

Coronavirus

# Bolton surge in infections 'due to super spreader'

### Asymptomatic individual broke quarantine rules on return from abroad to go out drinking with friends

By Brendan McFadden

A "SUPER-SPREADER" who broke quarantine rules to go on a bar crawl has been blamed for a surge of infections in Bolton, as council leaders call for powers to shut down pubs that break rules.

David Greenhalgh, Bolton Council's leader, said the area's high infection rate is linked to pubs and a "cohort of people" who refused to follow guidance, including the man who went drinking with friends instead of quarantining for 14 days when he returned from abroad.

The man was asymptomatic at the time, but developed symptoms after the pub crawl which "led to a large number of individual transmissions".

Mr Greenhalgh told the BBC: "We had somebody who did not adhere to quarantine, did not stay the 14 days, literally went on a pub crawl with a number of mates.

"From that incident which took place over a weekend - [the super-spreader] visited a number of premises - led to a large number of individual transmissions from that one person which you can imagine then is like holding back the tide because he then became symptomatic two days after they had all gone on this pub crawl.

"He was positive-tested the following day. That is four or five days where all the people he was in contact with have been going about their normal day-to-day business."

The revelation comes as other councils urge the Government to give them more powers to shut down premises where rules are being broken.

Nesil Caliskan, Enfield council leader and one of those campaigning for more powers for councils, also said yesterday: "We are incredibly limited because the legislation in places doesn't allow us to give warnings or go in and close venues so the Local Government Association and local authorities across the country are calling on the Government for additional powers to allow us to do that and I think that will be crucial in coming weeks.

"If we don't see a lockdown we will need to be able to see councils take a tougher stance in order to be able to ensure people keep each other safe and venues are adhering to social distancing laws."

Police chiefs have warned that offic-

ers will be out in force this weekend and urged people to follow social distancing rules.

Greater Manchester Police said they had already taken action after discovering that a gazebo had been erected in a garden for a wedding party. The force wrote in a tweet: "Officers prevented the illegal gathering before restrictions were breached."

Kent Police said there would be an increased presence in "key areas" around the county, as Covid-19 remains a "real and deadly threat".

Meanwhile the Metropolitan Police in London have called on those in the capital to "continue to act responsibly" as warm weather is predicted to hit the area. The force has announced it plans to continue to increase patrols in public spaces, disperse gatherings of more than six and remind the public of fines for breaching coronavirus guidelines.

People who flaunt the new rules for gatherings of six, which applies to both indoor and outdoor settings, face fines of up to £3,200.

Earlier this month a 23-year-old man from Bolton was fined £10,000 for failing to self-isolate after returning from a holiday in Ibiza and hosting a house party.

Bolton is subject to tougher measures than the rest of England, with hospitality venues only allowed to operate as takeaways and ordered to shut by 10pm. Visits to care homes and hospitals in Bolton are also tightly restricted and venues such as casinos, skating rinks and bowling alleys are not allowed to open.

Leaders in Bolton had been arguing for restrictions, placed on all of Greater Manchester, to be lifted at the end of August before the area saw a spike which led to it having the highest rates of the virus in the country.

In London, Mayor Sadiq Khan has warned that more restrictions were "increasingly likely" in the capital after he held an emergency meeting with the Government and council leaders.

He said on Friday: "The Prime Minister has said that we are now seeing the start of a second wave of Covid-19 across the UK. "Londoners should also know that I am extremely concerned by the latest evidence from public health experts about the accelerating speed at which [it] is now spreading here in London."



ANDREW HARRISON/GETTY IMAGES

*'The incident over a weekend led to a large number of transmissions from that one person'*

# Speaker upset as Hancock locks down without telling Commons

By Christopher Hope

CHIEF POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT  
RELATIONS BETWEEN Matt Hancock and Lindsay Hoyle have taken another

turn for the worse after the Health Secretary locked down the Speaker's constituency without telling Parliament.

Sir Lindsay is understood to have been angered that the plans to impose

Covid-19 restrictions in Lancashire - which includes his Chorley constituency - were not set out by Mr Hancock in the Commons on Thursday.

