any one time. Updated [guidance for schools and frequently asked questions](#) are published on the Welsh Government website.

Outbreaks at meat and food processing sites

24 June 2020

[Health Minister makes a statement](#) on two coronavirus outbreaks centred on meat and food processing sites in Wales, at the 2 Sisters plant in Llangefni, Anglesey and the Rowan Foods plant in Wrexham. New [guidance for meat processing and food production plants](#) on preventing and managing outbreaks of coronavirus was subsequently issued on 26 June 2020.

Report on BAME coronavirus outcomes

22 June 2020

A [report on the factors influencing negative Covid-19 outcomes for individuals from BAME backgrounds](#) is published. In a [statement](#) on 25 June 2020, the First Minister said the Welsh Government would give detailed consideration to the report and provide a formal response to its recommendations shortly.

Review of the coronavirus restrictions

19 June 2020

The First Minister announces changes to the coronavirus restrictions following the [fourth review](#) of the regulations. From 22 June all non-essential retail business, childcare facilities, the housing market can re-open; and private prayer in places of worship can take place. The First Minister also reiterated that pupils will be returning to schools on 29 June.

The requirement for people to stay local and within about five miles from their homes will remain in place for a further two weeks. However, the First Minister said that travel outside on a person's local area is allowed on compassionate grounds. This includes "to visit a loved one who needs help or to visit someone at a care home outdoors". The First Minister is looking to lift this restriction on 6 July.

Use of dexamethasone to treat COVID-19

17 June 2020

The [Health Minister announces](#) that the guidance for hospitals treating COVID-19 has been updated to include the use of dexamethasone. This follows an announcement by Oxford University that dexamethasone significantly reduces mortality amongst patients who need oxygen or ventilation.

Face coverings recommended in Wales

9 June 2020

The [Welsh Government is recommending](#) “that 3 layer face coverings should be used in situations where social distancing measures can be more difficult...for example, on public transport”. However, face coverings will not be mandatory. The Welsh Government also made it clear that wearing a face covering doesn't replace the need for social distancing or hand washing. It also reiterated that anyone with coronavirus symptoms “must self-isolate for a minimum of 7 days and get a test as quickly as possible”.

The Welsh Government has also published guidance on [how to make a 3 layer face covering](#) and [frequently asked questions](#).

Quarantine for UK arrivals now in force

8 June 2020

The [Health Protection \(Coronavirus, International Travel\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2020](#) come into force – residents and visitors entering the country from overseas must self-isolate for 14 days to prevent the further spread of coronavirus. This reflects a common position across the four UK nations. There are a number of [exemptions to the new border rules](#).

Return to school in Wales announced

3 June 2020

Wales' [Education Minister announces that schools will reopen](#) for all age groups on 29 June 2020. Term will be extended by one week to 27 July 2020. The Welsh Government publishes a document setting out its latest understanding of [coronavirus in relation to children and education](#). Schools in [England](#) have been open since 1 June 2020. In [Scotland](#) and [Northern](#)

Ireland, pupils will not return to schools before August 2020 when the new academic years there begin.

Contact tracing begins in Wales

1 June 2020

With contact tracing being rolled out, anyone who tests positive for coronavirus will be contacted by a contact tracer and asked to provide details of everyone they have been in close contact with. Those close contacts will be contacted and asked to self-isolate for 14 days.

The Minister for Health says that 8 June “contact tracing will be supported by a new online system” so people will have the option to provide the details of contacts online.

Changes for those shielding

1 June 2020

Wales' Minister for Health announces two changes for people who are shielding from today, but are advised to do so at times that are less busy to reduce the risk of contact with others. Firstly, they can exercise outdoors an unlimited number of times a day. Secondly, they can meet with another household outside on the same terms as the everyone else in Wales.

The Minister said that they should continue to follow the other advice on shielding, as previously given, and all who are shielding “will receive a letter from the Chief Medical Officer for Wales before 15 June setting out the next steps”.

