COVID-19 recovery

26th February 2021

**Title:** Recognise long covid as occupational disease and compensate frontline workers, say MPs

BMJ | 2021; 372: n503 | 19th February 2021

MPs have stepped up pressure on ministers to recognise “long covid” as an occupational disease and to compensate frontline health and other key workers living with its “debilitating” effects. The proposal by the All Party Parliamentary Group on Coronavirus has won the backing of 65 MPs and peers, as well as the BMA.

Full detail: [Recognise long covid as occupational disease and compensate frontline workers, say MPs](https://www.bmj.com/content/372/bmj.n503)

**Title:** When should the UK lift its lockdown?

The Lancet Respiratory Medicine | 19th February 2021

As of Feb 15, the UK has vaccinated more than 15 million people, mostly in vulnerable people aged 70 years and older, as well as health and social care workers. Lockdown, and now the rapid vaccine roll out, have combined to lower the daily death count and the number of patients hospitalised with COVID-19. The UK has now rapidly moved into vaccinating its next priority groups, with plans to vaccinate all adults 50 years and older by April. This would protect people who, prior to vaccination, represented 99% of the deaths and 80% of COVID-related hospitalisations.

In this context, this article asks ‘When should the UK lift its lockdown’?

Full detail: [When should the UK lift its lockdown?](https://www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S2213-2600%2821%2900106-5)

**Title:** Indirect acute effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on physical and mental health in the UK: a population-based study

The Lancet Digital Health | 18th February 2021

There are concerns that the response to the COVID-19 pandemic in the UK might have worsened physical and mental health, and reduced use of health services. However, the scale of the problem is unquantified, impeding development of effective mitigations. This paper aimed to ascertain what has happened to general practice contacts for acute physical and mental health outcomes during the pandemic.

The authors found that there were substantial reductions in primary care contacts for acute physical and mental conditions following the introduction of restrictions, with limited recovery by July, 2020. Further research is needed to ascertain whether these reductions reflect changes in disease frequency or missed opportunities for care.

Maintaining health-care access should be a key priority in future public health planning, including further restrictions. The conditions we studied are sufficiently severe that any unmet need will have substantial ramifications for the people with the conditions as well as health-care provision.

Full article: [Indirect acute effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on physical and mental health in the UK: a population-based study](https://www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S2589-7500%2821%2900017-0)

**Title:** How can policymakers plan better for the long term?

The Health Foundation | 24th February 2021

Coronavirus (COVID-19) has shown why governments must prepare better for an uncertain future. This long read explores what long-term planning means and how it could be improved Key points:

* Long-term planning is not just about preparing for future shocks, such as pandemics. It also means responding to ‘slow burn’ issues that are already well known, sustained action to meet complex policy goals, and protecting resources for future generations.
* A mix of approaches could help improve long-term planning. This includes alternative measures to assess policy progress and independent institutions to protect future interests. No approach is a silver bullet – and political will is ultimately needed.
* Recovery from the pandemic provides a unique opportunity for policymakers to develop longer term strategies for improving and protecting the nation’s health and care. Three areas to prioritise include: strengthening health and care system capacity and resilience; developing a national strategy to reduce health inequalities; and reforming adult social care to be sustainable and effective for the long term.

The article asks the following:

1. [Why plan for the long term?](https://www.health.org.uk/publications/long-reads/how-can-policymakers-plan-better-for-the-long-term#lf-section-118456-anchor)
2. [What does long-term planning actually mean?](https://www.health.org.uk/publications/long-reads/how-can-policymakers-plan-better-for-the-long-term#lf-section-118466-anchor)
3. [Why is long-term planning so difficult?](https://www.health.org.uk/publications/long-reads/how-can-policymakers-plan-better-for-the-long-term#lf-section-118476-anchor)
4. [What could improve long-term planning?](https://www.health.org.uk/publications/long-reads/how-can-policymakers-plan-better-for-the-long-term#lf-section-118486-anchor)
5. [Long-term planning and COVID-19 recovery](https://www.health.org.uk/publications/long-reads/how-can-policymakers-plan-better-for-the-long-term#lf-section-118496-anchor)

Full detail: [How can policymakers plan better for the long term?](https://www.health.org.uk/publications/long-reads/how-can-policymakers-plan-better-for-the-long-term)

**Title:** Maternal death: Learning from maternal death investigations during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic

Healthcare Safety Investigation Branch | February 2021

The purpose of this national learning report is to review the findings of HSIBs maternal death investigation reports and identify any potential themes and areas of learning. This learning could potentially improve maternal care if a future surge of COVID-19 cases occurs.

