

First UK death confirmed in coronavirus outbreak

March 5 2020

Britain on Thursday announced its first death from coronavirus within the country, as the total number of confirmed cases jumped to 115.

"I am very sorry to report a patient in England who tested positive for COVID-19 has sadly died," England's chief medical officer Chris Whitty said in a statement.

The patient, being treated in the Royal Berkshire Hospital in Reading, west of London, was elderly and had "underlying [health conditions](#)", he said.

The patient is believed to have contracted the virus in Britain.

One British man had previously died from [coronavirus](#), after being infected while quarantined aboard the Diamond Princess cruise ship near Tokyo.

Health authorities meanwhile updated their travel advice for people returning from Italy, which has badly hit by the outbreak that has infected more than 97,000 people and killed over 3,300 around the world.

It urges anyone returning from the country in the past fortnight who develops symptoms to self-isolate.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson expressed his sympathy for the family of

the victim who died, but said the nationwide situation had not changed significantly.

Britain is still trying to contain the outbreak, but is moving towards implementing an action plan to delay its spread until the warmer months.

The state-run health service is currently under strain as it deals with winter outbreaks of flu and norovirus.

"The situation is pretty much as it has been in the sense that we are still in the contain phase, though now our scientists and medical advisers are making preparations for the delay phase," Johnson said.

"What they are looking at in the next few days, in the near future, is what kind of measures might be necessary to retard the spread of the disease.

"As soon as they've decided that the moment is right to announce those, we will be absolutely clear with the public about what needs to be done.

"But for the moment things are as they have been."

Measures to be introduced when the virus spreads could include asking people to work from home, reducing large gatherings such as football matches and shutting schools.

On Thursday, rugby union officials announced the postponement of England's Six Nations match on March 14 in Rome against Italy where 11 towns are under quarantine.

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