Stay local

29 May 2020

In Wales, following the three week review of the regulations, the First Minister announces that the ‘stay at home’ message was changing to ‘stay local’. From 1 June **two households can meet outdoors** and social distancing and good hygiene practices should continue to be followed. It was stressed that people should **remain local and use “five miles as a guide”** but this is “a flexible concept which can vary depending on people’s circumstances”. The First

Minister also signalled that “**non-essential retail businesses should use the next three weeks to begin to prepare to reopen**”.

From 1 June in England, groups of 6 people can meet outdoors. Since 13 May people in England have been able to travel unlimited distances.

UK border measures announced

22 May 2020

The UK Home Secretary announces new public health measures for all UK arrivals to help guard against a second wave of coronavirus. This includes 14 days self-isolation for anyone entering the UK, with some limited exemptions.

Welsh Government referred to the EHRC

21 May 2020

The Older People's Commissioner for Wales calls for the Welsh Government to be investigated by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) over concerns that older people's human rights may have been breached in care homes. The Commissioner has concerns that older people's rights may not have been sufficiently protected, in these settings and across health and social care more widely. The EHRC responded to say it 'remains deeply concerned about serious potential breaches of older people's human rights during this pandemic'. The EHRC said it is working closely with the Commissioner and “is considering the use of all its powers to protect older people's rights”.

Home testing rolled out

18 May 2020

From this date, people in Wales with symptoms of coronavirus should be able to request a home coronavirus test via an online booking service. This is part of a new, UK-wide system for ordering home testing kits. Critical workers in Wales are also able to request home testing kits via the online service, “with tests prioritised towards these workers over members of the public according to capacity”. The Welsh Government has published guidance on how to use the home testing kit.

Symptoms update

18 May 2020

The four UK Chief Medical Officers issue an [update to coronavirus symptoms](#) to include loss of smell or taste. As of this date, all individuals should self-isolate if they develop at least one of: a new continuous cough; fever; loss of smell or taste (anosmia).

Testing for all care homes

16 May 2020

The Minister for Health, Vaughan Gething, [announces](#) that all care home residents and staff are able to access tests on the UK Government portal.

Framework for education and childcare

15 May 2020

The Minister for Education, Kirsty Williams, [publishes a framework](#) outlining the principles and current thinking for the next phase of education and childcare in Wales.

Traffic light guide out of lockdown

15 May 2020

The First Minister for Wales outlines the [roadmap for easing the restrictions](#) in Wales. It includes nine areas with four steps moving from the lockdown, to red, orange and green. The document says that these steps “represent broad phases” and that Wales “will not move wholesale from one phase to the next”. It is possible, therefore, to be in the red phase in one area and green in another.

Test, Trace, Protect

13 May 2020

The Welsh Government publishes its [testing strategy](#) to “enhance health surveillance” and “undertake effective and extensive contact tracing”. It says that so far testing has focussed on people in hospitals, care homes and symptomatic key workers and the next phase will mean testing anyone in the community with symptoms.

Face coverings not compulsory

12 May 2020

The Chief Medical Officer for Wales said in a statement that he is “not recommending the compulsory wearing of face coverings by everyone when they leave home – this should be a matter of personal choice”.

Prime Minister tells England to stay alert

10 May 2020

In a televised address the UK Prime Minister outlines changes to lockdown restrictions in England and promotes a new ‘stay alert’ message. Further details will be provided to the UK Parliament on 11 May 2020. The ‘stay at home’ message remains in place in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Scientific advice published

8 May 2020

The Welsh Government publishes updated modelling from its Technical Advisory Cell (TAC). TAC’s advice, as well as that from the UK Government’s Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE), is used to inform the Welsh Government’s response to coronavirus.

Lockdown in Wales extended

8 May 2020

Lockdown is extended for a further three weeks in Wales with some minor amendments to the restrictions: people may go out to exercise more than once a day but must stay local; garden centres may open as long as they comply with physical distancing; local authorities can begin to plan for the safe reopening of libraries and municipal recycling centres. The Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (Wales) Regulations 2020 were amended on 11 May to reflect this change.