This national learning report has identified changes in access to healthcare during the pandemic, barriers to effective work processes and pressures for staff. Seven themes emerged from HSIB’s analysis of the investigations.

* Unprecedented demand for telephone health advice caused delays in accessing health care
* Public messaging and ‘safety netting’ advice caused delays in seeking healthcare
* Guidance changed rapidly
* Use of early warning scores did not always detect deterioration
* Personal protective equipment requirements changed due to COVID-19
* Staff described feelings of stress and distress which can affect performance
* Difficulties in making a diagnosis and choosing treatment strategies

By describing these themes HSIB aims to inform decision making to improve patient safety in the months ahead.

Full report: [Maternal death: Learning from maternal death investigations during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic](https://www.hsib.org.uk/documents/285/HSIB_Maternal_Death_Report_V13.pdf)

**Title:** Unhelpful ‘catch up’ narrative about lost learning during the pandemic places unnecessary psychological pressure on children and young people

British Psychological Society | 22nd February 2021

Telling pupils they need to "catch up" on lost learning creates added pressure on children, educational psychologists have warned.

With extended school days and potential summer schools being floated as potential solutions to address the perceived educational attainment gap created by the pandemic, members of the BPS’s Division of Educational and Child Psychology are instead advocating for a phased return to regular schooling, combined with a quality-over-quantity approach to key learning. Where additional school time is a strategy, it should focus on supporting children through socialisation and play.

The BPS are also highlighting the importance of focusing on what children have learnt and achieved over the past year - thanks to the home-schooling efforts of parents and caregivers and remote-learning provision delivered by teachers and other educational professionals throughout the pandemic.

The impact of the lockdowns on children’s wellbeing and mental health must be considered as part of the decision-making around the return to school plan.

Full detail: [Unhelpful ‘catch up’ narrative about lost learning during the pandemic places unnecessary psychological pressure on children and young people](https://www.bps.org.uk/news-and-policy/unhelpful-narrative-lost-learning-during-pandemic)

**Title:** Covid-19: Keeping schools as safe as possible

BMJ | 2021; 372: n524 | 24th February 2021

Although evidence has accumulated that school outbreaks are limited in number and size and that mitigation measures are effective, the emergence of variants with increased transmissibilityraises uncertainty. This editorial explains it is therefore important to revisit how schools can be kept open without becoming centres of SARS-CoV-2 transmission, stating that a growing menu of effective measures can and should be deployed.

Full editorial: [Covid-19: Keeping schools as safe as possible](https://www.bmj.com/content/372/bmj.n524)

**Title:** New education recovery package for children and young people

Department for Education | 24th February 2021

The government has announced further elements of the recovery support package so children and young people can catch up on missed learning and development due to the pandemic.

From 8 March all children and students will return to face-to-face education in schools and colleges.

This will be supported with a new £700 million package, focusing on an expansion of one-to-one and small group tutoring programmes, as well as supporting the development of disadvantaged children in early years settings, and summer provision for those pupils who need it the most.

A new one-off Recovery Premium for state primary and secondary schools, building on the Pupil Premium, will be provided to schools to use as they see best to support disadvantaged students.

Full detail: [New education recovery package for children and young people](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-education-recovery-package-for-children-and-young-people)

**Title:** Is Covid at risk of becoming a disease of the poor?

BBC | 25th February 2021

This article reports on emerging data that suggests the poorest and most ethnically diverse communities are seeing the lowest levels of vaccination uptake. The article also highlights that those in more deprived and ethnically diverse communities have been at greater risk from the virus. Work by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) shows that those living in the most deprived neighbourhoods have been more than twice as likely to die from Covid as those in the least deprived - the reasons for this are complex, ranging from greater exposure to higher levels of poor health.

