

Coronavirus timeline: the response in Wales

Research Briefing

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

<p>Continued relaxation of restrictions</p> <p><i>25 March 2022</i></p> <p>Following the latest review of coronavirus restrictions, the <u>First Minister confirms</u> that measures will continue to be relaxed. However, due to an increase in cases and pressure on the NHS, the move will be more cautious than <u>previously indicated</u>. From 28 March, face coverings will no longer be required by law in retail settings and on public transport (but public health advice will continue to recommend their use). The requirement to self-isolate will also move from law into guidance. The £500 self-isolation payment will continue to be available until June. Two key legal requirements will remain: face coverings must still be worn in health and social care settings, and coronavirus risk assessments must continue to be carried out by businesses.</p>
<p>UK COVID-19 Inquiry terms of reference</p> <p><i>10 March 2022</i></p> <p>The UK Government publishes <u>draft terms of reference</u> for the UK-wide public inquiry into the COVID-19 pandemic. The <u>First Minister said</u> “In advance of their publication, the Welsh Government has made concerted representations to the Prime Minister to ensure the experiences of people in Wales will be properly and thoroughly reflected in the inquiry and that the decisions made by the Welsh Government and other Welsh public services are properly scrutinised by the inquiry team”.</p>
<p>Testing changes</p> <p><i>8 March 2022</i></p>



In a [Plenary statement](#), the Health Minister updates Members on changes to testing. "Between the end of March and June, we'll gradually move in a phased way from PCR testing and lateral flow testing being available to everyone. PCR tests will no longer be used for symptomatic testing. Instead, lateral flow tests will be available to order free online for people with symptoms".

Long-term plan for living with COVID-19

4 March 2022

The Welsh Government [publishes its long-term plan](#) for the transition from 'pandemic to endemic'. The plan sets out how Wales' response to coronavirus will change under two core planning scenarios - 'Covid Stable' and 'Covid Urgent'. Covid Stable is expected to be the most likely scenario.

Face covering rules change

28 February 2022

The legal requirement to wear a face covering in many indoor public places [ends today in Wales](#). Face coverings will still be required in shops, on public transport, and in health and care settings.

Updated vaccination strategy

24 February 2022

The Welsh Government publishes its updated [COVID-19 vaccination strategy](#).

England's plan for living with COVID-19

21 February 2022

The [UK Government](#) publishes its [plan for living with COVID-19](#). All remaining domestic restrictions in England will be removed on 24 February 2022. The legal requirement to self-isolate and routine contact tracing ends. From the start of April, the UK Government will end free symptomatic and asymptomatic testing for the general public. "Vaccines will remain the first line of defence against Covid-19".

Domestic COVID Pass no longer required

17 February 2022

The legal requirement to show a COVID Pass to enter certain venues and events in Wales has [now been lifted](#). "The international COVID Pass will continue to be integral to arrangements for safer international travel. Travellers will need to

check the relevant countries' rules for entry, including any different requirements for children".

Vaccines for 5 to 11 year olds

15 February 2022

The [Health Minister confirms](#) that she's accepted the [Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation \(JCVI's\) updated advice](#) that COVID-19 vaccination should be offered to all children aged 5 to 11 years of age. The Minister said "I would encourage all families with children between the ages of five and 11, who are not in any clinical at risk groups, to visit the Public Health Wales website for information about vaccination and to begin a conversation about whether they want to take up this offer".

New antiviral drug for those most at risk

14 February 2022

A [new antiviral medicine](#) will be offered to people who are at the greatest risk of becoming seriously ill if they test positive for COVID-19. This new combination treatment nirmatrelvir/ritonavir (Paxlovid) can be taken at home.

COVID passes and face coverings rule changes

11 February 2022

Following the latest review of the coronavirus restrictions, the [First Minister confirms](#) some upcoming changes. From 18 February, the domestic Covid Pass will no longer be needed for large events and nightclubs, cinemas, and theatres. From 28 February, adults and children aged 11 and over will no longer be required to wear face coverings in most indoor places, with the exception of health and social care settings, shops and public transport. "We will continue to recommend face coverings are worn in our guidance".

Alert level 0

28 January 2022

On this date, Wales [completes the move to alert level 0](#). Some measures remain in place, including mandatory face coverings in most indoor public places and on public transport. Detailed guidance can be found on the Welsh Government website [here](#). The First Minister said "The next three-weekly review will be carried out by 10 February, when we will review all the remaining measures at alert level zero".