‘Test, track and trace’ plan

5 May 2020

The Health Minister outlines the Welsh Government’s Public Health Protection Response Plan. The Plan ‘will set out how an effective ‘test, track and trace’ programme and digital technology will be pivotal to controlling transmission of the virus’.

CYPE Committee question Health Minister

5 May 2020

The [Health and Social Services Minister and Deputy Minister](#) answer [questions](#) from Children' Young People and Education Committee Members on the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on children's physical and mental health, and on health and social care services.

Support for universities and students

4 May 2020

The Education Minister publishes a [higher education policy statement](#) setting out how the Welsh Government is supporting universities and students dealing with the impact of coronavirus.

£500 payment for care workers

1 May 2020

First Minister of Wales announces a [£500 extra payment for social care staff](#). "The payment provides further recognition for an often "under-valued and overlooked" workforce. The payment will be available to some 64,600 care home workers and domiciliary care workers throughout Wales".

Past the peak?

30 April 2020

The [UK Prime Minister says](#) at the daily press conference that "we are past the peak of this disease".

Health Minister appears before committee

30 April 2020

The [Health, Social Care and Sport Committee](#) scrutinises the Welsh Government's response to coronavirus. The Health Minister answers questions on [personal protective equipment](#) (PPE), testing and an 'exit strategy' for lifting the current coronavirus restrictions.

Update on ventilators

29 April 2020

Wales' Health Minister provides an [update on critical care capacity and ventilators](#). Of the additional 1,035 ventilators being procured by NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership and through UK arrangements (as per his [statement](#) of 6 April), 353 have been received. The Minister said "The delivery of the ventilators procured through both the NHS Wales Shared Services and UK arrangements has always been on a phased basis over a 13 week period, based on the original projection of a peak occurring in June/July. There has always been sufficient ventilator capacity within NHS Wales throughout the COVID-19 period of activity".

More drive-through testing

28 April 2020

Two new testing centres will open and online booking service will be rolled out in Wales. A [Welsh Government press release says](#) that the testing centre in Llandudno will open on 29 April, and the Carmarthen centre will start testing critical workers on 30 April 2020.

Deaths data review

28 April 2020

Welsh Government publishes a [review of the mechanism for reporting COVID-19 deaths](#) in Wales. The review followed the under-reporting of a significant number of deaths by Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board. Issues were also identified with data provided by Hywel Dda Health Board.

Assembly committee scrutinises Education Minister

28 April 2020

The Children, Young People and Education Committee [questions the Minister](#) about the impact of coronavirus on pre- and post-16 education. Earlier, the Minister issued a [statement](#) describing a phased approach to the reopening of schools - "schools will not immediately return to operating at full capacity". The Minister emphasised that any move to reopen schools was not imminent.

Death in service

27 April 2020

Wales' Health Minister [establishes a COVID-19 Death in Service Scheme](#) for NHS and social care frontline workers. Under the Scheme, eligible beneficiaries will receive a one-off sum of £60,000, regardless of individual workers' salaries.

The Scheme will be time-limited, providing cover for the duration of the pandemic and will apply retrospectively from the 25 March 2020.

Exit strategy framework

24 April 2020

Welsh Government publishes its '[framework for recovery](#)' from the coronavirus pandemic. The [First Minister said](#) "The whole of the UK entered 'lockdown' in the same ways and at the same time, and our preference as a government would be that all four nations retain a common approach to lifting the restrictions. However, we have been consistent in making clear that we will take the right decisions in the interests of the people of Wales". The Counsel General and Minister for European Transition, Jeremy Miles, will be coordinating the [recovery preparations](#).

Stay at home restrictions revised

24 April 2020

The [stay at home regulations are revised in Wales](#) to clarify that people who leave their home with a reasonable excuse (such as for essential shopping, healthcare or work) cannot remain outside to do other things. New arrangements also allow people with certain health conditions or disabilities to leave home to exercise more than once a day. This is particularly aimed at helping families with children with autism and learning disabilities.

Support for hospices

19 April 2020

Wales' Health Minister [announces](#) a £6.3 million three-month package of additional support for hospices.

