

26 November 2020

Cumbria to move into COVID-19 High Alert status from Wednesday

The Government has today announced that Cumbria will move into Tier 2 of the new COVID-19 restrictions classification system from 00:01 on 2 December. Tier 2 areas are classed as High Alert for COVID-19.

Under the new restriction level groups of up to six people will be permitted to meet outdoors, but there must be no mixing of households indoors. Education settings remain open and pubs and bars must close unless operating as restaurants.

While the easing of lockdown restrictions is welcomed, Cumbrians are being urged not to forget the basic ways they can help keep themselves safe and avoid spreading infection – maintain social distancing, wear a face covering, and wash hands regularly.

Decisions on tiers are made by Government ministers informed by the following factors:

- Case detection rate (in all age groups and, in particular, amongst the over 60s);
- How quickly case rates are rising or falling;
- Positivity in the general population;
- Pressure on the NHS – including current and projected (3-4 weeks out) NHS capacity – including admissions, general/acute/ICU bed occupancy, staff absences; and
- Local context and exceptional circumstances such as a local but contained outbreak.

If these indicators are not improving, an area may be moved up a tier and if the trajectory improves, the area may move to a lower tier.

Full details of the new restrictions can be found at

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-restriction-tiers-what-you-need-to-know>

The area's status will be reviewed after 14 days.

Cumbria's Director of Public Health Colin Cox, said:

"The very latest data, up to Tuesday this week, indicates that the number of new infections is now reducing in all parts of the county which is very welcome and shows that it is possible to slow the spread of this virus.

"That said, the infection rate is still higher than we would wish it to be and we expected that the county would be placed in Tier 2. If restrictions were relaxed further there is little doubt we would see infections begin to rise again rapidly. Only in this last week of lockdown have we started to see some reduction in the number of people in hospital, which is very positive, but our hospitals remain under intense pressure and it is simply not sustainable for numbers in hospital to remain at these levels, let alone increase further.

"The new restrictions do provide more scope for people to have social contact outside the home and that is very welcome. However, I would encourage people to

stay switched on to the risks. Keep doing all the simple things - maintain social distancing, wear face coverings and wash hands – if we all do this then we can hopefully sustain the reduction in new infections.”

Colin Cox will be hosting a Facebook Live event tonight (26 November) from 7.30pm at www.facebook.com/cumbriacc where he will discuss these issues further and answer questions from the public.

The announcement comes as confirmed data for week ending 20 November shows:

- There were 860 new cases in Cumbria (a 199 decrease, -19%, from 1,059 cases in previous week);
- For the 5th week in a row Carlisle had the greatest number of new cases (+302 new cases), followed by South Lakeland (+244 new cases);
- Carlisle and South Lakeland also had the highest rates of new cases (278 and 232 new cases per 100k population respectively);
- Numbers of new cases increased from week 46 in Carlisle and South Lakeland (+22% and +5% respectively);
- Figures for Carlisle and South Lakeland are significantly affected by large outbreaks at Sedbergh School and Richard Rose Central Academy. These outbreaks resulted in 270 positive cases, the majority of which are reported in this week's figures;
- Numbers of new cases in Allerdale, Barrow-in-Furness, Copeland and Eden decreased from the previous week, with all four of these districts having rates below the national and regional averages.
- The number of new patients admitted with COVID-19 in both North Cumbria Integrated Care (NCIC) and University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust (UHMB) decreased slightly from the previous week;
- The average number of patients with COVID-19 in beds in NCIC was unchanged from the previous week, while the average number of patients with COVID-19 in beds in UHMB decreased slightly from the previous week.

This full COVID-19 situation report can be found at

www.cumbria.gov.uk/stopthespread

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