

Media Release

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Civil Contingencies Authority issues Work from Home recommendation in preparation for Omicron wave

The Civil Contingencies Authority is asking all those who are able to practically **work from home** to do so, as soon as possible. This recommendation is in response to emerging data on the Omicron variant.

Increasingly, data indicates a more transmissible variant that will spread quickly leading to significantly higher case numbers than have been seen under other variants, both globally and here in the Bailiwick. Six confirmed cases of Omicron have now been detected in Guernsey. This means there is the potential to see a large wave in the Bailiwick in the coming weeks. The emerging data also suggests it is incredibly important that people receive a vaccine booster to improve their protection against serious illness.

Currently the hospital and other health services are preparing for a potential increase in COVID patients, however, they do not expect the increase in hospital admissions to be as severe as the increase in overall cases. This continues to be kept under review as more data emerges, but the services are currently confident they are well prepared and will be able to manage. **The top priority now is to deliver the booster programme as quickly as possible** to minimise the numbers of cases requiring hospital or medical treatment.

The CCA continues to **strongly recommend the use of Lateral Flow Tests regularly**, including before attending any event where there will be crowds or a lack of social distancing (such as restaurants, pubs or nightclubs), where wearing a mask is not possible or before meeting a vulnerable person.

The CCA has made several other decisions today as part of its ongoing response to Omicron, and these will continue to be reviewed regularly:

Contacts of cases of Omicron will follow the same requirements as those who are contacts of delta cases. This means a contact who is fully vaccinated should carry out Lateral Flow Tests for 10 days and observe passive follow-up rules, avoiding certain settings such as care homes. Unvaccinated contacts will be issued with a Stay at Home Request and asked to isolate for 10 days.

The mandatory requirement to wear a face covering will be extended to cinemas, theatres and concert venues and places of worship, with the exception of those who are in those who are performing.

Deputy Peter Ferbrache, Chair of the Civil Contingencies Authority said

“This is still a very uncertain time as new data about Omicron comes in every day from around the world. We are taking a cautious approach, but one that recognises we have a highly vaccinated community and are well placed to very quickly deliver boosters to all adults. We are preparing for all scenarios, including the possibility that we’ll see a big wave in the next few weeks, potentially much bigger than the one we’re just getting over now. But through boosting we can certainly reduce the numbers of cases that become very ill, and for that reason our hospital team still feel confident of their ability to manage.

As a community we can help by trying to slow the rise in cases as much as practically possible, and that is why we’re asking those who can work from home to do so, and more than ever we are urging people to wear a face covering and take their lateral flow tests. Even though our hospital is well-placed to cope, we know large numbers of cases at one time can cause disruption to businesses and services. While we can hope that does not transpire, we must be prepared in case it does.”

Dr Nicola Brink, Director of Public Health said

“There is a lot still to learn about Omicron which means our best predictions right now may be wrong, but what we’re seeing is a virus that is much more transmissible and likely to soon become the dominant variant. We will keep updating our own predictions based on the latest data as it arrives, but we could see our own Omicron wave very soon. We have already very good cooperation from the community when it comes to wearing face coverings and taking lateral flow tests, but we must maintain that now more than ever. And most of all, I am appealing to all of those who have not yet taken up the vaccine to do so and for everyone to get their booster, which is absolutely our best means of protection. We need to work together, as we have done over the past almost two years, to protect our community.”

A live COVID-19 briefing is being held at 6pm today on gov.gg/coronavirus, the States of Guernsey Facebook page and local radio.