One source said the Speaker was

frustrated by the latest apparent snub from Mr Hancock, who has agreed to explain his reasons to MPs in the House of Commons tomorrow.

A friend of Sir Lindsay said: "There are a lot of upset MPs in Lancashire. He could have warned Parliament. The House should be told first."

A friend of Mr Hancock said that there had been no formal decision when Mr Hancock gave his statement to MPs at Ham on Thursday.

The decision to bring in restrictions in Lancashire, Merseyside, parts of the Midlands and West Yorkshire was an-

nounced at midday on Friday although local MPs were briefed earlier. Nearly 4.7 million people will be affected by the new lockdown rules. The decision was only "collectively signed off" later on Thursday. The friend added: "We can't have warned Parliament that haven't been agreed."

Sir Lindsay has often clashed with Mr Hancock in the House and recently criticised him for announcing lockdown measures before telling Parliament. Last week he demanded an apology from Mr Hancock for "ignoring" MPs when unveiling the

rule of six lockdown plans, accusing him of "being his chamber ragged". Sir Lindsay also told of his anger over the issues people face booking coronavirus tests in Lancashire, writing on Twitter that it was "unacceptable" that his constituents cannot book a test. He said: "I am receiving numerous complaints from residents unable to book a test after displaying Covid symptoms."

In May Sir Lindsay threatened to eject Mr Hancock from the Chamber after scolding him for heckling Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer during Prime Minister's Questions.

# Alternative Oktoberfest festivities risk virus spread in Germany

By Abbey Young-Powell

FEARS are growing in Germany that Oktoberfest parties could lead to a surge in coronavirus infections, pushing the country into a second wave of the pandemic.

The famous festival, which normally takes place in Munich every year in September and October, was cancelled

this year for the first time since the Second World War. Nevertheless, people will be celebrating this weekend. Alternative festivities - named "Wirtshaus Wien" ("pub Oktoberfest") - kicked off amid clear skies and sunshine on Saturday when traditional Oktoberfest would normally begin.

Over the coming weeks, 50 pub owners hope to create an Oktoberfest

atmosphere, and carousels and a ferris wheel have also popped up in the city. "For us, Oktoberfest is neither a place nor an event. It's a deep sense of life which is anchored within us," Gregor Lemke, a spokesman for several of the city's inns and pubs said.

The festival takes place amid rapidly rising infections in Germany and across Europe. New coronavirus infec-

tions in Germany have now reached the highest they have been since the end of April, the Robert Koch Institute announced yesterday. Within a day, Germany reported 2,297 new corona infections, the RHI said.

Munich and Bavaria are particularly badly affected. The number of new infections per 100,000 inhabitants within a week in Munich reached 50.7

on Friday, which is over the threshold at which measures such as tighter restrictions must be taken.

In the state of Bavaria, which includes Munich, the seven-day incidence is considerably higher than the national mean, the RHI also said.

Top German virologist Christian Drosten warned on Friday that the situation in Germany "could escalate like

other European countries", Germans shouldn't "delude" themselves that things are going very differently from other European countries, he said.

Last week it was reported that a 26-year-old American woman could face a hefty fine after she allegedly went out partying in the Alpine resort of Garmisch near Munich, despite having coronavirus symptoms.

# Bigg Market falls quiet as the party stops early for Newcastle revellers

Dispatch

By Tom Ough  
in Newcastle

Newcastle's Bigg Market is the party hub of a party city. To imagine what it looks like on a Friday night, add three parts William Hogarth's *Beer Street*, which depicts idyllic boozing bonhomie that any city would envy, to one part Hieronymus Bosch landscape. It is a heady cocktail, beloved by locals and tourists. "Noisy, busy and happy" is how one of the local street performers, who through volunteering to assist the drunk and vulnerable sees the worst and best of Bigg Market, describes a typical night.