Hospital-acquired COVID-19 infections

26 January 2022

The Health Minister announces funding of more than £4.5 million to investigate and learn from hospital-acquired COVID-19 infections in Wales. The funding will support a national framework to be used by health boards.

Self-isolation period reduced

25 January 2022

From 28 January 2022, people who test positive for COVID-19 will be able to leave self-isolation after five full days subject to two negative lateral flow tests. The Health Minister said "A shorter self-isolation period will support public services and businesses by reducing pressures on the workforce through Covid-related staff absences". Financial support through the Self-Isolation Support Scheme will revert to the original payment rate of £500 in recognition of the shorter isolation period.

International travel advice changes

25 January 2022

The Welsh Government changes its advice on international travel, and will no longer advise people to only travel overseas if their journey is essential. "Instead, we are asking everyone considering booking trips abroad to think of their own personal and family circumstances and how best they can keep themselves safe if they decide to travel abroad this year. We urge all those who are vulnerable to take extra precautions to stay safe". There will also be changes to testing requirements for travellers arriving in Wales from 11 February 2022.

Phased easing of COVID restrictions to continue

21 January 2022

The First Minister confirms that, based on the public health data and reductions in the number of COVID patients in hospitals, Wales will continue the gradual move back to alert level 0. "Today, (21 January), we will move to alert level zero for all outdoor activities. From next Friday, 28 January, we will complete the move to alert level zero, unless the public health situation changes for the worse".

Plan to ease restrictions in Wales

14 January 2022

The First Minister announces a phased approach to easing alert level 2 measures. From 15 January, up to 500 people can be present at an outdoor event. If

conditions allow, from 21 January all outdoor activities will move to alert level 0, and from 28 January all indoor activities and premises will move to alert level 0. The rules around self-isolation for people who test positive for COVID and for mask wearing in most public indoor places will remain in place after 28 January. The 3-weekly review cycle will be re-introduced from 10 February, when the Welsh Government will review all remaining measures.

Wales remains at alert level 2

7 January 2022

The First Minister confirms that following the latest, weekly review of coronavirus regulations, Wales will remain at alert level 2 with the current measures in place for the time being.

International travel changes - testing

5 January 2022

The Health Minister announces that, in line with decisions being taken elsewhere in the UK, she has “reluctantly agreed” to remove the requirement for fully vaccinated travellers and under 18s to take a pre-departure test and a day 2 PCR test when arriving in the UK (a lateral flow test can be taken instead at day 2). The requirements for non-vaccinated travellers remain unchanged.

Prioritising PCR testing

5 January 2022

Changes to PCR testing are announced with the aim of reducing pressure in the system and increasing access for those with symptoms:

1. Unvaccinated contacts of positive cases should take a lateral flow test on days 2 and 8 instead of a PCR test while self-isolating.
2. Asymptomatic people who have a positive lateral flow test will no longer be advised to have a follow-up PCR test to confirm the result, unless they are in a clinically vulnerable group.

See the Welsh Government's guidance on testing and self-isolation for further information.

Changes to self-isolation period

30 December 2021

The Health Minister announces that, based on advice from the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), the 10 day isolation period will be reduced to seven

days. This applies from 31 December 2021. People with a positive test must self-isolate for seven days, and should take a lateral flow test on day 6 and another test 24 hours later.

Self-isolation changes for close contacts of positive cases

23 December 2021

Changes to self-isolation requirements for close contacts of positive COVID-19 cases are announced. Fully vaccinated adults, children aged 5-18 and vaccine clinical trial participants identified as a close contact of a positive case of COVID-19 will not need to isolate. Instead, they should take lateral flow tests for 7 days as a precautionary measure.

Advice for children under 5, and for unvaccinated contacts remains the same.

Emergency support for businesses

23 December 2021

Wales' Economy Minister sets out details of a £120 million support package for sectors impacted by the move to alert level 2, including events, nightclubs, hospitality, leisure, tourism businesses, and retail.