Review of testing

18 April 2020

Welsh Government publishes a [review of its coronavirus testing](#) regime. The review describes a range of delays and supply chain issues and confirms that "we will not reach 5000 tests by the 3rd week of April". It includes a commitment to provide weekly updates setting out expected and actual increases in testing capacity.

Stay at home measures continue*16 April 2020*

Following the [UK Government's media briefing](#), the [First Minister said](#) that during a COBR meeting each of the four nations agreed to continue the current stay at home measures for a further three weeks. The Welsh Government published a [statement on the review of the regulations](#) underpinning these restrictions.

Statutory Sick Pay extended*16 April 2020*

[New regulations](#) come into force in Wales, England and Scotland to extend the statutory sick pay to include those who are extremely vulnerable and at high risk of severe illness from the coronavirus and are advised to stay at home for 12 weeks.

Social care funding*13 April 2020*

Wales' Health Minister, Vaughan Gething, [announces an extra £40m to support adult social care services](#) during the coronavirus pandemic. "The Welsh Government has been working with local authorities and other partners to identify the additional resources needed to meet the extra demands on adult social care services. We will review this allocation and potentially make further money available if needed in the future".

Expansion of video consultations*12 April 2020*

Welsh Government announces [further investment to roll out video consultation service](#) to secondary and community care. "This system will enable key services to maintain a visual link with patients, this is especially important in some services delivered in the community, including mental health services".

Funding for charities*8 April 2020*

The UK Chancellor announces £750 million of funding for the charity sector. A share of this funding will be allocated through the Barnett formula to Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland.

Critical care

5 April 2020

Health Minister issues statement about critical care capacity and availability of ventilators in Wales. He said that the number of critical care beds within Wales is “increasing on a daily basis”. As at 3 April, there are 353 critical care or invasively ventilated beds (there are normally around 153). He also highlighted that an additional 1,035 ventilators are being procured by NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership and through UK arrangements – “We expect Wales to receive a population-based share of UK procurement”.

Social distancing - workplaces and funerals

4 April 2020

Under amended regulations for Wales, businesses will have to take all reasonable steps to ensure the two metre social distancing rule is maintained between people on their premises. Guidance will be issued to explain what employers can reasonably be expected to do. The regulations also clarify the arrangements for funerals and crematoriums. The regulations, which amend the *Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (Wales) Regulations 2020*, will come into force on 7 April 2020.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

2 April 2020

Following a rapid review of PPE across the UK, new UK wide guidance is published.

Virtual GP appointments

2 April 2020

A video consultation service is rolled out to all GP practices in Wales.

Extra economic support

30 March 2020

Wales' First Minister **announces** a new £500 million Economic Resilience Fund to provide additional support to the Welsh economy, businesses and charities.

Declaration of threat to public health in Wales**29 March 2020**

The effect of the **declaration** is to enable the Welsh Ministers to use the powers conferred on them by Part 4 of Schedule 22 to the Coronavirus Act 2020, relating to the prohibition or restriction of events or gatherings and to the closure of premises or imposition of restrictions on persons entering or remaining inside premises.

Statutory sick pay from day 1**28 March 2020**

New **regulations** come into force in Wales, England and Scotland which allow statutory sick pay to be paid from the first day of an employee's absence due to the coronavirus. This includes those who are unable to work due to having coronavirus symptoms and those in the household of someone with the symptoms.

New testing**28 March 2020**

The Health Minister, **Vaughan Gething**, **announces** a new coronavirus testing plan for Wales. This includes the introduction of a new antibody test (being tested in the UK in the coming week) which will identify whether people have recently had the virus and if they have an immunity.

Principality Stadium to become a field hospital**27 March 2020**

Cardiff and Vale University Health Board **announces that** the Principality Stadium in Cardiff will be set up as a temporary hospital to provide 2,000 extra beds to the NHS. This will be supported by £8 million capital funding from Welsh Government.

Plans are also being progressed to develop additional bed capacity in other parts of Wales. **New regulations** came into force on 30 March 2020 allowing a

local authority to undertake development on its land in response to the coronavirus emergency without needing to obtain planning permission. As a result, for example, local authorities could use leisure centres as temporary hospitals.