At 10pm on Friday, the party stopped. The North East is experiencing a particularly sharp upswing in new Covid-19 cases, and the Government has imposed various restrictions in response. Among those restrictions is the rule that pubs, clubs, restaurants and bars must close by 10pm - effectively a curfew. As dusk

turned to dark on the curfew's first night, there were as many police in the historic stepped marketplace as there were members of the public. The evening work of the police revolved up at this point, with bar-hoppers chatting and laughing over the thumping music emanating from basement dance floors. Tonight the packs of strutting boys and clattering girls were all but absent. Most of the few people on the street were couples on quiet evenings out.

"The place would usually be 'rammed', said Dan Walker, 27, who had just been to a comedy show with his girlfriend, 28-year-old Kloe Wilson. Every member of the audience had had to wear face shields. The strange emblem of Bigg Market, he said, was "the way it should be for the situation that we're in".

A couple of hundred yards down the hill a few freshers were smoking outside Bijoux, a bar on Mosley Street. They were some of the first to arrive of this year's Newcastle University intake, the majority of whom get here in residential halls. The new arrivals will find that security guards are patrolling the six-person flats to which freshers are assigned, breaking up gatherings and



Revellers, above and right in Newcastle's Bigg Market, where pubs closed at 10pm due to the new Covid-19 restrictions

throwing out interlopers. "And if there are big parties," said Janie Harrison, an 18-year-old business student from Yorkshire, "the police turn up."

Two girls, vigorously chatting, approached the bar. How was their night going? "C---, honestly!" said the first, Alicia James, 18. "It's awful!" said the second, Chelsea Deighton. At this point in the night they should be "dancing around [Ms James' words], 'getting absolutely mortal'" (Ms Deighton's). But with 20 minutes remaining before 10pm, they had time for just one more drink. Both



Brilliant, because I've got some lovely presents, but 10 o'clock - Tesco's open later than that! I can't believe it!"

The bells of Newcastle Cathedral tolled 10. The final punters had been ushered out of the hostries, and a couple of dozen of them, mostly freshers, congregated outside the cathedral. The police, who like the door staff here are general masters of de-escalation, gently reminded the youngsters of the rules. Slowly but surely, they dispersed. Bigg Market fell quiet.

On my way out of the city centre, I passed one more couple: he in black tie, she in a white jacket over a... wedding dress! Hours earlier, Neil and Bobbi Athey had wed at Alnwick, a pretty town in Northumberland. They were going to have a wedding of 80, then had to cut it down to 30. "Then we were like, 'Sod it! Us and two witnesses,'" said Mrs Athey happily.

Mr Athey looked at his new wife and grinned. "It'll take more than a pandemic to stop us getting married, aye?"

# We must be cautious - but let society function

Commentary

By Prof Carl Heneghan  
and Tom Jefferson

Cases of Covid are rising, and hospital admissions are creeping up, demand for testing has outstripped capacity "three to four times", admitted Dido Harting, the head of the newly formed National Institute for Health Protection. She said the "sizeable" rise in demand for tests had been unexpected.

Testing capacity was based on modelling from the Sage advisory group which didn't anticipate the increase in infections. As a consequence, the testing system is falling over - only a third of people at walk-in centres get their test results within 24 hours, and the tracing system cannot function appropriately. Confusion reigns, and we are talking ourselves into a second national lockdown as the Government is further panicked by its advisers and their fortune-tellers.

Underpinning the chaos is a fundamental misunderstanding of the effects of seasonal viral pathogens. We are not surprised that Dido Harting doesn't know that infectious rise at this time of year as she has no previous healthcare experience. The oversight of the Government advisers in not understanding the seasonal effect is, however, deeply troubling. Pandemic theory suggests younger people are most affected. Yet, in this current

pandemic, the age structure of those most affected suggests that the virus is operating as a seasonal pathogen.

Over 75% accounted for 75 per cent of the deaths in the UK in the spring outbreak. Analysis of the Office for National Statistics reveals there have been only seven deaths in under 14s in the UK, and four in Italy up to the age of 19, where the median age of death is 78 years. This pattern is similar across the globe. However, the H1N1 swine flu pandemic in 2009 caused 15,000 deaths in young people. Those with chronic conditions as well as the healthy young died. In the 2009 pandemic, 70 children died in England. But more telling, is what is happening in consultations in the past week. The majority of these infections are for the common cold. The return to schools and everyday life leads to a sudden increase in infections at this time of year. In the youngest, there is a near threefold increase in urgent hospital admissions with the current increase in cases.

