

# UK virus death toll rises to over 14,500

April 17 2020

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Britain's death toll from the coronavirus rose by 847 to 14,576 on Friday, daily health ministry figures showed, a slightly slower increase than the 861 new deaths recorded the previous day.

Nevertheless, the number of deaths over a 24-hour period to 1600 GMT

Thursday is still higher than in previous days when the number of fatalities had been on a downward trend.

Britain remains among the countries worst-hit by the pandemic, with the latest data also showing the total number of infections in the country has climbed to nearly 109,000.

That followed a further 5,599 people testing positive in the 24 hours to 0800 GMT Friday.

On Thursday, the government extended its lockdown to tackle the coronavirus for at least the next three weeks.

"The worst thing we could do right now is ease up too soon," said Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab, who is deputising for Prime Minister Boris Johnson as he recuperates from COVID-19.

Johnson, who is now off work and recovering at Chequers—the country estate of prime ministers—after a week in hospital, ordered the initial three-week lockdown on March 23.

It shuttered "non-essential" shops and services, banned gatherings of more than two people and gave police powers to fine those flouting the rules.

The government has insisted the lockdown is working and there are signs the pandemic is peaking in Britain, with the infection rate thought to have dropped markedly.

But it is yet to detail when and how the country might eventually begin to relax the stringent social-distancing regime.

There are also concerns over the slow expansion of testing for

[coronavirus](#), which many people see as crucial to easing the confinement measures.

Health Minister Matt Hancock, who has previously pledged to scale-up testing to 100,000 a day by the end of April, announced Friday that they would now prioritise a new range of key workers.

Police officers, the fire service, [prison staff](#), "critical" local authority staff, members of the judiciary and some other government staff will qualify if they need tests.

But Britain remains far behind the target, conducting just 21,328 tests in the latest 24-hour period recorded.

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