Full detail: [Is Covid at risk of becoming a disease of the poor?](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-56162075)

**Title:** What does the pandemic mean for health and health inequalities?

The Health Foundation | 18th February 2021

The pandemic, and wider governmental and societal responses have exposed existing inequalities in our society, with implications for the nation's long-term health.

The Health Foundation’s [COVID-19 impact inquiry](https://www.health.org.uk/what-we-do/a-healthier-uk-population/mobilising-action-for-healthy-lives/covid-19-impact-inquiry) is exploring the pandemic’s implications for health and health inequalities across the UK with a focus on three time periods in relation to the pandemic - before, during and after. It will also shine a light on groups who have been disproportionately affected, hearing from a diverse set of voices across the UK to inform its robust analysis.

The Health Foundation aims to share the findings from the inquiry in summer 2021. This infographic highlights areas of focus for the COVID-19 impact inquiry and some of the questions that it seeks to answer.

Infographic and full detail: [What does the pandemic mean for health and health inequalities?](https://www.health.org.uk/news-and-comment/charts-and-infographics/what-does-the-pandemic-mean-for-health-and-health-inequaliti)

**Title:** Supporting the LGBTQ+ population through COVID-19 and beyond

NHS Confederation | 18th February 2021

Leaders from across the healthcare system agree that for the LGBTQ+ population to recover and thrive after the pandemic, the way services are designed and delivered, and the workforce environments they are delivered in, must change.

This report sets out a series of recommendations to help healthcare leaders, service designers and commissioners ensure their services and workplaces meet the needs of the LGBTQ+ population:

1. Create visible leadership and confident staff
2. Create a strong knowledge base
3. Be non-heteronormative and non-cisnormative in everything you do
4. Take responsibility for collecting and reporting data
5. Listen to your service users
6. Proactively seek out partners to co-deliver services

Full detail: [Supporting the LGBTQ+ population through COVID-19 and beyond](https://www.nhsconfed.org/-/media/Confederation/Files/Networks/MentalHealth/LGBTQ-post-covid-recommendations.pdf)

**Title:** All adults on learning disability register should be prioritised for vaccination, says advisory committee

BMJ | 2021; 372: n547 | 24th February 2021

The UK government’s vaccine advisory committee has said that all people on the GP Learning Disability Register should now be invited for a covid-19 vaccine as part of priority group 6.

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) said that adults with other related conditions such as cerebral palsy should also be invited and that local authorities should help to identify adults with learning disabilities in residential and nursing care, as well as those who require assisted living support and those in shared accommodation with multiple occupancy.

This will mean that at least 150 000 more people with learning disabilities should be offered the vaccine more quickly.

The announcement comes after some local GP groups decided to prioritise all patients with learning disabilities for covid-19 vaccination, in response to evidence that disabled patients were at much higher risk from the disease.Recent figures from the Office for National Statistics showed that 60% of people in England who died from covid-19 from January to November 2020 had a disability.

Full detail: [All adults on learning disability register should be prioritised for vaccination, says advisory committee](https://www.bmj.com/content/372/bmj.n547)

**Title:** Vaccine success drives England’s lockdown exit

BMJ | 2021; 372: n528 | 23rd February 2021

In a speech to the House of Commons on 22 February the prime minister gave details of the government’s road map for exiting the current lockdown in four stages, subject to four conditions being met at each stage.Boris Johnson said that although the threat “remains substantial,” the “extraordinary success” of the covid-19 vaccine programme led by the NHS, alongside falling infections and hospital admissions, meant that a cautious lifting of restrictions was now possible.

Full detail: [Vaccine success drives England’s lockdown exit](https://www.bmj.com/content/372/bmj.n528)

See also:

* [Prime Minister sets out roadmap to cautiously ease lockdown restrictions](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/prime-minister-sets-out-roadmap-to-cautiously-ease-lockdown-restrictions) | Prime Minister's Office, 10 Downing Street
* [COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-spring-2021) | Cabinet Office

**Title:** New campaign encourages the nation to keep going and stay at home

Department of Health and Social Care | 25th February 2021

Everyone across the UK is being reminded of the importance of staying at home and the risks in relaxing their behaviour at this crucial point, in a new advertising campaign.

