

Coronavirus timeline: the response in Wales

Research Briefing

The table below highlights key developments in Wales in response to coronavirus (COVID-19).

Confirmation of international travel changes and calls for PCR test retention

27 September 2021

The Welsh Government confirms that, in line with the other UK nations, it will merge the green and amber travel lists into one and remove the requirement for pre-departure testing for those fully vaccinated. It reiterates its concern about the UK Government's decision to move away from PCR tests for returning travellers on day two. "Having different testing requirements in the four nations of the UK does create communication and enforcement challenges, particularly as so many Welsh travellers return to the UK via an English port or airport. The real answer is to retain day two PCR testing throughout the UK – we will continue to press the UK Government to reinstate UK-wide testing, while we continue to thoroughly examine the evidence for a Wales-only testing regime".

CMO encourages pregnant women to have vaccine

18 September 2021

The Chief Medical Officer for Wales (CMO) appeals to pregnant women to accept the COVID-19 vaccine when offered. This follows a rise in the number of unvaccinated pregnant women admitted to hospital with COVID-19 who are experiencing serious illness. "The COVID-19 vaccine can be given at any time of a pregnancy. I would encourage people to contact their health board if they have not accepted their offer. The latest evidence and medical professionals agree that the vaccine provides the greatest protection from COVID-19".



COVID Pass for nightclubs and events

17 September 2021

The First Minister announces that from 11 October 2021, adults in Wales will need to show an NHS COVID Pass to enter nightclubs and events including: indoor, non-seated events for more than 500 people; outdoor non-seated events for more than 4,000 people; any event with more than 10,000 people in attendance. The NHS COVID Pass will be used to show that someone is fully-vaccinated, or that they've had a negative lateral flow test result within the last 48 hours.

International travel changes

17 September 2021

The UK Government announces changes to the rules for international travel to England from 4 October 2021. Fully vaccinated travellers coming from non-red list countries will be able to replace day 2 PCR tests with cheaper lateral flow tests, and no longer need to take pre-departure tests. Eight destinations are removed from red list, including Turkey and Pakistan. Wales' Health Minister confirms that she has agreed to the red list changes (effective from 22 September), and that the Welsh Government will consider the proposed changes to testing requirements: "As Wales shares an open border with England, and most travellers arriving in Wales enter through ports outside Wales, it is not effective to have separate border health policy arrangements for Wales. (...) We will carefully consider the UK Government's proposed changes to the border health measures, which include the removal of pre-departure testing and introducing lateral flow tests instead of PCR tests on day two of people's return to the UK. Our considerations will be underpinned by robust evidence and our main focus will continue to be on reducing the risk to public health in Wales".

Vaccines for 12-15 year olds

14 September 2021

The Health Minister agrees with the recommendation of the four UK Chief Medical Officers (CMOs) that all children and young people aged 12-15 not already covered by existing JCVI (Joint Committee for Vaccination and Immunisation) advice should be offered a first dose of Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine. "The UK CMOs have decided that the additional likely benefits of

reducing educational disruption and the resulting reduction in public health harm provide enough extra advantage to recommend in favour of vaccinating this group. In addition, there is a small advantage at an individual level as already identified by the JCVI.”

Vaccination autumn booster programme

14 September 2021

The Health Minister accepts the recommendation of the Joint Committee for Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) that individuals who were eligible and received vaccination in Phase 1 of the COVID-19 vaccination programme (priority groups 1-9) should be offered a third dose COVID-19 booster vaccine with a minimum 6-month interval after the second dose. The purpose of the autumn booster campaign is to “reduce any further incidence of COVID-19 and maximise protection in those who are most vulnerable to serious infection, ahead of the winter months”.

COVID-19 recovery fund to support social care

14 September 2021

The Deputy Minister for Social Services announces a new £48 million COVID-19 recovery fund to support social care in Wales. £40 million is allocated to local authorities to help the social care sector meet the ongoing challenges caused by the pandemic. A further £8 million will fund a number of specific priorities, including extending the carers support fund; tackling loneliness in older people; investing in the social care workforce’s wellbeing and in residential services for care-experienced children.