Wales to move to alert level 2

22 December 2021

The First Minister announces that Wales will move to alert level 2 from Boxing Day. Measures include:

- A general requirement for 2 metre social distancing in all premises open to the public and workplaces.
- The 'rule of six' will apply to gatherings in premises such as hospitality, cinemas and theatres.
- All licensed premises will need to take additional measures to protect customers and staff, including table service and collecting contact details.
- Face coverings will be required in hospitality settings at all times apart from when seated.
- Large events will not be allowed indoors or outdoors. The maximum number of people who can gather at an indoor event will be 30, and 50 at outdoor events.

There will be an exception for team sports - up to 50 spectators will be able to gather outdoors, in addition to those taking part. There is also an exception for events involving children and young people under 18.

Vaccination update - children and young people

22 December 2021

The Joint Committee for Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) issues new vaccination advice for children and young people, including vaccines for children aged 5 to 11 in 'at-risk' groups, booster doses for 16-17 year olds, and boosters for 12-15 year olds deemed at risk. The Health Minister says that NHS Wales will identify eligible 5 to 11-year-olds and begin offering appointments in the New Year. Under 18s will receive an appointment when they become eligible.

Sporting events to be played behind closed doors**20 December 2021**

The Economy Minister announces new measures for indoor and outdoor sporting events, in response to further increases in Omicron cases. He also confirmed a £3 million Spectator Sports Fund will be available to support clubs and sporting venues affected by the measures.

Advice to "keep Wales safe" at Christmas**16 December 2021**

The Welsh Government issues "strong guidance" for the Christmas period, in advance of new restrictions from Boxing day. The guidance asks people to get vaccinated, use lateral flow tests before going out, and to space out social events, and reiterates public messages about meeting outdoors, social distancing, masks, and handwashing.

International travel - red list changes**14 December 2021**

The Health Minister announces that, in line with decisions being taken elsewhere in the UK, she has agreed to remove all 11 countries from the red list. These countries were added to the list following the emergence of the Omicron variant. "Just three weeks after its notification to the World Health Organisation, omicron has spread around the world and is now well-established in the UK". The Welsh Government continues to advise against all but essential international travel.

Booster rollout accelerates**13 December 2021**

The First Minister sets out Wales' aim to offer all eligible adults an appointment for a booster vaccine by the end of the year.

UK COVID alert level increased to level 4

12 December 2021

Following a rapid increase in Omicron cases, the [UK Chief Medical Officers](#) have recommended that the [UK COVID-19 alert level](#) should increase from level 3 to level 4. UK alert level 4 means COVID-19 is in general circulation, transmission is high, and direct pressure on healthcare services is widespread and substantial or rising. The UK alert level describes the threat the virus poses rather than the level of restrictions needed. There is a separate [alert level system](#) which underpins restrictions in Wales.

Omicron a “worrying development”

10 December 2021

In the latest [review of the coronavirus restrictions regulations](#), the First Minister describes the new Omicron variant as a “worrying development”, saying “we must be prepared for cases to rise quickly and sharply”. He said “Our best defence is vaccination. We have expanded the vaccination programme, in line with the latest advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation and we will be offering a booster vaccine to all eligible over-18s by the end of January”. While Wales will remain at alert level 0, the Welsh Government is now advising people to take a lateral flow test before going out, visiting friends and family, or travelling, and to wear face coverings in all public places, including in cinemas and theatres, pubs and restaurants, except when eating or drinking. Updated guidance on use of face coverings and where this is a legal requirement can be found [here](#).

Testing to identify Omicron

9 December 2021

[Health Minister announces](#) plans to increase testing capacity for identifying the Omicron variant in Wales.

Deployment of COVID therapies in Wales

8 December 2021

Following the announcement of a [UK-wide trial](#) investigating the benefits of the antiviral medicine molnupiravir in people at risk from COVID-19, the [Health Minister provides an update](#) on access to medicines for the treatment of COVID-19 in Wales.

Boosters for all adults

7 December 2021

Wales' [Health Minister says](#) that all eligible adults will be offered a booster vaccination by the end of January.

International travel changes

5 December 2021

[Health Minister Eluned Morgan confirms](#) that Nigeria will move onto the travel red list from 6 December 2021. Also that a 48 hour pre-departure testing requirement is being reintroduced for all travellers. Similar action is being taken across the UK.

First Omicron case in Wales

3 December 2021

A case of the [Omicron variant has been confirmed in Wales](#). The case, in Cardiff and Vale University Health Board area, is linked to international travel.