As schools have gone back, there has been a rise in acute respiratory infections. GP surveillance data shows more than a 50 per cent increase in consultations in the past week. The majority of these infections are for the common cold. The return to schools and everyday life leads to a sudden increase in infections at this time of year. In the youngest, there is a near threefold increase in urgent hospital admissions with the current increase in cases.

Parents readily recognise the problems of juggling care and work that arise with unwell children, something that is seemingly not obvious to the Government's soothsayers. Baroness Harding said: "I don't think anybody was expecting to see the real sizeable increase in demand that we've seen over

the last few weeks, so none of the modelling was expecting that, and that's why we all need to think really hard about how we prioritise the use of these tests." This kind of statement betrays a lack of knowledge of respiratory disease and ignorance of the hysteria surrounding even the slightest case of the sniffles.

At this time of year, a highly characteristic rise in respiratory

"When ... we will need a more robust approach ... but that time is not now."

infections occurs in all age groups. It is not clear to us why we have lost sight of this. The chaos across the board is now a significant issue for all of us. Schools are steadily grinding to a halt: whole year groups are sent home due to a single positive test.

Parents distressed by the need to get a test for their children waste valuable time trying to book an appointment for a result that takes ages to come through. Only one in seven tests provided a result in under 24 hours in the week up to Sept 9. In many cases, by the time the result does become available the child has recovered and is no longer infectious. A one-stop test with PCR cannot tell you whether you are infected, but whether you are merely excreting pieces of dead viruses. We wonder how many of the segregated were really infectious

when they had the test, and we are still unable to understand the rationale for blanket testing. Estimates from northern Italy suggest that with the high test cut-off suggested by Public Health England, less than 3 per cent would be considered contagious. Lack of transparency on test cut-offs used in the interpretation of facts.

We are now in a troubling phase. The inevitable rise in cases has not translated into a more robust approach to the current threat at hand.

There may come a time when the threat is more significant and we will need a more robust approach to restrictions, but that time is not now. As we go into the winter consultations for acute respiratory infections (for all viruses and other agents) - in a good year - will quadruple. In a bad year they can go up nearly tenfold. However, in previous years when this has happened, we have not panicked, but we have gone about our daily lives - business unhindered.

Now - more than ever - we need to proceed with a sensible cautious approach, that prioritises social distancing but ensures our society functions as it has done in previous pandemics, and in every year when the seasonal impact of infections occurs. Carl Heneghan is a professor at Oxford University and director of the Centre for Evidence-Based Medicine. Tom Jefferson is honorary research fellow at the same centre



Open house Stacie Sanacroft-Iotima, Jill Boyington and Elaine Malon ready to welcome visitors to the Freemasons' Hall in London.

# University students 'eat in to help out' with £1 dinners

By Camilla Turner  
EDUCATION EDITOR

STUDENTS have been urged to "eat in to help out" by the University of Bolton which is offering £1 dinners delivered to halls while the town is in lockdown. The scheme, which will run while restaurants are closed as part of the local lockdown measures, is aimed at helping students abide by the rules. There is rising concern among ministers that droves of students returning to university will ignore rules on large gatherings. Prof George Holmes, Bolton's vice-chancellor, said the £1 dinner

scheme would "keep students away from the local population". He said: "This is 'eat in to help out'; it means students can sit down together for dinner. The menus will be selected to be Covid-friendly and we are conscious of making sure they are healthy."

Meals will generally be prepared by the university's own caterers, although students can also get takeaway fish and chips from a local eatery for £1, with the rest subsidised. It is just one of the measures the university is taking to encourage students to be Covid-compliant on campus. "We have bought 1,000 bicycles to give to students to commute on so they don't need to do car shares or take public transport," Prof Holmes said. "Students will have to wear masks in the classroom and lecturers will be behind a screen."

