

# Coronavirus – latest update from the First Minister

The Scottish Parliament may be in recess but the government daily briefing still continues.

This is today's speech by the First Minister in which she says that the number of deaths from the virus have now fallen for the ninth week in a row:

Good afternoon, thank you for joining us.

I'll start as usual with an update on the latest COVID figures in Scotland.

Since yesterday, I can confirm that an additional 8 cases have been confirmed, which takes the total number now to 18,259.

A total of 785 patients are currently in hospital with suspected or confirmed COVID-19, which is a decrease of 100 since yesterday. That includes a decrease of 11 in the number of confirmed cases.

You will recall yesterday there was quite a big increase in suspected cases, so clearly that has gone in the other direction today.

As of last night, 17 people were in intensive care with confirmed or suspected COVID-19, which is 2 fewer than the number I reported yesterday.

Since 5 March, 4,071 patients who had tested positive and needed hospital care have now been discharged from hospital.

Unfortunately, in the past 24 hours, 1 death has been

registered of a person who had been confirmed as having the virus. That takes the total number of deaths in Scotland under that measurement to 2,486.

In addition, as is now usual on a Wednesday, National Records of Scotland has just published its more detailed weekly report.

This publication, like our daily figures, includes deaths of people who have been confirmed by a test as having COVID. But it also includes cases where the virus was entered on a death certificate as a suspected or contributory cause of someone's death – even if its presence was not confirmed by a test.

The latest NRS report covers the period to Sunday just passed, 28 June. At that point, according to our daily figures, 2,482 deaths of people who had tested positive for the virus had been registered.

However, today's report shows that, by Sunday, the total number of registered deaths with either a confirmed or a presumed link to the virus was 4,155. Of those, 35 were registered in the seven days up to Sunday, which is a decrease of 14 from the week before.

This is ninth week in a row now in which the number of deaths from the virus has fallen.

Deaths in care homes made up just under half of all COVID deaths last week – and the number of COVID deaths in care homes reduced again, from 20 in the previous week to 16 in the most recent week.

Finally, and very significantly today, I can report that the total number of deaths recorded last week – from all causes, not just from COVID – was 20 below the five-year average for the same time of year.

This is the first time since March that the total number of

deaths has been below the 5-year average – in other words, the first time since we don't have a number of excess deaths above that average

To put that in context, last week it was 46 higher than average, and 11 weeks ago the number of deaths recorded in a single week was 878 higher than the five-year average for the same time of year.

So this week's statistics again tell of the real and sustained progress that we are making in tackling COVID.

That said, the numbers also speak of heartbreak for many of our fellow citizens.

We can take some comfort in the trends shown by today's data, but we should never, ever lose sight of the fact that every single death represented by these numbers is a tragedy.

And I want to send my condolences to everyone who is grieving right now as a result of losing somebody to this illness.

I also want, as I always do, to thank our health and care workers, and all key workers. We continue to be grateful for all of the contributions that you are making.

In tomorrow's media briefing I hope to be able to confirm that we are going ahead with many of the Phase 2 changes that have already been signalled.

Today though I want to highlight a couple of things which demonstrate, in different ways, how the progress we have made in addressing COVID, is starting to allow a return – a very careful return – to greater normality, although life should still not feel like normal.

The first is that from today, our Warmer Homes Scotland programme will resume.

Warmer Homes Scotland tackles fuel poverty, by giving help to

those who most need it, to make their housing more energy-efficient. It therefore cuts people's heating bills and reduces our total greenhouse gas emissions.

The scheme's restart also means that more than 300 staff are being brought out of furlough, so that they can get back to work improving people's homes.

Overall, therefore, the resumption of Warmer Homes Scotland is good for employment, for the environment, and for those households across the country whose homes will become easier and more cost-effective to heat.

The resumption is also one further sign – not a huge one, but still a significant one – that public services and economic activity are starting up once again.

The second issue I want to touch on relates to children and young people.

Much of the discussion about the changes we hope to confirm tomorrow will understandably be around issues such as changes to travel restrictions, and the reopening of some parts of the hospitality sector.

But we also know that this has been an incredibly difficult time for children and young people.

It has been very tough not going to school for an entire term, and then being so restricted in how you can meet up with and play with your friends.

These restrictions have also, of course, made things more challenging for parents and carers.

We're therefore keen to make some changes which will help to make this a slightly more normal and less frustrating summer holiday for many young people.

So tomorrow I hope to confirm more details of that.

Tomorrow the Chief Medical Officer will also announce some important changes in our advice for some children who are shielding, who until fairly recently had been advised to stay completely at home.

All of our children and young people, in my opinion, have responded incredibly well to an incredibly difficult situation and I'm grateful to all of you for that – indeed I'm proud of all of you for that.

But we know how important it is for you to be able to see a bit more of your friends over the summer as well as, I hope, being able to go back to school in August.

Tomorrow's announcements therefore I hope will set out ways in which you can do that and as a result, hopefully it will allow you to get a bit more from the summer holidays.

Now I want to close by emphasising again, our key public health messages.

In a moment I'm going to hand over to Jason Leitch who will share some information with you about a cluster of cases that has recently been identified in the Dumfries and Galloway area of Scotland.

And that, as well as being important in its own right, is also a reminder for us – a sharp reminder for us – that COVID is still out there.

So it is really important that all of us continue to follow the public health advice that is being given.

So I want to take the opportunity, as I always do, to emphasise these key messages and the fact that things like hand washing, while always important, become far more important when we start going out and about a bit more – more important than even these kinds of measures were when most people were staying at home all of the time.

That's why I ask you to familiarise yourself with, and remember, the FACTS campaign that we have been running for the past week or so now.

That summarises the five key things that all of us must remember, and must abide by if we're going to be able to keep this virus at bay.

Firstly, face coverings should be worn in enclosed spaces like shops and public transport – I'll say more tomorrow about face coverings in retail.

Second, avoid crowded places, even outdoor crowded places because the risk of transmission in a crowded place is high, and please don't take that risk.

Thirdly, clean your hands regularly and avoid touching hard surfaces if you can, but when you do touch hard surfaces, clean them thoroughly too.

Fourthly, two-metre distancing remains our advice.

And lastly, self-isolate and book a test immediately if you have any of the symptoms of COVID. And remember, those symptoms are a new, continuous cough, a fever or a loss of or change to your sense of taste or smell.

And don't wait to see if you feel better – if you have any of these symptoms book a test immediately. You can find out how to do that by going on to the [NHS Inform website](#).

If all of us follow these five basic measures, it doesn't mean that there won't be risks and potential setbacks in the weeks ahead, but it does mean that collectively we are minimising those risks, and we're giving ourselves the best possible chance of building on the progress that we've made over these past three months, and not allowing that progress to be squandered.

So I appeal to all of you to keep following this advice and to

think very carefully, each and every time you go out of your house, about the things you could be doing that give the virus a chance to spread and, conversely how, by following the advice and the FACTS campaign, you can minimise or remove those risks.

So my thanks for your cooperation and compliance to date – please, please keep doing it.