Omicron – face coverings in schools

29 November 2021

In response to concerns over the Omicron variant, Wales' [Education Minister announces](#) that all staff and learners in secondary schools, colleges and universities should now wear face coverings while indoors where physical distancing cannot be maintained. "This is a temporary, precautionary measure that will be in place for the remaining weeks of term at which point the position will be reviewed".

International travel changes – more tests

29 November 2021

To help prevent the spread of the new Omicron variant, the [Health Minister has agreed](#) that from 30 November 2021, all fully-vaccinated travellers arriving in Wales, including under 18s, will need to self-isolate and take a PCR test before or on day two. "We are considering whether we will also require a PCR test on day eight". Once someone has received a negative test result they can leave isolation. The requirement for non-vaccinated travellers returning from non-red listed countries to take a PCR test at days two and eight and self-isolate for 10 days remains unchanged. Similar rules will apply in all parts of the UK. The Minister reiterates that the Welsh Government continues to advise against all but essential international travel.

Omicron variant – four more south African countries moved to red travel list

27 November 2021

Angola, Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia are also linked to the Omicron variant (B.1.1.529) and move to the red list from 28 November 2021.

First UK cases of Omicron variant identified

27 November 2021

Two cases of B.1.1.529 (Omicron) variant are identified in the UK. The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) designated B.1.1.529 as a variant under investigation on 25 November 2021. It was designated a variant of concern on 27 November 2021.

International travel changes in response to new Omicron variant

26 November 2021

The Health Minister announces that six south African countries will move onto the red list from today following the identification of new coronavirus variant B.1.1.529 (Omicron). Travellers from Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe will not be permitted to enter Wales but must enter through a port of entry in England or Scotland and go into a managed quarantine facility for 10 days. They must also take post-arrival PCR tests on day 2 and day 8. Similar action is being taken across the UK.

Wales still at alert level zero

18 November 2021

Following the latest review of the coronavirus regulations, the First Minister announces that Wales will remain at alert level zero. He said “We will do everything we can to keep Wales open and to keep Wales safe. This means that retaining the option of extending the use of the Covid Pass in hospitality settings this winter, if cases and NHS pressures rise”.

Advice on vaccines for 16 and 17 year olds and extending the booster programme

15 November 2021

The Health Minister provides an update on announcements from the Joint Committee for Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI). JCVI has advised that a second dose of COVID-19 vaccine should be offered to young people aged 16-17 who are not in an ‘at-risk’ group. Also that a booster vaccination should be

offered to those aged 40-49 years old, at 6 months or more following their second dose.

COVID Passes for cinemas and theatres

15 November 2021

From today, NHS COVID Passes will be needed to enter cinemas, theatres and concert halls in Wales. Here's information on how to get your NHS COVID Pass.

Senedd votes to extend use of COVID Passes

9 November 2021

Members of the Senedd approve the extension of the NHS COVID Pass to cinemas, theatres and concert halls in Wales from Monday 15 November.

International travel changes - WHO 'Emergency Use' vaccines

8 November 2021

The Health Minister announces that in line with changes being made in the rest of the UK, people who received vaccines with World Health Organisation (WHO) Emergency Use Listing status in a country issuing recognised vaccine certificates will only need to take a day two test (this can be a lateral flow test) following their arrival in Wales. The vaccines which currently have WHO Emergency Use Listing status are Sinopharm, Sinovax and Covaxin. This change will apply from 22 November 2021.

Still alert level 0 but some stronger measures

29 October 2021

Following the latest three week review of the coronavirus restrictions regulations, the First Minister announces that Wales will remain at alert level 0 but with some strengthened measures. These include changes to the self-isolation guidance from 29 October 2021 - adults who are fully vaccinated and children and young people aged 5-17 will be asked to self-isolate until they have received a negative PCR test if someone in their household has symptoms or tests positive for Covid-19. People who are not vaccinated will still have to self-isolate for 10 days following contact with someone who has tested positive. From 15 November 2021, use of the NHS COVID pass will be extended to cinemas, theatres and concert halls.

International travel changes

28 October 2021

In line with changes elsewhere in the UK, the [Health Minister agrees](#) to remove the remaining seven countries from the red list for international travel, and add an additional 35 countries to the list of countries whose vaccinations and certifications we recognise for international travel. These changes apply from 1 November 2021.

