

Headlines

- First Minister [outlines](#) Welsh Government's approach to legislation amid Covid-19
- National Assembly [holds](#) first virtual plenary session
- Plaid Cymru and Conservative leaders [join](#) Welsh Government's Covid core group
- Public Health Wales [confirms](#) 274 new cases and a further 29 deaths due to Covid-19
- Councils [given](#) emergency powers to support NHS with new field hospitals
- Home abortions in Wales [approved](#) during coronavirus crisis
- Jane Hutt [highlights](#) support for victims of domestic abuse amid stay-at-home rules
- Education Minister [outlines](#) support for school supply staff during closures
- Emergency measures [unveiled](#) to support farmers during coronavirus outbreak

Welsh Government

News

Press Conference: During the Welsh Government's daily Covid-19 briefing, Kirsty Williams [said](#) a statement on the provision of free school meals for the remainder of the academic year will be made in the near future. The education minister commended the effort of schools that have remained open to cater for the children of essential key workers and vulnerable children. Ms Williams also praised teachers who have successfully utilised the government's online Hwb resources to engage with pupils and continue their education through remote learning. The minister also recognised the important role of universities and colleges, with medical students stepping up to join the NHS workforce during a trying time, as well as researchers joining the international effort to find a cure for Covid-19. Turning to university admissions, Ms Williams stated that she did endorse a position of blanket unconditional offers for prospective students, and that results day should be "*business as usual*" wherever possible. Asked when the Welsh Government expects the coronavirus outbreak to peak, Ms Williams said the chief medical officer has acknowledged that the actions the Welsh public are taking by adhering to self-isolation and social distancing are undoubtedly improving the situation and saving untold lives. She added that it is too early to make accurate predictions about what will happen next, and that it remains entirely possible that different regions of Wales will reach their Covid-19 peak at different times. The minister refuted criticism that there is too much variety in the free school meals provision offered by local authorities across Wales. She said the Welsh Government is the only government in the UK that is maintaining free school meals provision over the extended Easter school holidays. Ms Williams said every university in Wales is contributing to the national effort to combat the coronavirus outbreak, such as allowing their students to join and support the NHS workforce, providing accommodation to NHS workers and using their laboratories for research. Questioned on whether any universities are specifically helping in terms of providing ventilators and testing facilities, the minister pointed out that the clinical laboratories of Swansea University are working on PPE, with Cardiff University also making its laboratories and equipment available. Ms Williams also commended the University of South Wales for using virtual learning to rapidly upskill nursing students so that they can join the NHS workforce quickly. Turning to curriculum reform, Ms Williams clarified that the timetable for the implementation of the new curriculum has not been delayed by Covid-19 yet, but that the Welsh Government will be issuing guidance for educational professionals on this issue in the near future. Ms Williams also stated that the coronavirus outbreak will not affect the six-week school summer holidays, and the Welsh Government will be publishing a 'Continuity of Learning' programme for the summer term. She also said that every child in Wales should have log in details for the Hwb online platform, which will give them free access to Microsoft Office software on up to five devices. Answering a

question on cancer treatments, Ms Williams stated that even though the NHS is under incredible pressure at this time, emergency and vital provision will remain in place, which includes cancer treatment.

Cases: Public Health Wales [confirmed](#) 274 new cases have tested positive for Covid-19 in Wales, bringing the total number of confirmed cases to 1,837. A further 29 deaths have been reported of people who had tested positive for coronavirus, taking the number of deaths in Wales to 98.

Legislation: Mark Drakeford [issued](#) an update on the Welsh Government's legislative programme in light of Covid-19. The First Minister said the Local Government and the Curriculum Bills will be prioritised.

Field Hospitals: Julie James [introduced](#) emergency permitted development rights for the construction of field hospitals, which will allow local authorities to change the use of buildings or erect temporary structures on their land without planning permission.

Home Abortions: Vaughan Gething [announced](#) that women in Wales will have access to abortion services at home during the coronavirus crisis.

Domestic Abuse: Jane Hutt [set out](#) measures to help those at an increased risk of domestic abuse during the current stay-at-home rules.

Supply Teachers: Kirsty Williams [issued](#) a letter outlining the support available for school supply staff during the Covid-19 school closures.

Farming: Lesley Griffiths [announced](#) emergency measures to support farmers during the Covid-19 outbreak.

