

# **Coronavirus – updated measures now in force**

**COBRA met this afternoon and agreed four specific additional measures from today for all four nations, including one regarding mass gatherings which is already in force in Scotland.**

These measures relate to self isolation of whole households where one member has symptoms of the virus, social distancing for everyone in Scotland, specific tailored advice for those who already have health conditions and advice against holding mass gatherings of over 500 people either inside or outside.

The First Minister held a briefing just before 5.30, flanked by the Chief Medical Officer Dr Catherine Calderwood and the Health Secretary Jeane Freeman just after Downing Street had also held a briefing.

Ms Sturgeon was categorical in the seriousness of her statement. She said: “The measures we are confirming today are designed to reduce the peak impact of this outbreak and to protect the most vulnerable to save lives and reduce the number of people who will die from it.”

She set out the measures in force from today: “The measures that I am about to confirm for Scotland and which are being confirmed for the other three nations in the UK as well reflect the seriousness of the situation that we face.

“But let me stress that these measures, although they will be disruptive for people, and will in many respects for the next period change life for all of us, as we know it, are very much about all of us doing the right thing for ourselves and for

each other, to reduce the impact that coronavirus will have on our society, enable our NHS to continue to offer care and treatment for those who need it and to save lives.”

These three measures are additional to what was announced last week – that anyone with a fever or with a persistent cough should stay at home for a period of seven days.

When any member of a household is symptomatic, then the whole household should stay at home for 14 days. That means not going out at all as far as possible. It means seeking help from others for basic essentials and preferably to stay at home. If that is not possible then you should stay away from people as far as possible.

## SOCIAL DISTANCING

The First Minister said: “The second measure relates to what we describe as social distancing, and that is advice to reduce all non essential social contact and to do that, as much as possible. From today that is advice being given to everyone in our population. That means where it is possible to do so you should work from home, you should avoid unnecessary travel. Stay away from pubs, cinemas, and other crowded places reduce unnecessary social contact as much as possible.

“That advice is given particularly strongly to more vulnerable groups such as people over 70, those who suffer from defined long term health conditions and who qualify for the flu vaccination and pregnant women. we don’t yet know enough about this virus and that is why we are taking a very precautionary approach and including in this list of vulnerable groups of women who are pregnant.

“The third additional measure relates to the most vulnerable groups in our society and what we mean by that is specifically people who suffer from compromised immune systems Over the next few days, we will be contacting people in that group that is around 200,000 people across Scotland to offer specific

tailored advice and support what we are seeking to do is shield that most vulnerable group in our country.”

The last measure is the advice to cancel large gatherings either inside or outside, but it stands to reason in light of social distancing advice that these would be difficult to hold anyway.

Detailed guidance will be published shortly and The Scottish Government Resilience Committee will meet this evening.

“We will discuss across Scottish Government but also with our partners and local government, the police and others what we are going to do to support people to get through what is going to be an extremely difficult period of months ahead.”

The Health Secretary will make a statement to Holyrood tomorrow.

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Chief Medical Officer Catherine Calderwood was very serious in her delivery and said: “It’s very clear from our scientific advice that we are on the cusp of a rapid acceleration of numbers of Coronavirus and we have in Scotland, evidence of sustained sustained community transmission of the virus here.

“The measures that we are outlining are to prevent spread of the virus further to protect the vulnerable and to protect our whole population, and our NHS not only for those patients who will have coronavirus, but of course for all the other patients that the NHS is already treating, and will require to treat in the months ahead.

“The measures that we’ve introduced, we believe will have that desired effect of reducing the number of cases coming into our NHS and prevent those services in particular, our intensive care services or respiratory wards or wards where we can provide oxygen to prevent those services becoming

overwhelmed.”

“It would be important at this point to emphasise that as we’ve said previously, the vast majority of people will have mild illness. Perhaps they will not even be aware that they have had coronavirus or it’s a cold, something that’s very easily able to manage at home. However, not only protecting our population about this virus, in particular, those vulnerable groups, even with excellent care, some of our Scottish population will become very severely ill and sadly, some may die.

“What we really want to prevent our deaths which would be avoidable deaths, which we would avoid if our NHS is not overwhelmed deaths where if we have enough ventilators enough intensive care beds will not happen.”

“As the First Minister has said, these are not measures we’ve taken lightly, they are taken with the best scientific evidence that we have. We really need to protect our population across Scotland. And I know that my NHS colleagues, and those in social care have already been working very hard to drawing up plans for this eventuality. They have extremely challenging times ahead.

“They can be helped by the population, hearing our messages complying with what we have suggested to protect our population and protect ourselves.”