Changes to testing arrangements for international travel

22 October 2021

The [Health Minister confirms](#) that in line with changes being made in the rest of the UK, all adults in Wales who are fully vaccinated, and the majority of under 18s, who have travelled from countries which are not on the red list, will be able to take a lateral flow test (instead of the current requirement for a PCR test), on or before day two of their arrival into the UK. The changes will come into force in Wales on 31 October 2021. The Minister says "I have reluctantly decided that for practical reasons close alignment with the UK Government's arrangements is the most viable option. We continue to encourage people to only travel for essential reasons".

Winter plan for health and social care

21 October 2021

The Welsh Government publishes its [Health and social care winter plan 2021 to 2022](#), setting out how it intends to meet health and care demands over the winter months. An additional £42m funding for social care is also [announced](#). The Winter plan sits alongside other documents including the [Coronavirus control plan](#), which sets out the Welsh Government's wider response to the pandemic.

Welsh residents impacted by incorrect COVID-19 test results

15 October 2021

[Technical issues](#) at a laboratory in England has led to some incorrect COVID-19 pcr test results between 8 September and 12 October 2021. The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) estimates around 4,000 Welsh residents whose tests were processed at the affected laboratory may have been given inaccurate results and the majority of these tests will have been taken at testing sites across the Gwent and Cwm Taf Morgannwg areas. Those affected will be contacted by NHS Test and Trace and advised further.

Updated COVID-19 vaccination strategy

12 October 2021

The Health Minister publishes an updated COVID-19 vaccination strategy and confirms that the majority of those who are eligible will be offered their booster vaccination by 31 December 2021. The strategy also confirms that by 1 November 2021, offers will be made for one dose for all 12-15 year olds and a booster vaccination for care home residents and health and care staff. A digital booking system is being developed to allow people to book appointments online.

COVID Passes needed for events and nightclubs

11 October 2021

From this date, people in Wales will need to show an NHS COVID Pass to attend large events, nightclubs and similar venues, to prove that they are fully vaccinated or have tested negative.

Wales remains at alert level zero

8 October 2021

Following the latest review of the coronavirus restrictions regulations, the First Minister announces that Wales will remain at alert level zero for the next three weeks. The only substantial change to alert level zero measures will be mandatory COVID passes for adult entry to certain venues and events from 11 October 2021.

Updated coronavirus control plan

8 October 2021

The Welsh Government publishes an updated coronavirus control plan, which sets out two planning scenarios over winter. In the first, termed Covid Stable, Wales will remain at alert level zero through the autumn and winter, with all businesses able to open. At this time, this is thought to be the most likely scenario. The second scenario, Covid Urgent, is designed to deal with any sudden changes to the situation, such as the emergence of a new, fast-spreading variant or vaccine immunity levels falling, which may increase pressures on the NHS.

International travel changes

7 October 2021

The Health Minister agrees to the removal of further countries from the red list (from 11 October 2021) but emphasises the changes are not without risk. "They increase opportunities for new infections and new variants, which could escape the vaccines to enter the UK and Wales. We look to the UK Government to provide reassurances that it will be maintaining consistent and robust

surveillance systems that can detect dangerous variants early and that measures to relax restrictions can be swiftly reversed should the international position worsen”.

Senedd votes on COVID passes for nightclubs and large events

5 October 2021

The Senedd approves the draft Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (No. 5) (Wales) (Amendment) (No. 17) Regulations 2021, which will require people to show an NHS COVID pass to enter high risk establishments such as nightclubs, and large events from 11 October 2021.

COVID-19 testing for children and young people and staff working in special educational provision

5 October 2021

The Minister for Education and Welsh Language amends advice to learners in secondary schools and colleges who are under 18 and have a household member who has tested positive for COVID-19. From 11 October 2021, it is recommended that in addition to PCR tests on Day 2 and Day 8, they should undertake daily lateral flow testing every day for seven days. Also, following advice from its testing advisory group, the Welsh Government will no longer recommend that children under 5 years of age without symptoms take COVID-19 tests. It is also announced that vaccinated staff working in special educational provision who are identified as a contact, household or otherwise, will, subject to a risk assessment, be required to receive a negative PCR test before attending work and then undertake daily lateral flow tests.

The legislative response by the Welsh Ministers to the coronavirus pandemic

4 October 2021

The Welsh Government publishes a report covering all subordinate legislation made by Welsh Ministers in response to the coronavirus pandemic in the period 10 August 2020 to 31 August 2021.

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.