While transmission rates decline, vaccines continue to be rolled out and the roadmap out of lockdown has been published, the heartening new campaign is encouraging people to ‘keep going’. It acknowledges how difficult lockdown has been but highlights its effectiveness with falling infection rates and successful vaccine roll-out.

The campaign will run across TV, radio, out-of-home advertising and on social media, reminding people that everything they’ve done – working from home, washing their hands, wearing a mask, maintaining social distancing and video calling – is helping stop the spread of COVID-19 and new variants, edging us closer to coming out of lockdown.

Full detail: [New campaign encourages the nation to keep going and stay at home](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-campaign-encourages-the-nation-to-keep-going-and-stay-at-home)

**Title:** JCVI issues interim advice on Phase 2 of COVID-19 vaccination programme rollout

Public Health England | 26th February 2021

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has considered the evidence for Phase 2 of the UK’s COVID-19 vaccination programme.

For Phase 2, modelling studies also indicate the speed of vaccine deployment is the most important factor in maximising public health benefits against severe outcomes.

After groups 1 to 9 in Phase 1, people aged 40 to 49 years are at highest risk of hospitalisation, with the risk reducing the younger you are. Prioritisation will therefore continue in the following order, once all at-risk groups in Phase 1 have been offered at least one dose of the vaccine:

* all those aged 40 to 49 years
* all those aged 30 to 39 years
* all those aged 18 to 29 years

The committee agreed that mass vaccination targeting occupational groups would be more complex to deliver and may slow down the vaccine programme, leaving some more vulnerable people at higher risk unvaccinated for longer.

Operationally, simple and easy-to-deliver programmes are critical for rapid deployment and high vaccine uptake.

Full detail: [JCVI issues interim advice on Phase 2 of COVID-19 vaccination programme rollout](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/jcvi-issues-interim-advice-on-phase-2-of-covid-19-vaccination-programme-rollout)

See also: [Priority groups for phase 2 of the coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccination programme: advice from the JCVI](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/priority-groups-for-phase-2-of-the-coronavirus-covid-19-vaccination-programme-advice-from-the-jcvi)

**Title:** Latest findings from antibody surveillance study published

Imperial College London | Department of Health and Social Care | 25th February 2021

Imperial College London and Ipsos MORI have published their latest antibody surveillance report tracking COVID-19 infection across England. For the first time, the study captures participants who have received a COVID-19 vaccine, and also gathers insight into how different groups feel about vaccines.

* Over 154,000 participants took part in a home surveillance study for COVID-19 antibodies between 26 January and 8 February
* Findings published by Imperial College London and Ipsos MORI show 13.9% of the population in England had antibodies against COVID-19
* 17,000 participants had received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, with 91% of people across all ages testing positive for antibodies after 2 doses of the Pfizer vaccine
* Overall vaccine confidence is high with 92% having accepted or planning to accept a vaccine offer

Further detail: [Latest findings from antibody surveillance study published](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/latest-findings-from-antibody-surveillance-study-published)

See also: [Coronavirus antibodies in 14% of England’s population – Imperial REACT](https://www.imperial.ac.uk/news/215753/coronavirus-antibodies-14-englands-population-imperial/)

pre-print report: ['REACT-2 Round 5: Increasing prevalence of SARS-CoV-2 antibodies demonstrate impact of the second wave and of vaccine roll-out in England'](https://www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/institute-of-global-health-innovation/REACT-2-round-5-preprint.pdf)

**Title:** Ethnicity vaccination gap narrows in England, but concerns remain

BMJ | 2021; 372: n505 | 19th February 2021

The gap between the number of black people and white people vaccinated against covid-19 in England has slightly narrowed in the past few weeks, although it is still a concern and requires attention, say experts.