Publications

Minutes: [Tax Advisory Group meeting: March 14 2019](#)

Welsh Revenue Authority: [Equality report 2020 and strategic equality plan 2020-2024](#)

Guidance:

- [Co-design for a sustainable farming scheme for Wales](#)
- [Covid-19: Social landlords housing regulation guidance](#)
- [Continuation of immunisation programmes during the Covid-19 pandemic: Letter from CMO](#)

Statistics:

- [Local area fuel poverty estimates: 2017-18](#)
- [Recycling, and bags used for shopping \(National Survey for Wales\): 2018-19](#)

Decision reports:

- [GCSEs and AS levels](#)
- [Covid-19 emergency support](#)
- [Appointment to the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board](#)

Freedom of Information

- [Traffic figures](#)
- [BSI Speedway](#)

News

Plenary: The National Assembly [held](#) its first ‘virtual’ plenary session due to the restrictions designed to halt the spread of coronavirus. Following last week’s emergency Senedd meeting, the Business Committee decided to switch to fully online plenary meetings using the video conferencing facility Zoom.

Legislation

- [Abortion Act 1967 – Approval of a Class of Place for Treatment for the Termination of Pregnancy](#)

Publications

Remuneration Board: [Statement on the pay of AMs and office holders](#)

Written Questions

- Number of Covid-19 [hospitalisations](#) and [fatalities](#) per health board
- [Whether Covid-19 testing agreement collapsed because of the UK Government](#)
- [Private supplier of Covid-19 testing and why the deal collapsed](#)
- [Using the International Convention Centre Wales as a temporary field hospital](#)
- [Number of PPE requested by public services](#)
- [Laboratory space being used for Covid-19 testing](#)
- [Ensuring NHS staff can access meals during their shifts](#)
- [Ensuring a robust supply of hydroxychloroquine](#)
- [Ensuring adequate supplies of PPE for care homes and domiciliary care workers](#)
- [Withdrawing business rate relief for retail/hospitality businesses with a rateable value of £500k+](#)
- [Providing local authorities with advance payment of the revenue support grant](#)
- [Number of homeless people in temporary accommodation](#)

Party News

Welsh Labour: [New coronavirus smart test for Wales](#)

Plaid Cymru:

- [Farmers shouldn’t pay price for pandemic](#)
- [‘Welsh Government needs to do more to protect tenants’](#)

Plenary

[Statement by the First Minister: Coronavirus](#) – Wednesday, April 1

Update

Mark Drakeford updated AMs on measures his government has taken in response to the coronavirus crisis in the week since the Senedd last met. The First Minister warned that the spread of coronavirus continues to accelerate in Wales, saying there has been a significant increase in the number of people requiring hospital treatment and an increase in the number of deaths. Prof Drakeford said Paul Davies and Adam Price have accepted invitations to join the cabinet’s Covid-19 group. He told the Senedd that an agreement has also been reached to make military assistance available to civilian authorities.

Health and Social Care

Adam Price asked about a collapsed deal with pharmaceutical company Roche to deliver 5,000 tests a day. He urged the Welsh Government to independently source its own testing capacity in addition to working on a four-nation basis, suggesting that Welsh universities should be approached about their laboratory capacity. The Plaid Cymru leader also raised concerns about personal protective equipment (PPE), asking if councils are free to procure their own stocks. He also asked if care workers going into people's homes should be advised to wear PPE as a matter of course. Prof Drakeford argued that a co-ordinated approach across the four nations is sensible, saying he does not want to see countries competing for scarce resources. On PPE, Prof Drakeford told AMs that councils can secure their own supplies but, again, he cautioned that he does not want to see local authorities competing against one another. He confirmed that an emergency helpline about access to PPE will not be made public for individual nurses and care workers as is the case in England. Responding to Brexit Party group representative Caroline Jones, the First Minister said a significant amount of PPE was given to care homes earlier this week.

Education and Children

On education, Prof Drakeford said the government has worked quickly to provide information students may need since the decision to close schools and cancel exams. He explained that year 10 and 12 students, who were due to sit examinations this summer, will not be required to sit those exams and their full qualifications will be provided in 2021. The First Minister said more than 800 schools have stayed open to support the most vulnerable learners and the children of critical workers, adding that most will remain open over Easter.

Mark Drakeford agreed with Lynne Neagle about the importance of ensuring that the needs of vulnerable children and young people are closely monitored. He said fresh guidance has been issued to Flying Start and Families First services. Prof Drakeford stressed that school remains a place where vulnerable children can get help, adding that the government is working with teaching unions and councils on post-Easter services.