Wider choice of COVID tests for international travellers

12 September 2021

The Health Minister confirms that from 21 September 2021, people returning to Wales from overseas will be able to book PCR tests with a wider choice of test providers. “The change comes as new standards and spot checks are being introduced, which will help to address long-standing concerns and issues about the market for PCR tests for all travellers returning to the UK”.

Updated advice on vaccination of children aged 12 to 15

3 September 2021

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) recommends expanding the list of specific, underlying health conditions for children and young people aged 12 -15 years who should be offered COVID-19 vaccination.

For children without underlying health conditions, the JCVI advises that the margin of benefit is considered too small to support universal vaccination of healthy 12 to 15 year olds at this time. It notes that the JCVI's remit does not include consideration of the wider societal impacts of vaccination, including educational benefits. "The government may wish to seek further views on the wider societal and educational impacts from the Chief Medical Officers of the UK 4 nations". The Health Minister, Eluned Morgan, confirms that alongside the other nations of the UK, she has asked Wales' Chief Medical Officer to provide guidance 'at the earliest opportunity' on the clinical and wider health benefits of vaccinating this age group.

Further vaccinations for individuals who are severely immunosuppressed

2 September 2021

The Health Minister welcomes the advice of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) that a third 'primary dose' of COVID-19 vaccine should be offered to people aged 12 years and over who were severely immunosuppressed at the time of either, or both, of their first two vaccine doses. "This is because some individuals who are severely immunosuppressed due to underlying health conditions or certain medical treatments may not produce a full immune response to COVID-19 vaccination. These individuals need additional protection".

Investment to improve air quality in schools, colleges and universities

30 August 2021

The Welsh Government announces investment in technology to improve air quality and disinfection in education settings. "£3.31m will be provided for new ozone disinfecting machines, to reduce cleaning times, improve disinfection and reduce costs. The funding is expected to supply more than 1,800 machines, at least one for every school, college and university in Wales".

It was subsequently reported that the Welsh Government said it would be taking expert advice before any procurement process begins.

Infection control decision frameworks for schools and colleges

27 August 2021

Local COVID-19 infection control decision frameworks for schools and colleges are published. Some core measures should be in place regardless of the risk level, other interventions may be tailored to reflect local risks and circumstances. The Welsh Government says this approach should be adopted as soon as possible after the start of term, and by 20 September 2021 at the latest.

No changes to COVID-19 rules in Wales

27 August 2021

In the latest review of the coronavirus restrictions regulations, the First Minister confirms there will be no substantive changes to the rules in Wales. He urges people to continue to take precautions to protect themselves and others, highlighting the increase in cases of coronavirus across Wales. The Chief Medical Officer's advice on this latest review of the restrictions can be found here. The regulations will be reviewed again on 16 September 2021.

Children and young people to be removed from shielding patient list

25 August 2021

The Health Minister states that following a comprehensive review of evidence, children and young people are no longer considered clinically extremely vulnerable. "Whilst all children and young people are being removed from the shielding patient list, there remains a small number in this group who may have been advised by their own specialists to isolate or reduce their social contact because of their medical condition or treatment. Where this is the case, children and young people are advised to continue to follow the advice of their own clinician".

Extra COVID-19 funding for health and social services

19 August 2021

The Welsh Government allocates additional funding of £551m for health and social services in Wales. This includes £411m for ongoing costs of dealing with

the pandemic until April 2022, and £140m for recovery and tackling waiting times.

Wales moves to alert level zero

5 August 2021

The First Minister announces that Wales will move to the new alert level zero on 7 August 2021. There will be no legal limits on the number of people who can meet, including indoors, and all businesses will be able to open. Some protections will continue to be in place, including self-isolation for people with COVID-19 symptoms or with a positive test result, and face coverings will remain a requirement in most indoor public places in Wales (the notable exception is hospitality). Also from 7 August 2021, adults who are fully vaccinated and children and young people under 18 years of age will no longer need to isolate if they are identified as close contacts of someone who has COVID-19. The Chief Medical Officer's advice to the First Minister on this latest review of the restrictions can be found here.

