

## Media Release

embargo until time/date

**Date:** 21 March 2020

### 15 Cases of COVID-19 confirmed in a 24 hour period.

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The Director of Public Health, Doctor Nicola Brink, has announced today that the Bailiwick now has a **total** of 17 positive cases of COVID-19. All positive cases are located in Guernsey. These results were received by Public Health between 16.30 on the 20<sup>th</sup> March and 18.15 today.

As at 18.15 today the testing number were as follows:

Total tests taken	Negative results	Positive results	Awaiting results
299	221	17	61

All 15 positive cases have a clear travel history and have recently returned from the UK, France, Tenerife, Mainland Spain, Germany, Austria and Switzerland and became symptomatic (a cough, fever or shortness of breath) on their return. There appears to be two clusters acquired in France and Germany. Of importance is that none of the cases appear to have been acquired locally.

All patients followed Public Health advice and self-isolated as soon as they showed any symptoms. They sought help promptly and are being supported by healthcare professionals.

The test results received in the last 24 hours are from samples taken between 17<sup>th</sup> and 19 March 2020. Public Health Services are still waiting for the results of tests taken between 11<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> March 2020. These samples were sent to the laboratory in Birmingham that HSC uses. However, due to the situation in the UK regarding sampling, the laboratory were unable to process these for us and sent them to another laboratory in Colindale. These samples are in a batch of around 500 samples (from across the UK) which are still awaiting processing.

Dr Brink said:

‘Guernsey has prepared for COVID-19 using World Health Organisation guidelines for managing a pandemic, that is you design your response so that it is specific to your local jurisdiction. Guernsey included countries on its Group A and Group B lists for affected areas much sooner than Public Health England. We took into account our ageing demographic and the number who have holiday homes in France and Mainland Spain. This has allowed us to design a Bailiwick specific response. It is encouraging that our more cautious approach has resulted in us picking up these cases.

As we face an increasingly difficult time, it is important that we continue to plan and adapt to ensure that our response is right for the Bailiwick. For example, we are able to increase the number of people in our Tracing Unit so we can manage the contacts around these new individual positive cases’

Deputy Gavin St Pier, President of the Policy & Resources Committee said:

‘It is clear that the nature of spread of COVID-19 has changed and more and more cases are being identified globally. This is exactly as Dr Brink and her team had predicted through their modelling and has been used as the basis for recent decisions such as closing our borders to non-essential travel, the temporary closing of schools early for Easter and the change in the licensing rules for pubs and clubs.

Whilst these restrictive measures are viewed by some as an inconvenience, the results that we have received over the last 24 hour starkly demonstrate why those decisions have been made.

Additional resources have been made available to support Public Health and I am incredibly grateful to everyone involved. They are working incredibly hard to do their utmost to support our community.

Let’s be clear, we know and have always known that we will have more positive cases in Guernsey but the good news is we have no cases of transmission within the community and so remain in the ‘contain’ phase of our plan.’

Deputy Heidi Soulsby, President of the Committee *for* Health & Social Care said:

‘These are not the last difficult and impactful decisions we will have to make whilst we fight to protect our community from COVID-19. It is essential that people listen to the advice we are issuing regarding hand washing, social distancing and self-isolation.

Now is the time for everyone to consider their behaviour and how this can impact on the more vulnerable members of our community and the older population.

We only have one hospital and a small health and care infrastructure. The behaviour of our community will either protect that infrastructure or bring it to its knees. We cannot send patients off Island as UK hospitals are full. No single member of our hospital services team wants to be in a position where we are having to decide who to treat because of a lack of resources.

Everyone absolutely must work with us and pull together as a community to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Having regard to the need to manage resources, individual media releases will not be issued in respect of further positive test results. Instead [gov.gg/coronavirus](http://gov.gg/coronavirus) will be updated at 09.00 daily with the results received in the previous 24 hours.'

**Ends**

## Notes to Media

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