



## Wandsworth Health News

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# Coronavirus -Special Edition

The coronavirus has brought Britain to a standstill.

We should have known what was likely to happen as soon as the first case here was reported on 31 January.

By that time, China, where the outbreak occurred in December had taken tough measures.

The World Health Organisation, praised China's vigorous public health measures, describing its approach to Coronavirus as probably the most "ambitious, agile and aggressive disease containment effort in history".

The province at the centre of the outbreak was on complete lock down from 22 January. The Chinese New Year was put on hold and a complete ban put on travel, schools were closed, there was a ban on large scale events, and people were forced to self isolate . In addition there was

widespread testing for the virus and temperature checks as well.

China's example was belatedly followed by Italy on the advice of Chinese doctors. First North Italy, then all of Italy was closed down. Italy has replicated the Chinese handling of the coronavirus outbreak.

Meanwhile in Britain none of the Chinese example has been followed. This is despite the number of cases of coronavirus in China bottoming out, which has resulted in the slow let up of the restrictions.

Italy is still in the grip of the epidemic ruing the day that the government did not follow China's advice sooner.

The UK, with its part time Prime Minister, is all of a dither.

Faced with the biggest health crisis in more than a generation the advice of the

government, so far (17 March) has been woeful.

No leadership, no direction just advice which people may or may not follow.

It has been left to organisations like the sports associations to take the initiative. Wisely, they have banned events.

Almost two weeks after Broadway shut in New York, the theatres too have unilaterally taken the decision to close their doors. No directive from Boris.

Policy making in the UK regarding CV19 is made on the hoof. Our leader claims he is, 'acting on medical advice.' That advice is at variance with that of virtually every other country.

Nobody really knows how many have coronavirus in the UK. Testing has come to a halt.

**For more on the coronavirus-see over**

# Coronavirus - cuts leave UK unprepared

Our NHS has been underfunded for years.

Already stretched beyond capacity it was in no state to face this latest challenge. It wasn't even prepared for the usual winter peak emergency admissions.

This is as a direct result of the government's consistent cuts to the NHS over the past ten years

The UK now has fewer doctors and nurses per head than almost any developed country. It ranks second-worst amongst the 21 most economically developed countries, with only 2.8 doctors and 7.9 nurses per 1,000 population - both well below the average for the 21 countries. The average number of doctors per 1,000 population is 3.6, with Austria having 5.1, and the average number of nurses is 10.1. Switzerland has 18 nurses per 1,000 people - more than twice as many as the UK.

In total, 17,230 beds have been cut from the 144,455 NHS beds that existed in April-June 2010, the period when the coalition Conservative/Liberal Democrat government took office and imposed a nine-year funding squeeze on the NHS, even though critics cautioned against it because

of growing pressures on the service.

The 127,225 figure is the smallest number of beds available in acute hospitals, maternity centres and units specialising in the care of patients with mental health problems and learning disabilities since records began in 1987/88.

England currently has one of the lowest levels of hospital beds per 1,000 people ratio - 2.3 - compared with 13 in Japan; 12 in South Korea; 8 in Russia and Germany; 6 in France; 4.5 in Switzerland; 4.3 in China; 4.2 in Scotland, 3.8 in Australia; 3.6 in Italy; 2.97 in Spain; 2.96 in Ireland; and 2.77 in the US.

One of the keys to ensuring effective treatment for critical-condition cases of coronavirus is the availability of a high number of intensive care unit (ICU) beds. This is because, if the UK follows the pattern in China, as many as one in five coronavirus patients could need intensive care in order to recover.

But, according to figures from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the UK has just 6.6 ICU

beds per 100,000 people, compared with Germany's 29.2, Italy's 12.5 and France's 9.7.

Italian doctors have warned medics across Europe to "get ready" for Coronavirus in a letter revealing that up to 10 percent of all those infected with coronavirus need intensive care, with hospitals becoming overwhelmed

There are more than 4,000 intensive care beds in the UK, but about four-fifths are currently occupied

Most cases will be mild, although the evidence suggests that one in five may need hospital treatment.

So no small wonder that the UK is unable to cope.

Over a decade of continuous under funding has left our NHS in a perilous state with little capacity to fight its greatest challenge.

Extra funding is welcome but it takes years to train health professionals who are so desperately needed at the present time

# Coronavirus -what's happening in Wandsworth ?

Anyone wanting to know the number of Coronavirus cases in Wandsworth can check it on the Public Health England website. The website gives daily updates.

At the time of writing (17 March) there were 59 confirmed cases in Wandsworth and 34 in neighbouring Merton.

