

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>Prime Minister tells England to stay alert</p> <p><i>10 May 2020</i></p> <p>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.</p>
<p>Scientific advice published</p> <p><i>8 May 2020</i></p> <p>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.</p>
<p>Lockdown in Wales extended</p> <p><i>8 May 2020</i></p> <p>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.</p>
<p>'Test, track and trace' plan</p>



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

<p>children who are vulnerable and children of key workers who cannot be cared for at home.</p>
<p>Health protection regulations for Wales <i>18 March 2020</i> <u>Regulations come into force</u> which provide for “the imposition of proportionate restrictions” on individuals where it’s suspected that they may have coronavirus. Similar <u>regulations</u> were made in England in February. These regulations were replaced by the Coronavirus Act 2020 which received Royal Assent on 25 March 2020.</p>
<p>Welsh Government briefs Health Committee <i>18 March 2020</i> The <u>Committee receive</u> 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.</p>
<p>Legislative proposals <i>17 March 2020</i> The UK Government <u>publishes details</u> of the proposed measures to be included in the fast-tracked coronavirus legislation.</p>
<p>Support for business <i>17 March 2020</i> The Minister for Finance, Rebecca Evans, <u>announced support for small businesses</u> in Wales. Retail, leisure and hospitality businesses with a rateable value of £51,000 or less with receive 100% reduction in business rates, and pubs with a rateable value between £51,000 and £100,000 with receive a £5,000 reduction.</p>
<p>Assembly business revised <i>17 March 2020</i> Assembly business will prioritise COVID-19 and <u>all non-time-critical business is suspended</u>. The Senedd building closes to visitors.</p>
<p>Updated advice and social distancing <i>16 March 2020</i></p>

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).