Death rate slows – but infections jump

By Colin Fernandez
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THE coronavirus toll has risen by 621 to 4,934 across the UK, the health ministry said yesterday – but the death rate did appear to be increasing more slowly.

However, the number of new daily infections jumped to 5,903 people testing positive in 24 hours, compared with 3,735 the previous day.

Among the deaths were 29 patients with no underlying health problems. The rate was lower than the 708 increase in deaths from Saturday.

The figures also do not include deaths outside hospital, such as those in care homes or within their own houses.

But the reductions were still seen as an ‘early sign’ that lockdown measures may be working. Peter Openshaw, Professor of Experimental Medicine at Imperial College London, said yesterday: There is inevitably a delay in seeing the effects of social-distancing measures on deaths, because deaths typically occur almost three weeks after the onset of disease, which is usually about five days after exposure to the virus.

‘Reduction in deaths would not be expected until about a month after measures are put in place.’

He added that it was ‘not clear’ whether bringing in more severe clampdowns on going outside would be beneficial, saying:

‘For now it would seem that the main problem is that some are not fully observant of the measures already in place.’

The statistics released by the Department of Health and Social Care correspond to the day on which the death was reported, not the actual date of death – which is usually days, sometimes weeks, before it appears in the statistics.

As of Sunday morning, 195,524 people had been tested in Britain, of which 47,806 were positive for coronavirus.

Cellular microbiology professor Simon Clarke, of Reading University, said: ‘The news of a smaller day-on-day increase in Covid-19 deaths is welcome, but it remains far too early to view this as evidence of a slowdown in the rate of fatalities.’