How well prepared is St George's, our local hospital, to cope with the CV19 pandemic ?

Like every other hospital in the NHS St George's has been starved of finance and has just come out of special measures imposed by the Care Quality Commission.

Its finances have for a long time been the subject of review and the hospital needs to borrow almost every month to keep its head above water.

As reported in the last issue of WHN within a week of coming out of special measures the guarantee that the hospital board had given

to the CQC was broken. The agreed end of year deficit of £3 million was tripled to £12million.

The latest figures from the Trust Board meeting of 27 February show a vacancy rate of just under 11% and a sickness rate of nearly 4%.

Our local hospital is understaffed and already many are off sick

It is totally unprepared for a crisis like this

## Wandsworth Group

### Keep Our NHS Public

**Meets second Monday in the month at the PCS building by Clapham Junction Station, 7.30pm**

**All welcome**

## Wandsworth Health News

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**Below is an excellent article from the *Morning Star* newspaper written by a former Labour MP, Alan Simpson**

The nation is at war. Peacetime production has slumped, foreign travel collapsed, casualties rise.

In every part of the country, people worry about how to avoid the enemy.

This time, however, it is germs, not Germans, that we fear. Even the Germans are under attack.

Medically, economically and politically, the coronavirus pandemic has caught us all on the hop.

Forget the Chancellor's hyperbolic claims. His first Budget will not save Britain from either coronavirus or an economic crash. Sadly, nor will anything emerging from the Prime Minister.

Far more significant than the Budget speech was Boris Johnson's admission that "many more British families are going to lose loved ones before their time."

This isn't so much a prediction as an acknowledgment of where his policies are taking us.

Johnson's preference for encouraging individual behaviour change — rather than more interventionist "test-and-trace" and social-

distancing policies — will deliver a slower drift into a much deeper problem.

Most offensive of all is the claim that "herd immunity" is what will save us.

Throughout history, herd immunity comes only after widespread infection and substantial death rates.

Even the benefits are often shortlived, with immunity not comprehensively passed on to succeeding generations of the herd.

By turning his back on more interventionist measures, Johnson's policies look more like A Very British Cull — ironically, one getting shot of large numbers of the very voters who put him into power.

At the moment, Britain has a lower death rate from the virus than Italy (1.4 per cent against 6.7 per cent).

The logic behind the government strategy is that the more dispersed the detected cases, the more manageable they are for the NHS. Without testing and tracing it will not last.

Coronavirus in Britain is running about three weeks behind Italy. The path of its unfolding epidemic is entirely predictable.

Cases double every four days. By the end of the week we can expect about

2,000 cases. In less than three weeks — assuming the rate of increase remains constant — the total number of cases in Britain will have exceeded 16,000.

Even this number is misleading. In truth, the government does not know, and does not want to know, Britain's true infection rate.

The World Health Organisation now says that China's most effective strategy was the extensive testing, proactive detection and immediate isolation of patients. This is what rapidly reduced infection rates.

By choosing not to adopt vigorous test-and-trace policies, Britain has opted not to know precise numbers. The government is left chasing water down a hill. Except it isn't chasing.

Current online advice says "don't go to your GP and don't call NHS 111 unless your condition becomes serious." No wonder the public are confused.

It's hard to predict the number of hospital admissions to expect, but a 20 per cent uptake would generate over 3,000 cases. Some curious counting methods could make the numbers much higher.

The normal NHS way of dealing with a surge is to release about 10 per cent of hospital capacity.

This would amount to about 3,000 beds. In exceptional circumstances it might increase to 20 per cent, but only for a short period. Soon the pressure of competing demands for hospital beds builds to breaking point.

By the end of three weeks, the capacity of the NHS to deal with the coronavirus epidemic will be close to

breaking point. Long before then, people will question Britain's lack of critical-care beds. Italy has 12.5 critical-care beds per 100,000 people: the UK has 6.6 beds per 100,000.

It is one of the — many — brutal ways of measuring the scale of NHS cuts since 2010. No amount of Johnson's hand-washing can escape this.

In search of safety nets

Neither Johnson nor his Chancellor has a magic wand

to wave over absent critical-care beds and the medical staff they rely on.

Private-sector beds can be requisitioned into "the war effort," but then we come to staffing.

Johnson cannot magic back the 14,000 EU nationals who left the NHS during Britain's Brexit debacle, nor reverse the 87 per cent fall in NHS job applications that followed.

**Keep Up to date with what is happening in the NHS**

**Visit :<https://keepournhspublic.com/>**

**For more information on what is happening  
around the world with the Coronavirus  
outbreak**

**See the World Health Organisation(WHO)**