Self-isolation support payment increased

4 August 2021

The Minister for Finance and Local Government, Rebecca Evans announces that the Welsh Government's self-isolation support payment will increase from £500 to £750 from 7 August 2021, to be reviewed by Ministers in three months. The payment helps support people who are told to isolate by the NHS Wales Test Trace Protect (TTP) service because they have tested positive, have symptoms of coronavirus or are a close contact who is not fully vaccinated.

Update on vaccination advice for children and young people

4 August 2021

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advises that an initial dose of Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine should be offered to all 16 and 17 year olds who haven't been vaccinated. The Welsh Government said it is now working with the NHS on arrangements to offer the vaccination to all 16 and 17 year olds in line with the JCVI's advice.

Changes to self-isolation for people who are fully-vaccinated

29 July 2021

The First Minister confirms that from 7 August 2021, adults who have been fully-vaccinated will no longer have to self-isolate if they are identified as close contacts of someone with coronavirus. Children and young people under 18 will also be exempt from the need to self-isolate if they are identified as close contacts of a positive case. From 7 August, contact tracers will provide a 'warn and inform' service for fully-vaccinated individuals if they are identified as close contacts, which will reinforce key messages about minimising the risk to others from Covid-19.

Under-18s invited for their first COVID-19 vaccine

29 July 2021

The Welsh Government announces that following advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), young adults aged from 17 years and 9 months are being invited to have their COVID-19 vaccine in Wales. "The lead-in time before they turn 18 is to ensure a good uptake of the vaccine in newly-turned 18 year olds as they become more mobile and more independent. Many will be entering the workplace or starting University in the autumn term". Also following JCVI advice, health boards are working to identify and issue invitations for vaccination to children and young people aged 12 and over who are at increased risk of serious COVID-19 disease.

Changes to quarantine requirements for vaccinated international travellers

28 July 2021

The UK Government announces that from 2 August 2021, travellers from the EU and US who have been fully-vaccinated can visit the UK without having to self-isolate on arrival. The Welsh Government confirmed that this decision would also be implemented for Wales. The Health Minister noted that although the Welsh Government "regret" the UK Government's decision to remove quarantine requirements, "it would be ineffective to introduce separate arrangements for Wales" due to the open border with England.

Advice to clinically extremely vulnerable people

27 July 2021

The [Chief Medical Officer for Wales says](#) that, despite the increase in cases of coronavirus and the easing of restrictions in Wales, people who are clinically extremely vulnerable are not advised to shield at this time. "Advice to the clinically extremely vulnerable to follow shielding measures was paused on 01 April 2021 and since that time those on the shielding patient list have been advised that they should follow the same rules as other citizens in Wales, however they should take extra care to minimise their risk of exposure. There will be some exceptions – where patients have received specific advice to shield themselves by their own clinician. This is advice that they are likely to have had to take regardless of the pandemic, they should continue to follow this personalised advice if advised by their clinician". A copy of the letter sent to people on the shielding patient list can be seen [here](#).

Social care recovery plan

22 July 2021

The Welsh Government [launches](#) its [social care recovery framework](#), setting out immediate and short-term priorities for recovery in the social care sector. The Deputy Minister for Social Services, Julie Morgan, also [announced](#) easing of restrictions for care homes. "Whilst some measures such as visitor testing for indoor visits and risk assessments for visits remain in place, other restrictions have been eased further. Residents no longer need to isolate on return from an overnight stay and entertainers will be permitted in indoor areas of the home to enable residents to resume the activities they enjoy".

Vaccination advice for children and young people

19 July 2021

The [Joint Committee for Vaccination and Immunisation \(JCVI\) publishes](#) [further advice](#) on the vaccination of children and young people. This states that children at increased risk of serious COVID-19 disease should be offered the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. This includes children aged 12 to 15 with severe neurodisabilities, Down's syndrome, immunosuppression and multiple or severe learning disabilities. The JCVI also recommends that children and young people aged 12 to 17 who live with an immunosuppressed person should be offered the vaccine. The JCVI is not currently advising routine vaccination of children outside of these groups. [Wales' Health Minister says](#) "In line with the other nations of the UK, the Welsh Government welcomes this JCVI advice".