The Health Minister provided [further details on field hospitals in Wales](#) in a written statement on 5 April 2020.

Closure of public paths and land

27 March 2020

Using the new powers to enforce social distancing, a number of [public paths and land in Wales are closed](#) including Snowdon, Pen y Fan and sections of the Pembrokeshire coast.

Local authority care and support

26 March 2020

[New regulations](#) were made in Wales to bring into force provisions in the Coronavirus Act 2020 to relax local authority duties relating to assessing and meeting [needs for care and support](#). Local authorities now only have to meet needs in the most serious cases where someone is at risk of abuse or neglect.

Carrying forward annual leave

26 March 2020

New [regulations](#) come into force across Great Britain allowing workers, who cannot reasonably take annual leave due to the coronavirus, to carry over their holiday into the next two leave years.

Support for the self-employed

26 March 2020

The Chancellor outlines a new UK [income support scheme for self-employed people](#) who have been adversely affected by the coronavirus.

Police powers

26 March 2020

New regulations come into force giving the police powers to enforce social distancing in [Wales](#) and [England](#). People not complying with the regulations can be directed to return home (or be removed from where they are and returned home), and can be issued with a fixed penalty notice.

Coronavirus Act 2020

25 March 2020

Following agreement by both Houses of Parliament the [Coronavirus Bill](#) receives Royal Assent.

Legislative consent

24 March 2020

Assembly [agrees](#) the Legislative Consent Motion on the Coronavirus Bill.

When the UK Parliament wishes to legislate on a subject which is devolved to the National Assembly for Wales, convention requires it to receive the Assembly's consent before it passes the legislation in question. This consent is given through Legislative Consent Motions (LCMs).

Shielding the extremely vulnerable

24 March 2020

The Welsh Government published [guidance for those who are identified as extremely vulnerable to the coronavirus](#). This includes information on the delivery of medicine and food as well as what to do if you're living with somebody who is vulnerable.

Prime Minister's address

23 March 2020

The UK Prime Minister [addresses the nation](#) - all people are now required to stay at home except for very limited purposes. Non-essential shops and community spaces will close, and gatherings of more than two people in public are prohibited. These measures are enforceable by the police and other relevant authorities. The First Minister of Wales makes a [statement on the new measures](#).

Tourism clampdown

23 March 2020

The Welsh Government announces that caravan parks, campsites and tourist hotspots will be closed to visitors “from today”. Regulations requiring the closure of holiday parks, camping sites, amusement arcades and indoor play centres came into force in Wales on 24 March 2020. These also provide for the closure of certain public footpaths and land. These regulations were later replaced by the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (Wales) Regulations 2020 on 26 March 2020.

Travelling in Wales

22 March 2020

The First Minister says that “social distancing includes avoiding all but essential travel and if people don't follow this advice we will have no choice but to use powers to enforce it”.

Forced closure of some businesses

20 March 2020

The Prime Minister announces that the Government are “telling cafes, pubs, bars, restaurants to close tonight” as well as “nightclubs, theatres, cinemas, gyms and leisure centres”. Regulations requiring the closure of businesses selling food or drink for consumption on the premises came into force in England and Wales the following day. These regulations were later replaced by the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (Wales) Regulations 2020 on 26 March 2020.

Coronavirus job retention scheme

20 March 2020

The Chancellor announces the creation of a Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme where any UK employers will be able to contact HMRC for a grant to cover 80% of the salary of retained workers. The Scheme will cover the costs of wages backdated to 1 March 2020 and is initially set up to cover at least 3 months.

Emergency Bill introduced

19 March 2020

The [Coronavirus Bill 2019-21](#) is introduced in the House of Commons. According to the [Explanatory Notes](#), the Bill “ensures that the agencies and services involved – schools, hospitals, the police etc. – have the tools and powers they need. Each of the four nations of the UK has its own set of laws, and thus these tools and powers differ to varying degrees in each area. Consistency of outcome will be achieved by making the range of tools and powers consistent across the UK”. Senedd Research’s summary provides more [information on the Bill and its implications for Wales](#).