Economy

Paul Davies, for the Conservatives, called on the Welsh Government to reprioritise its finances in response to the outbreak. Describing Tuesday's £1.1bn announcement as 'business as usual', he pointed out that only 25% of the funding comes from the Welsh Government. The Leader of the Opposition also called for an update on when ministers will bring forward a supplementary budget. Prof Drakeford argued that it is unfair to describe the £1.1bn freed up from other commitments as 'business as usual'.

Domestic Violence

Paul Davies raised concerns that the outbreak may lead to a domestic abuse pandemic. Prof Drakeford said the government is alert to the concerns and Jane Hutt has published new guidance to the sector.

Construction

Adam Price raised the Scottish Government's instructions for all non-essential construction to cease, urging the Welsh Government to use its powers to do likewise. Prof Drakeford pointed out that Scottish ministers issued guidance rather than instructions, saying he is still wrestling with how best to bear down on unsafe construction sites while ensuring that essential works for public purposes are not disrupted.

Third Sector

Paul Davies urged the Welsh Government to redistribute its funding to third sector organisations so those responding to the outbreak are at the front of the queue. The Tory group leader asked about steps to increase the number of volunteers in Wales. Mark Drakeford highlighted announcements of £24m for the voluntary

sector and £50m for a direct delivery food scheme for Wales' most vulnerable people. He praised the Wales Council for Voluntary Action and County Voluntary Councils for everything they are doing in partnership with local authorities to match the huge upswell of volunteers with tasks that need to be carried out. He said 30,000 people have come forward since the start of the coronavirus crisis.

Online Shopping

Labour backbencher Lynne Neagle raised concerns about access to online shopping, calling for the England-only registration scheme for vulnerable shoppers to be replicated in Wales. Prof Drakeford told the Torfaen AM that the Welsh Government is in talks with supermarkets. He said shielded individuals who cannot leave their homes will be prioritised and councils will act as clearinghouses to put volunteers in touch with individuals who have no family nor friends to rely on.

Statements from Vaughan Gething and Ken Skates will follow.

Media Round-up

- ITV: [Plaid Cymru and Conservative leaders join Welsh Government's Coronavirus Core Group](#)
- BBC: [Coronavirus: GP surgery apology over 'do not resuscitate' form](#)
- ITV: [Wales sees highest number of coronavirus-related deaths as cases rise to 1,837](#)
- Nation.Cymru: [Home care staff 'fear for their lives' because of lack of protective equipment](#)
- BBC: [Coronavirus: A fifth of smaller UK firms 'will run out of cash'](#)
- ITV: [Work begins on field hospitals in Swansea and Neath Port Talbot as demand expected to rise](#)
- Nation.Cymru: [Adam Price calls for 'honesty' over collapsed coronavirus testing deal](#)
- BBC: [Coronavirus: Dental patients 'could lose teeth'](#)
- WalesOnline: [Welsh Government faces questions as coronavirus test deal appears to collapse](#)
- South Wales Argus: [Coronavirus Wales: 29 more deaths, 274 new cases](#)
- BBC: [Coronavirus: Wales' air pollution drops because of lockdown](#)
- Nation.Cymru: [No pay rise for Assembly Members due to coronavirus pandemic](#)
- IWA: [COVID-19 Lockdown: Rest and Prepare for the Long Haul to Recovery](#)
- BBC: [Coronavirus: 'Be kind' to yourselves, home-school parents told](#)
- Nation.Cymru: [Coronavirus: Westminster won't implement a basic income – but Wales should](#)

Coming Up

Agenda

Wednesday, April 1

- First Minister's Statement: [Coronavirus](#)
- Health Minister's Statement: [Coronavirus](#)
- Economy and Transport Minister's Statement: [Coronavirus](#)
- Statistics: [Welsh Housing Conditions Survey \(local area fuel poverty estimates\)](#)

Thursday, April 2

- Statistics: [Consistent performance measures for post-16 learning: August 2016-July 2017](#)
- Statistics: [Aggregate agricultural output and income: 2019](#)
- Statistics: [Research and development gross expenditure: 2018](#)

Friday, April 3

- Research: [Teachers' statutory induction](#)

Tuesday, April 7

- First Minister's Statement: [Coronavirus](#)
- Environment Minister's Statement: [Response to Covid-19](#)
- Debate: [General Principles – Local Government and Elections Bill](#)
- Motion: [Financial Resolution – Local Government and Elections Bill](#)