As of 13 January, data from the OpenSAFELY platform showed that twice as many white people aged over 80 (43%) had been vaccinated as black people (21%). By 11 February, when 91% of this age group had been vaccinated, 91% of white people had been vaccinated, compared with only 58% of black people and 72% of people from South Asian backgrounds

Full detail: [Ethnicity vaccination gap narrows in England, but concerns remain](https://www.bmj.com/content/372/bmj.n505)

See also: [Covid-19 vaccine hesitancy among ethnic minority groups](https://www.bmj.com/content/372/bmj.n513) | BMJ [editorial]

**Title:** Is vaccination roll out reducing cases and deaths in the UK?

BMJ | 2021; 372: n506 | 19th February 2021

Death rates among people over 80 appear to be falling faster than other age groups, so are we starting to see the effect of the vaccination programme? This BMJ analysis looks at what we know, asking the following questions:

* Are deaths falling in groups of people who have been vaccinated?
* Is this because of the vaccination programme?
* Is vaccination having an effect on hospitalisations?
* Are infection rates falling among the elderly?
* What about antibody levels?

Full detail: [Is vaccination roll out reducing cases and deaths in the UK?](https://www.bmj.com/content/372/bmj.n506)

**Title:** In The Wake Of The Pandemic: Preparing For Long Covid

World Health Organization, Europe | 25th February 2021

Some 1 in 10 people still experience persistent ill health 12 weeks after having COVID-19, termed “long COVID” or post-COVID conditions. This policy brief looks at how sufferers, including medical professionals, are driving some of those responses.

Written for decision-makers, this brief summarises what is known about the conditions, who and how many people suffer from them, diagnosis and treatment, and how countries are addressing the issue. It looks at the need for multidisciplinary, multispecialty approaches to assessment and management; development of new care pathways and contextually appropriate guidelines for health professionals; and the creation of appropriate services, including rehabilitation and online support tools.

Full document: [In the wake of the pandemic: Preparing for Long COVID](https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/339629/Policy-brief-39-1997-8073-eng.pdf)

See also: [New policy brief calls on decision-makers to support patients as 1 in 10 report symptoms of “long COVID”](https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-emergencies/coronavirus-covid-19/news/news/2021/2/new-policy-brief-calls-on-decision-makers-to-support-patients-as-1-in-10-report-symptoms-of-long-covid)

**Title:** Almost half of people with possible cancer symptoms didn’t see GP in first wave of pandemic

Cancer Research UK | 25th February 2021

Nearly half of people who had potential cancer symptoms in the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic did not contact their GP, a Cancer Research UK and Cardiff University study suggests.

Initial findings of the UK-wide survey, focusing on the experiences of 7,543 people from March to August 2020, found that possible cancer symptoms were common during the first wave, with 40% of people saying they had experienced at least one potential cancer symptom.

Of those who experienced symptoms, 45% admitted to not contacting their GP for any symptom. People did not seek help even for ‘red flag symptoms’ – 31% of those who experienced coughing up blood, 41% of those who had an unexplained lump or swelling and 59% of those who noticed a change in the appearance of a mole did not contact their GP.

People gave a variety of reasons for putting off seeking medical help, including not wanted to burden the NHS.

Full detail: [Almost half of people with possible cancer symptoms didn’t see GP in first wave of pandemic](https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-us/cancer-news/news-report/2021-02-25-almost-half-of-people-with-possible-cancer-symptoms-didnt-see-gp-in-first-wave-of-pandemic)

See also: [Half with cancer signs didn't contact GP in first wave](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-56180913) | BBC News

**Title:** PHE launches new Psychological First Aid training

Public Health England | 21st February 2021

Online training, developed by Public Health England, is now available for those supporting children and young people affected by coronavirus (COVID-19).

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a huge impact on children, with many reporting that it has made them feel more stressed, lonely and worried.

The online course, developed by Public Health England (PHE), offers training on how to provide practical and emotional support to children and young people affected by emergencies or crisis situations. Children and young people can be very resilient, but crises such as COVID-19 can severely impact their mental health. Getting the right support early on can help prevent problems occurring or worsening.

Those completing the training will be equipped to better identify those children that are in distress and provide support to help them feel safe, connected and able to take steps to help themselves during the pandemic or other crisis situations.

It’s available for all frontline workers such as teachers, health and social workers, charity and community volunteers and anyone who cares for or is regularly in contact with children and young people aged up to 25, including parents and caregivers. It takes about 3 hours to complete (split into 3 sessions that the learner can complete at their own pace) and no previous qualifications are required.

Further detail: [PHE launches new Psychological First Aid training](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/phe-launches-new-psychological-first-aid-training)

We

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