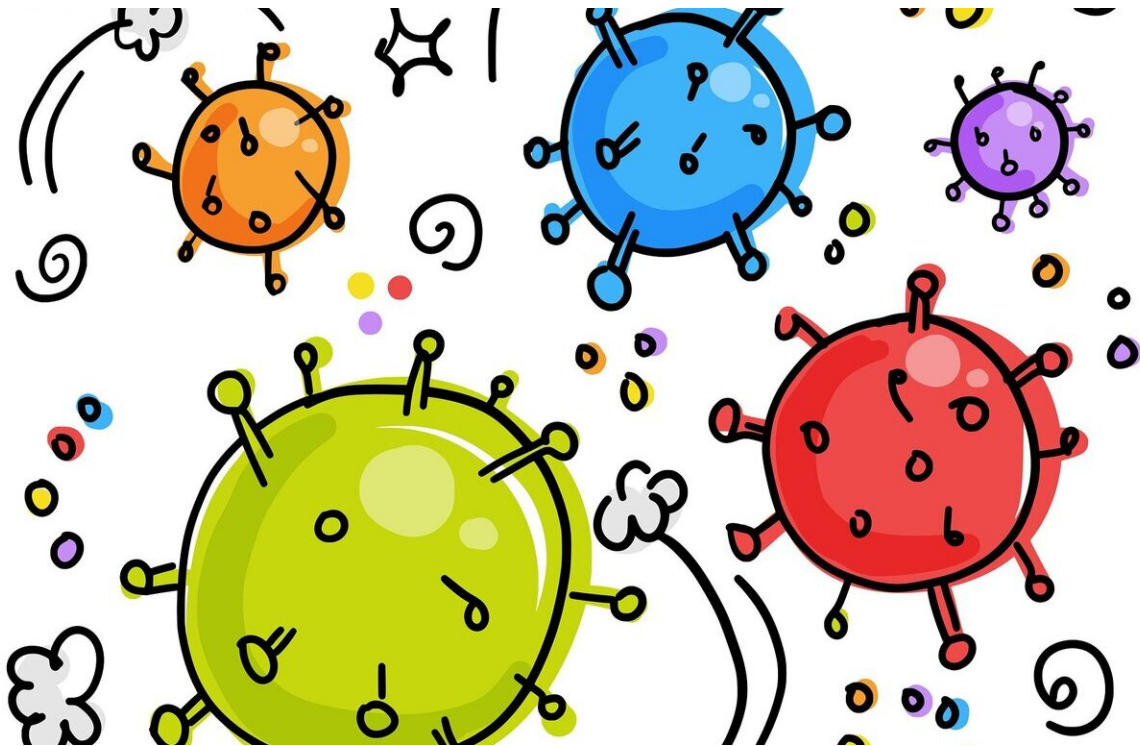


UK to impose local virus rules after tussle with mayor

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Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

The British government was set to impose tougher coronavirus restrictions on Tuesday on the English city of Manchester, defying the wishes of local leaders for the first time under a new system of localised curbs.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson warned last week of the need for action but Greater Manchester mayor Andy Burnham had demanded more money before agreeing to shut pubs and other venues, warning that low-paid workers could sink deeper into poverty.

The row threatened to undermine Johnson's latest strategy of local lockdowns across England—other parts of the UK set their own rules—which he hopes will allow him to avoid the kind of national shutdown imposed in March.

A deadline of midday on Tuesday passed without agreement and the region's 2.8 million residents now look set to have restrictions imposed from London.

"I'm disappointed that despite recognising the gravity of the situation, the mayor has been unwilling to take the action that is required to get the spread of the virus under control in Greater Manchester and reach an agreement with the government," communities minister Robert Jenrick said.

"I have therefore advised the [prime minister](#) that these discussions have concluded without an agreement."

Government sources suggested Manchester was set to join the city of Liverpool in entering "Tier Three", the highest of a three-level approach across England based on the local prevalence of COVID-19.

Under the regime, many pubs, bars, casinos and other venues will be closed for four weeks and residents will be barred from meeting anybody outside their household indoors.

Further details were expected later when Johnson holds a press conference and Health Secretary Matt Hancock gives an evening

statement to parliament.

"The collapse of these talks is a sign of government failure," Keir Starmer, leader of the main opposition Labour party, tweeted.

He accused Johnson's Conservatives of treating communities in Manchester and other hard-hit parts of England "with contempt".

The UK has so far suffered the worst toll in Europe from [coronavirus](#), with more than 43,000 deaths.

With infection rates rising again, the four nations of England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland are taking different approaches. Wales will on Friday impose a two-week shutdown from Friday.

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