

Terrifying coronavirus map puts UK on path for WORSE outbreak than Italy as deaths soar

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April 1, 2020

The Department for Health has this afternoon confirmed the total number of coronavirus deaths in the UK has soared by 563 in the past 24 hours – the highest daily increase since the outbreak in Britain began. The huge surge in COVID-19 deaths means the total number of fatalities has increased from 1,789 to 2,352. Research by the Cato Institute – an independent US think-tank – has found in the 20 days since the 10th recorded death, the UK is now ahead of Italy.

In that time period Italy, the country with the most coronavirus related deaths in the world, had 2,158 fatalities.

By comparison, the UK has now surpassed that total by 194 with 2,352 deaths.

Following the initial 20 day timeframe, the number of deaths in Italy has continued on a steep trajectory with more than 12,000 fatalities to date.

The figures released by the Department for Health on Wednesday revealed the UK continues on an upward curve with a 31 percent increase in deaths since yesterday.

At the start of the outbreak it took 17 days for the UK to pass 200 deaths, it has since taken just 11 days to pass 2,000.

As of 9am the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the UK stood at 29,474.

However, the number of people with COVID-19 is thought to be much higher as the Government comes under mounting pressure to increase the number of daily tests.

Around 8,000 tests per day are currently being carried out which is short of the Government's initial 10,000 daily target.

Business Secretary, Alok Sharma, warned at the daily briefing from Downing Street the UK could see a “dangerous second peak.”

Mr Sharma said: "People will understand across the country why we have put these restrictions in place and the Prime Minister was very clear they were for an initial three-week period and we would review them.

"But what's also really important is that if we stop these too quickly, there is a possibility that that massive effort people have made across the country is wasted and we could potentially see a dangerous second peak.

"We absolutely want to avoid that."

At the daily briefing from Downing Street on Tuesday Cabinet Office Minister Michael Gove blamed a global lack of reagents needed to carry out tests, though the chemical industry in the UK suggested there were no shortages.

England's deputy chief medical officer Dr Jenny Harries said: "It's not that we are not testing, what we are doing is focusing on using testing for clinical care as a priority, which I think people understand completely, and then secondly around getting our frontline workers and actually then everybody back into safe work.

"At the moment, if you were a member of the public and you tested positive, you would not be taking any different action to the action that we are asking you to do currently."

Housing and Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick this morning told Radio 4's Today programme that testing capacity should hit 15,000 in the next few days.

Mr Jenrick also said he expects there to be 25,000 tests per day by the middle of April. Number 10 has also insisted it is ramping up the number of tests for NHS staff – with 2,000 already completed on our brave healthcare workers on the frontline.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock, who is currently in self-isolation after being diagnosed with the virus last week, has now scrapped the 15 percent cap on the number of tests that can be carried out on NHS staff.

A spokesman for the Prime Minister said: "We're very clear that we want more testing to be carried out, and that we are working with NHS England, Public Health England and others to ensure that happens."