England's restrictions are lifted

19 July 2021

England moves to Step 4 of its roadmap out of lockdown. This means most legal restrictions to control COVID-19 have been lifted, replaced with guidance emphasising personal judgement and responsibility.

From Monday 19 July, all parts of Scotland move to its level 0, with modifications to some restrictions. Scotland's First Minister said 'We previously indicated that we hope to move beyond level 0 on 9 August. That remains our expectation'.

International travel changes announced

14 July 2021

From 19 July, fully vaccinated adults returning from amber list countries, and under-18s, will no longer need to self-isolate. They will still need to take tests pre-departure and on day two following their arrival in the UK. Eluned Morgan, Minister for Health and Social Services said "We continue to caution against international travel for non-essential reasons this summer. As the First Minister has set out today, we regret the UK Government's decision to remove the requirement for adults who have been fully vaccinated to self-isolate when returning from amber list countries. However, it would not be practical for us to introduce a separate border health policy".

Wales will move fully into alert level one from 17 July

14 July 2021

The Welsh Government publishes an updated Coronavirus control plan. The First Minister announces changes to restrictions in Wales from 17 July 2021 including: up to six people can meet indoors in private homes and holiday accommodation; organised indoor events for up to 1,000 seated or 200 standing can take place, and; ice rinks can re-open. Limits on the number of people who can gather outdoors will be removed. He said "We will consider whether Wales can move to the new alert level zero on 7 August following the next review of the restrictions. (...) Face coverings will remain a legal requirement in all indoors public places, with the exception of education settings and hospitality. We expect to gradually ease these requirements - and

are beginning with hospitality settings from 7 August". The Chief Medical Officer's advice on this 21 day review of COVID-19 restrictions is available [here](#).

Self-isolation support payment scheme extended

13 July 2021

The [Welsh Government announces](#) that the £500 payment scheme which supports people on low income if they have to self-isolate is being extended until March 2022.

Face coverings still a requirement

11 July 2021

Ahead of the next 21-day review of the coronavirus regulations (Wednesday 14 July 2021), the [Welsh Government announces](#) that face coverings will continue to be mandatory in some places "while coronavirus remains a public health threat". This includes public transport and health and social care settings.

Changes in schools for autumn term

9 July 2021

Education Minister Jeremy Miles makes a [statement on the operation of schools and colleges in Wales from September](#). Changes include: face coverings will no longer be required in classrooms; an end to 'contact groups' for school pupils and full-time learners in colleges, and; normal session times will resume. A 'local COVID-19 infection control decision framework' for schools and colleges will be published at the start of the autumn term.

Third milestone achieved

2 July 2021

The Minister for Health and Social Service, Eluned Morgan, [announces](#) that more than 75% of adults aged under 50 have received their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, therefore achieving their third and final milestone.

The next phase of the vaccination programme

30 June 2021

The Joint Committee for Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) publishes advice on the third phase of the COVID-19 vaccination programme. It advises that an autumn booster campaign should be launched in September to “maximise protection in those who are most vulnerable to series infection”. Those being offered a third dose will largely follow the priority groups for the first and second doses.

Support for people struggling to pay their rent

30 June 2021

A £10 million Tenancy Hardship Grant is announced by the Minister for Climate Change, Julie James. The Welsh Government says the grant is designed “to support people who have fallen behind on their rent by more than eight weeks between 1 March 2020 and 30 June 2021”.

Measures to protect businesses from eviction extended

28 June 2021

Economy Minister Vaughan Gething announces that businesses in Wales affected by the pandemic will now be protected from eviction until the end of September 2021. The moratorium against forfeiture of business tenancies for non-payment of rent was originally due to end on 30 June 2021.