Here we go again  
Once more lockdown looms large on the horizon, and once more scientists are at odds with politicians over the best path through the pandemic. This picture, taken in late February, captured the remarkable tension as the No10 team, and Chief Scientific Officer Prof Chris Whitty, discussed measures to combat the spread of Covid-19

The first European country to experience the Covid nightmare is using testing to isolate new outbreaks

By Andrea Vogt in Bologna

COMMUTERS and students with bulging backpacks step off the trains and walk briskly past bustling espresso bars, fashionable shops and trattorias laying tables for the day.

It feels like any other typical autumn back-to-school day in a mid-size Italian city - except everyone is wearing a mask.

Tomorrow, classes start here in at Italy's largest, oldest university in Bologna following an alternating weekly hybrid approach: half of students following the live stream online, the other half sitting in preselected seats in the classrooms, where both students and tutors must wear masks.

Much of Europe is struggling with what WHO officials this week warned was an "alarming" second wave of Covid-19. Lockdowns and restrictions are being considered for regions of Spain, France and the UK.

Italy, however, seems to have dodged - or at least delayed - the second wave bullet thus far. While the UK has seen new cases jump over 4,000 a day, and France over 9,000, Italy's new cases have been hovering between 1,500-2,000 a day (very few compared with the 30-40,000 cases Italy was seeing last spring), with around 100,000 people tested daily.

"In Italy we have not returned to the contagion levels of March like in other European countries but we have to be careful and not let our guard down," said Walter Ricciardi, one of the Ministry of Health's guiding scientific experts. "Distancing, masks, and controlling clusters are key, Ricciardi said, along with encouraging flu vaccines and use of Italy's contact tracing app 'Immu'."

According to the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, Italy ranks 14th in the list of EU countries for cases per 100,000 people in the last two weeks. Spain and France are at the top. What did Italy do differently?

It kept its quarantine at 14 days, refusing to shorten it to 7 or 10 as other European countries did. But most importantly, Italy is using its testing capacity wisely, said Andrea Crisanti, a molecular parasitologist at Imperial College on secondment to the University of Padua, credited with helping contain the virus in the Veneto region. "Today, the active surveillance strat-

egy we adopted in Veneto is being used country wide," Prof Crisanti told *The Sunday Telegraph*. "Every time we get a positive case, even asymptomatic, we test everybody who is part of the various family, social and work networks of that person. This is how all our clusters are now being handled."

"By rapidly pinpointing new positives, with the help of health departments, we are intercepting new outbreaks by isolating all the closest contacts," confirmed Raffaele Donini, Emilia Romagna regional health councillor.

Unlike Spain, Italy did not court foreign tourists (there were noticeably fewer in popular spots like Venice and Florence) and clamped down on the party scene, prohibiting dancing in nightclubs.

Silvio Berlusconi, the former Italian premier, was infected after holidaying in Sardinia. After 10 days in a Milan hospital, the 83-year-old media tycoon went home last Monday.

There is widespread civic adhesion to mask-wearing in Italy, a notable difference with other European countries. Fear is a factor, too. Italians were

*'Italians are wary of what a second wave might bring and eager to make sure that doesn't happen'*

the first in Europe to experience the coronavirus nightmare and subsequent lockdown that kept them in their home districts for months.

The grim death bulletins and televised images from inside overwhelmed hospitals and morgues had a chilling psychological impact. "The shock of being the first European country to get hit by the pandemic and experience an extended lockdown has not worn off," said Erik Jones, professor of European Studies with Johns Hopkins University in Bologna. "Italians are wary of what a second wave might bring and eager to make sure that doesn't happen."

With school just starting, it is still early for health experts to detect community transmission quietly spreading as large groups start gathering again.

"We are in an unstable equilibrium with two forces acting in opposite directions," Crisanti explained. "On the one hand, we are giving the virus the opportunity to transmit when we go back to work and school, on the other, the force pulling in the other direction is our behaviour; so now we need to be stricter about masks, social distancing and testing to keep that equilibrium."