Committee questions Minister on school closures**19 March 2020**

The Education Minister appears before the [Children, Young People and Education Committee](#) to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on education, including the cancellation of this summer's GCSE and A-level exams.

Schools in Wales close**18 March 2020**

The Minister for Education, [Kirsty Williams](#), [announces](#) that the Easter break will be bought forward and schools across Wales “will close for statutory provision of education” by 20 March 2020. However, [schools are open](#) to children who are vulnerable and children of key workers who cannot be cared for at home.

Health protection regulations for Wales**18 March 2020**

[Regulations come into force](#) which provide for “the imposition of proportionate restrictions” on individuals where it’s suspected that they may have coronavirus. Similar [regulations](#) were made in England in February. These regulations were replaced by the Coronavirus Act 2020 which received Royal Assent on 25 March 2020.

Welsh Government briefs Health Committee**18 March 2020**

The Committee receive a technical briefing from the Chief Medical Officer on the response to COVID-19 in Wales, and from the Health Minister on the emergency legislation.

Legislative proposals

17 March 2020

The UK Government publishes details of the proposed measures to be included in the fast-tracked coronavirus legislation.

Support for business

17 March 2020

The Minister for Finance, Rebecca Evans, announced support for small businesses in Wales. Retail, leisure and hospitality businesses with a rateable value of £51,000 or less will receive 100% reduction in business rates, and pubs with a rateable value between £51,000 and £100,000 will receive a £5,000 reduction.

Assembly business revised

17 March 2020

Assembly business will prioritise COVID-19 and all non-time-critical business is suspended. The Senedd building closes to visitors.

Updated advice and social distancing

16 March 2020

The Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, updated advice that if anybody in a household has a new continuous cough or high temperature the whole household should self-isolate for 14 days.

The Prime Minister also said that all non-essential contact and unnecessary travel should stop, and people should start to work from home where possible. This social distancing is particularly important for people over 70 years old, pregnant women and those with some health conditions, he added that "it will be necessary to go further and to ensure that those with the most serious health conditions are largely shielded from social contact for around 12 weeks".

The UK Government said they “will no longer be supporting mass gatherings with emergency workers”.

Suspension of non-urgent NHS appointments

13 March 2020

Vaughan Gething announces the suspension of a number of NHS services including non-urgent outpatient appointments and non-urgent surgical admissions and procedures. The Minister says that “these actions will allow for services and beds to be reallocated and for staff to be redeployed and retained in priority areas”.

Statutory sick pay regulations

13 March 2020

New regulations come into force across Wales, England and Scotland that those who are self-isolating, in line with guidance relating to COVID-19, are deemed to be incapable of working and are entitled to statutory sick pay.

Delay phase

12 March 2020

The UK has moved into the delay phase and the UK Chief Medical Officers have raised the risk to the UK from ‘moderate’ to ‘high’. New advice issued says to self-isolate for 7 days if you develop a high temperature or a new continuous cough. You do not need to go to a GP, pharmacy or hospital. It’s recommended to only phone 111 if you’re symptoms don’t get better after 7 days or your condition gets worse.

Video health consultations

12 March 2020

The Minister for Health and Social Services, Vaughan Gething, announces that a web-based service will allow people who are self-isolating to speak to and receive advice from NHS healthcare professionals via video.

Pandemic

11 March 2020

World Health Organization describes COVID-19 as a pandemic, but emphasises that this “does not change WHO’s assessment of the threat posed by this coronavirus. It doesn’t change what WHO is doing, and it doesn’t change what countries should do”. (The term ‘pandemic’ refers to the spread of a new, infectious disease across multiple countries, rather than its severity or numbers of cases/deaths).

Budget 2020

11 March 2020

The UK Chancellor announces a £12 billion package of measures to support public services, individuals and businesses affected by COVID-19. This includes additional funding for services, statutory sick pay changes, and a temporary increase in the Business Rates retail discount (which would be in England only). The Welsh Government welcomes the announcement, but wants further clarity about how the measures will be funded in full. “We are in ongoing discussions with the UK Government to ensure Wales gets the funding it needs to deal with the impact, especially in the context of the pressures our demographic makeup could present”.

