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For immediate release

**South East counters national trend as number of Covid-19 related deaths increases**

Responding to figures published today (Tuesday) by the Office for National Statistics showing that more Covid-19 related deaths are now being recorded in the South East’s care homes than in hospitals, and that the number of recorded deaths has risen week-on-week,**UNISON South East regional secretary Steve Torrance**said:

"These latest ONS figures must urgently set alarm bells ringing across the South East.

“It is shocking and deeply worrying that significantly more people are now dying from Covid-19 every week in our region’s care homes than in our hospitals.

"Vulnerable residents and ​care workers looking after them have been abandoned to fight the disease alone. Many staff still don't have the safety kit or tests they need. Government claims of a protective ring being placed around care homes ​ring hollow.

"The care sector must be completely overhauled once the crisis has passed. Never again should the concerns of staff​, unions and employers be ignored."

Commenting on the overall rise in reported deaths and whether this should impact on government decisions increase school pupil numbers on 1 June and reopen many shops the week after, **UNISON South East regional secretary Steve Torrance**said:

“A week-on-week rise in the overall number of deaths in the South East is a stark warning that the government’s plans to ease the lockdown are premature.

“There are real concerns that ministers are gambling with the safety of pupils, staff and the wider community by pursuing an arbitrary 1 June deadline for schools without proper tracking and tracing being in place.

“Any other easing of restrictions must only be done when it is safe to do so. Key workers have paid a high price during this crisis; their sacrifices must not be undone by actions being taken too quickly.”

**Notes to editors:**
-The union has launched a [petition](https://action.unison.org.uk/page/59627/petition/1?ea.tracking.id=web) demanding the government step up and deliver on its promises around PPE and do much more to protect care staff and elderly people.

– ONS figures for registered deaths due to Covid-19 in the South East for 2 to 8 May and 9 to 15 May 2020 show the following for the region’s counties. This is a 10% increase in week-on-week care home deaths, and an 8.5% increase in week-on-week total deaths.

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| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2-8 May** | **9-15 May** |
| **County** | **Care Home** | **Hospital** | **Total** | **Care Home** | **Hospital** | **Total** |
| Berkshire | 29 | 27 | 57 | 28 | 22 | 56 |
| Buckinghamshire | 21 | 15 | 41 | 21 | 16 | 38 |
| East Sussex | 26 | 11 | 44 | 33 | 18 | 53 |
| Hampshire & IOW | 78 | 53 | 133 | 86 | 36 | 129 |
| Kent | 36 | 47 | 92 | 46 | 77 | 136 |
| Oxfordshire | 17 | 18 | 38 | 29 | 15 | 48 |
| Surrey | 47 | 39 | 92 | 31 | 31 | 69 |
| West Sussex | 32 | 18 | 54 | 41 | 23 | 69 |
| **Total** | **286** | **228** | **551** | **315** | **238** | **598** |

– UNISON is the UK’s largest union, with more than 1.3 million members providing public services – in education, local government, the NHS, police service and energy. They are employed in the public, voluntary and private sectors.

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