

COVID-19 CRISIS

BRAVE DAD HOME

AFTER MIRACLE COVID FIGHT

DAILY UK DEATHS
202
TOTAL UK DEATHS
41,481

Infections down to quarter in England

By SHAUN WOOLLER

COVID-19 infections in England have fallen to a quarter of what they were a fortnight ago, new figures show.

But the virus may be flaring up again in the South West, with the R rate between 0.8 and 1.1.

Another 202 people were yesterday confirmed to have died, taking the UK total to 41,481.

Testing suggests 33,000 people were living with the bug between May 25 and June 7 - down from 133,000 two weeks earlier.

This is equal to six infections per 10,000 people outside hospitals and care homes, the Office for National Statistics said. It was four times higher from May 11 to May 24.

There were 31,600 new cases per week, or 4,500 per day, between April 26 and June 7 - down from 5,600 a day up to May 30.

Death rates more than halved in all but two regions in England and Wales between April and May, the ONS said.

These were the North East and Yorkshire and The Humber. The greatest decrease - 83.3 per cent - was in London.

While there are concerns for the R rate in the South West, the East is faring best at 0.7 to 0.9.

London, the Midlands, the North West and the South East are 0.8 to 1.0 and the North East and Yorkshire are 0.7 to 1.0.

To anybody living with this horrific virus.. never give up hope

- BATTLING JOHN YESTERDAY

EXCLUSIVE by JULIA ATHERLEY

MIRACLE man John Betts - who faced death from Covid-19 during 65 days on a ventilator - told other victims last night: "Never give up hope."

The battling dad, 59, spent the longest known period on the intensive care machine of any coronavirus-hit Brit.

He repeatedly came close to death and his family was warned on four occasions that he might not make it through the night.

He finally left hospital yesterday after waking up from an induced coma - similar to that endured by the husband of TV presenter Kate Garraway.

Masked hospital staff applauded as he left Northampton General Hospital - where he was admitted at the end of March - and was taken home.

In a powerful message to fellow virus sufferers, he said: "To anybody living through this horrific disease, stay strong. I'm blessed to have come

through this battle and be back at home with my family.

"I've still got a long way to go and I know that rehabilitation could take up to six months but I have wonderful support around me.

"I am forever grateful to the staff and doctors at Northampton General."

The business consultant was rushed into hospital on March 26 and was put in intensive care after testing positive for Covid-19.

He was sedated and put on a ventilator the next day as he was struggling to breathe.

His daughter Lauren Bedford, 23, and her husband Cameron, 25, were told four times to prepare for the worst.

Cameron, 25, said: "It has been an emotional rollercoaster. Initially when he went in they said they needed to run some tests, but hoped to get him in and out within two weeks."

Lauren visited John in hospital the last time doctors thought he could die.

Cameron said: "Lauren went in to

say, 'Keep fighting'. He wasn't awake at that point but sometimes a family member's voice can help. He woke up two days later on April 16."

John was finally taken off the ventilator on June 1.

Cameron saw the similarities with the plight of TV Kate's stricken husband Derek Draper, 52.

He said: "They have got it a lot worse but I know the pain she must have been feeling."

"There can be issues around brain damage when people wake up from such a long time in a coma."

"He (John) had CAT scans and took around ten days to come round after the sedation - which is quite a long time."

"That was the most worrying point - thinking, 'Is he going to wake up?', and when he does, 'Is he going to have some sort of brain damage?'"

Mr Draper remains in a coma in hospital, almost three months after contracting coronavirus.

Lauren and Cameron have now moved in with John to help him recover. He lost 13kg (2st) during his

illness and can now walk only 20 yards at a time.

Doctors think he will eventually be back to full health next March - a full year on from when he fell ill.

Dr Sonia Swart, chief executive of Northampton General Hospital said: "Everyone in the hospital wishes John the very best as he leaves us to continue his recovery with his family."

"I want to pay tribute to all our staff for the care, compassion and dedication they have shown to John, and continue to show to each and every one of our patients."

Last month an unidentified 35-year-old woman with Covid-19 recovered after 58 days on a ventilator at Southampton General Hospital.

Dr Sanjay Gupta, the hospital's lead consultant for critical care, said: "Suddenly she can communicate, whereas before she was so weak she could barely lift a finger to write anything."

Dad-of-three George Clark, 61, spent 56 days on a ventilator at Ayr Hospital after being struck by the virus.

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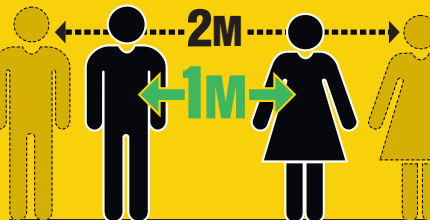
I am blessed to have come through this.. I am forever grateful to staff and doctors

A big hand... John acknowledges hospital staff who applaud as he leaves yesterday, and below, before his illness



Waving goodbye... John walks out after his amazing recovery

'QUIET' BID TO BOOST PUBS



By JONATHAN REILLY and SHAUN WOOLLER

PUBS, restaurants and shops could be allowed to ignore two-metre social distancing as part of a blueprint for getting Britain back up and running.

Firms that take other steps to cut the virus risk may be allowed to let staff and customers get closer.

Measures being discussed by scientists include a ban on singing and even loud talking, which can help project the virus around a room.

Businesses would have to prove they've made their spaces safe before getting the green light to open.

It could help them bounce back if the two-metre rule stays in place - although PM Boris Johnson hinted yesterday it could shrink to one metre.

Among options outlined yesterday in papers from science advisors were staggered working hours, smaller work groups, video conferencing, no hot-desking, more cleaning, anti-bacteria surfaces, sensors instead of door handles and a ban on loud music in pubs, so customers don't have to yell or talk loudly.

Men will also be encouraged to put the toilet seat down.

Pressure is mounting on the PM to reduce the two-metre rule amid fears that it will cripple Britain's recovery.

He said yesterday: "We are looking for the moment where we have got the figures down, but when they are down so far, we can say the two-metre rule is no longer necessary."

The current rule applies when you meet people from other households. Two metres is roughly the distance virus particles from breath travel before falling to the ground.

In one document published yesterday the scientists admitted: "It is not possible to say with certainty what a safe distance of separation is." They say evidence suggests one metre is between two and ten times riskier.

Yesterday pub groups urged the Government to confirm July 4 as the date they can reopen because they will need to start brewing beer today.

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CHARLES GETS BACK ON JOB

By MATT WILKINSON

CHARLES and Camilla are leaving isolation and returning to face-to-face senior royal work.

The Prince of Wales, 71, and Duchess of Cornwall will meet French President Emmanuel Macron at Clarence House on Thursday.

It is the first non-virtual royal engagement arranged since William and Kate visited an NHS 111 call centre on March 19.

The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge are also said to be preparing for a return next week.

A royal source said: "This is not a wholesale return to public-facing duties but one or two more public engagements have been planned."

Charles has been in isolation at Birkhall, Scotland, with Camilla after he was struck down by the virus. They will now move to Highgrove, Gloucs.

30-MINUTE BUG TEST

A NEW test that can diagnose Covid-19 in just 30 minutes by analysing urine, blood or saliva has been identified by scientists.

The method finds genetic material from the virus and was successfully used to detect Zika and Ebola.

But Dr Robert Shorten, of the Association for Clinical Biochemistry and Laboratory Medicine, said there were limitations to the technology.

He said: "It generated false positives in negative samples. This may be due to cross-reactivity with other viruses or contamination."