‘COBRA Cymru’

10 March 2020

The First Minister confirms that a core ministerial group has been established and is meeting weekly, “to make sure that we are in a position to respond urgently and immediately where such a response is necessary”. The Health and Social Services Minister also highlights that NHS Wales’ Chief Executive is establishing an ‘NHS Wales and social services planning and response team’, which will “provide ongoing support, co-ordination and integration of the health and social services response”.

Containment phase

9 March 2020

The UK Prime Minister chairs an emergency COBRA meeting, attended by the First Ministers of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The Prime Minister announces that the UK remains in the first ‘containment’ phase of the

outbreak, but that extensive preparations are being made for a move to the 'delay' phase.

Emergency legislation

8 March 2020

UK Government confirms that there will be an upcoming COVID-19 emergency bill, as part of the UK's phased response to the virus. The legislation, which will apply across the four UK nations, provides Wales with emergency powers to respond "quickly and effectively" to the outbreak.

Notifiable disease

5 March 2020

The Health Protection (Notification) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 are made, making COVID-19 a notifiable disease in Wales. Equivalent regulations for England were made the same day. Scotland was the first UK country to make COVID-19 a notifiable disease (from 22 February 2020), followed by Northern Ireland (29 February 2020).

Health Committee briefed

4 March 2020

A special meeting of the Welsh Cabinet is held. The Health, Social Care and Sport Committee receive a technical briefing from the Director General of Health and Social Services and NHS Wales' Chief Executive, the Chief Medical Officer, and Public Health Wales' lead.

UK action plan

3 March 2020

UK Government publishes its Coronavirus action plan: a guide to what you can expect. This joint action plan between the UK Government and devolved Governments in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland sets out a phased response to the virus. This includes the 'contain phase', the 'delay phase', a 'research phase' through to the 'mitigate phase'. The action plan also said that government would "consider legislative options, if necessary, to help systems and services work more effectively in tackling the outbreak" and would ensure

that “any necessary changes to legislation [were] taken forward as quickly as possible”.

First case in Wales

28 February 2020

Wales' first coronavirus case confirmed. The patient had travelled back to Wales from northern Italy.

Health protection regulations

10 February 2020

For England, regulations were made under the *Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984*, which provide health professionals with the powers to “keep individuals in isolation where [they] believe there is a reasonable risk an individual may have the virus”. In response, Wales' Health Minister said he was considering whether similar legislation was needed in Wales. The Welsh Ministers do have powers to make equivalent regulations for Wales under the 1984 Act. These regulations were replaced by the Coronavirus Act 2020 when it received royal ascent on 25 March 2020.

No NHS charges for overseas visitors

4 February 2020

The National Health Service (Charges to Overseas Visitors) (Amendment) (Wales) Regulations 2020 are laid. These exempt overseas visitors from being charged for the diagnosis and treatment of COVID-19 in Wales. Equivalent regulations are also in force in England (from 29 January 2020).

Wash your hands

1 February 2020

The UK Government launches a public information campaign to advise on how to slow the spread of COVID-19, similar to the ‘catch it, bin it, kill it’ campaign and emphasising the importance of hand-washing. The Welsh Government said it was working with Public Health Wales to support the campaign.

UK risk level

31 January 2020

First UK coronavirus cases confirmed. The UK Chief Medical Officers advised an increase in the UK risk level from low to moderate. However, it was made clear that “this does not mean [they] think the risk to individuals in the UK has changed [...] but that the UK should plan for all eventualities”.

Public health emergency

30 January 2020

World Health Organization declares that COVID-19 had met the criteria of being a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC).

Coronavirus first seen in China

31 December 2019

A number of cases of pneumonia were reported in Wuhan, China, which were later identified as a new strain of coronavirus which had not been seen in humans before: the novel coronavirus (referred to as COVID-19 from 11 February 2020).