Vaccination status via the digital NHS COVID Pass

25 June 2021

From this date, people in Wales will be able to show proof of vaccination on their phone, tablet or laptop via a digital NHS COVID Pass if they need to travel urgently and meet the vaccine requirements relevant to the country they are travelling to. NHS COVID Pass letters have been available in Wales since May for those needing to travel urgently. The digital pass will be the default option for people requiring proof of vaccination status when travelling internationally. Letters will continue to be issued for people unable to access the digital pass.

More countries added to the UK's green list for international travel

24 June 2021

Malta, Madeira, the Balearic Islands, several UK overseas territories, and Caribbean islands including Barbados are added to the UK government's

green list for international travel. Eritrea, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Mongolia, Tunisia and Uganda added to the red list. Wales continues to follow the same traffic-light approach as the rest of the UK. The Health Minister Eluned Morgan reiterates the Welsh Government's calls for people to holiday at home. "Our strong advice continues to be not to travel overseas unless it is essential because of the risk of contracting coronavirus, especially new and emerging variants of concern".

Easing of restrictions is paused

17 June 2021

The First Minister, Mark Drakeford, announces a 4 week in pause in the easing of coronavirus restrictions due to the new delta variant. He says the pause will allow more people to receive their second dose of a vaccine and help prevent an increase in serious illness as cases begin to rise again.

Supporting people with long COVID

15 June 2021

The Health Minister, Eluned Morgan, outlines how the government will work with NHS Wales to support people with long COVID. The latest estimate is that 50,000 people in Wales are experiencing long COVID and the ONS estimates that 9,400 of these people will be limited in their day-to-day activities.

All adults in Wales offered a vaccine ahead of schedule

13 June 2021

Health Minister Eluned Morgan confirms that all eligible adults in Wales will have been offered a vaccine by Monday 14 June 2021 - six weeks ahead of schedule.

'Covid support hubs' pilot

11 June 2021

Hubs offering a range of support to people who need to self-isolate and to those hardest hit by the pandemic are being rolled out in a pilot scheme in parts of North Wales. The scheme is part of Wales' Test, Trace, Protect programme.

Vaccination strategy update

7 June 2021

The Welsh Government publishes [an update](#) on its COVID-19 [vaccination strategy](#). The Health Minister says she is confident that, subject to supply, the Welsh Government will achieve milestone 3 (all adults offered their first dose by end July 2021) around four weeks early. For second doses, the Welsh Government expects all those who have come forward for their first dose to be offered a second dose by end of September 2021. It is also planning to re-offer the vaccine to those who did not take up the original offer. An online booking system will be established in Autumn 2021 to allow people to book and amend appointments. The strategy update also sets out how Wales is preparing for any decisions by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) about booster jabs and vaccinating children, following the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA's) approval of a vaccine for use in children over 12 years of age.

UK approval for Pfizer vaccine for 12-15 year olds

4 June 2021

The [UK Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency \(MHRA\)](#) approves use of the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine in 12 to 15 year olds.

Phased move to alert level one

4 June 2021

Wales' [First Minister confirms](#) that from Monday 7 June 2021, up to 30 people will be able to meet outdoors, and larger organised gatherings and events will be able to take place outdoors. Up to three households can form an extended household. 'The two-stage approach will enable more people to be vaccinated – and complete their two-dose course – amid growing concerns about the spread of the delta variant of the virus across the UK'.

Portugal moves to amber on international travel traffic light list

3 June 2021

From 04:00 hrs on Tuesday 8 June, [Portugal \(including Madeira and the Azores\) moves to the amber list](#), meaning travellers returning to Wales from Portugal will need to self-isolate. This reflects the position across the UK. The

decision follows increased concern about the spread of variants of coronavirus. Seven countries – Afghanistan, Sudan, Sri Lanka, Bahrain, Trinidad and Tobago, Costa Rica, and Egypt – have also been added to the red list.

Contact tracing in Wales extended until March 2022

2 June 2021

The Health Minister, Eluned Morgan, announces that the Test, Trace, Protect service in Wales will be extended until March 2022. The Welsh Government will invest a further £32 million in the service.

Football fans urged not to travel

28 May 2021

The Welsh Government and the Football Association of Wales urge fans to support the Wales football team at home rather than travelling abroad. Wales are set to play matches in France, Azerbaijan and Italy but all are currently on the amber list of countries for travel to and from the UK. The First Minister said 'It's our very clear advice that you shouldn't travel – France, Azerbaijan and Italy are on the amber list because the virus is in circulation there'.

Covid tests encouraged for people holidaying in Wales

26 May 2021

The First Minister urges anyone planning a break in Wales from an area with higher rates of coronavirus, including areas in England with high levels of the delta variant, to test themselves before they travel and during their stay. Only those with a negative test result and no symptoms of coronavirus should travel. See information on how to obtain lateral flow testing kits.

Vaccination certificate for urgent international travel

24 May 2021

Health Minister, Eluned Morgan, announces that Welsh residents can apply for a certificate of vaccination for urgent international travel. People living in Wales can request a certificate if they have had both doses of a COVID-19 vaccine, they urgently need to travel to a country which requires vaccine certification, and they are not able to either quarantine or provide tests to meet

the country's entry requirements. The Welsh Government's advice is to only travel overseas if it is essential.

Funding for NHS and social care recovery

20 May 2021

Wales' [Health Minister announces](#) a £100m investment to kick-start the health and care system's recovery from the pandemic. 'The money for new equipment, staff, technology and ways of working will help health boards improve services across primary, community and hospital care, by increasing capacity and cutting waiting times as they begin resuming non-emergency care following the pandemic'.

Vaccination progress update

19 May 2021

The Welsh Government publishes an [update on vaccination](#), highlighting that all health boards in Wales are now offering the vaccine to adults aged 18 and over. It also states that the Welsh Government is closely monitoring the 'India variant' (VOC-21APR-02) in Wales. 'In line with the latest JCVI advice, we are working with our local incident teams and health boards to facilitate bringing forward, subject to supply, second doses of vaccination where it will reduce infections, severe illness and hospitalisations'.

International travel resumes

17 May 2021

From Monday 17 May, [international travel can resume](#) under a traffic light system aligned with England and Scotland. Countries will be classified as green, amber or red. People returning from green list countries will not have to quarantine when they return. The Welsh Government advises people to only travel abroad for essential purposes.

Further information on [foreign travel](#) and [vaccine certificates for travel](#) is available from the Welsh Government.

Wales moves into alert level 2

14 May 2021

Following the latest three week review of the coronavirus restrictions regulations, the First Minister confirms that from Monday 17 May the whole of Wales will move into alert level 2. As well as the re-opening of indoor hospitality, indoor entertainment venues can re-open and an increased number of people can attend organised indoor and outdoor activities.

Re-opening of indoor hospitality and further support

11 May 2021

The First Minister confirms that from 17 May six people from six different households will be able meet indoors in cafes, pubs and restaurants.

The Welsh Government also announces that businesses still affected by the coronavirus restrictions will be able to claim up to £25,000 in support to meet ongoing costs through to the end of June 2021. More information is available on Business Wales.

Pilot events get underway

11 May 2021

The First Minister, Mark Drakeford, announces a proposed list of pilot test events that will take place over the coming weeks. The Welsh Government says it is working with partners on the delivery of pilot events which will develop processes and guidance for the safe return of events.

UK lowers the COVID-19 alert level

10 May 2021

The four Chief Medical Officers of the UK agree to reduce the UK COVID-19 alert level from 4 to alert level 3. The UK was at alert level 5 in January and came down to alert level 4 in February. Alert level 3 means that the virus is in general circulation. This UK alert level relates to the threat the virus poses and is separate from the alert levels that underpin the restrictions in Wales.

Update on the AstraZeneca vaccine

7 May 2021

The Welsh Government announces it will implement the change in the advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) and the

Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) and offer those under 40 (with no clinical risk factors) an alternative to the AstraZeneca vaccine. Those who have already had a first dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine should still receive the second dose.