

Business Secretary's statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 12 November 2020

Good afternoon. I am joined today by Professor Stephen Powis, National Medical Director of NHS England

The average number of new cases each day is now 22,524, compared to 22,398 a week ago.

There are now 14,196 COVID-19 patients in hospital across the UK, compared to 12,406 a week ago.

1,219 patients are now in mechanical ventilation beds, compared to 1,142 a week ago.

And, sadly, another 595 deaths within 28 days of a positive test were reported yesterday.

The 7 day average daily number of deaths each day in the UK within 28 days of positive test by date reported is now 375, up from 295 a week ago.

Our thoughts are very much with the families and loved ones of those who've lost their lives.

Which is a reminder to us, as to why we are taking the action we are, to stop the spread of this virus and ultimately save lives.

Today, we are also reminded about the vital importance of fighting this virus to protect our economy.

Whilst the economy grew by 15% in the third quarter, it slowed in September and remains 8.2% below where we were in February.

We in government understand acutely the human impact this statistic represents.

It's jobs, livelihoods, and families affected.

So we will continue to support businesses now, and as they recover.

The government has provided unprecedented levels of support for businesses over the past 8 months.

To date, that represents over £200 billion in support.

This is one of the most generous and comprehensive packages of financial support provided in the world, which the International Monetary Fund has praised.

Just this month we have announced an extension of the self-employed grant scheme to March next year.

An extension of the furlough scheme, at 80% until the spring.

Cash grants of up to £3,000 per month for businesses in England, which are required to be closed due to this month's national restrictions.

These will benefit 600,000 business premises.

And I can confirm today that we will be distributing £2.2 billion to local authorities tomorrow, to allow them to make these vital grant payments to businesses which have been affected.

All of these measures are designed to preserve jobs and help businesses stay afloat.

Today, we have also announced that more than 19,000 jobs have been created so far through our Kickstart Scheme.

These jobs are spread across the country and in a variety of sectors.

I know how hard this job market is, particularly for young job seekers, hoping to enter the workplace for the first time.

The Kickstart Scheme is a ray of hope for young people, and I want to thank all the businesses which have stepped up to participate in this scheme.

I speak to businesses everyday, and I can see, that despite the tough times, they are determined to soldier through this.

Through sheer hard work, innovation, resilience and invoking a real community spirit across the United Kingdom.

For example, in Aberdeenshire, Brewdog has made hand sanitiser to protect our front-line NHS staff.

In Belfast, Axial3D has helped to develop thousands of new ventilators.

In Surrey, Carousel Lights have adapted their manufacturing process to produce 'sneeze screens' for GP surgeries, pharmacies, and care homes.

In Caerphilly, Transcend Packaging has converted production lines to create PPE, almost doubling their workforce in just four months.

Because, despite the government's support, and when it comes down to it, it is you who are keeping this country going.

You who are powering our economic recovery.

Just as our brilliant scientists and researchers are powering ahead in the race to discover a safe and effective vaccine.

A little over 6 months ago, I stood here and announced the creation of the

Vaccines Taskforce.

A team of industry experts, scientists and civil servants, with one mission: to secure a vaccine to beat down this virus.

Since then, they have secured access to 350 million doses, through agreements on 6 of the leading candidates in the world.

The Taskforce has demonstrated how we can work together at pace.

Business and science, the NHS and local communities, together forging a path out of this predicament.

But, although this week's announcement on the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is potentially very good news, we still have a lot of hurdles to overcome before we can be certain of its safety and efficacy.

And so we must ensure that we continue to follow the guidance.

To protect our loved ones, our families, our friends, our communities.

Because the virus is still here. It is still a danger.

So we must not lose our resolve now.

We must keep focused.

To protect the health of the nation and the health of the economy.

Working together, supporting each other, we will get through this.

We will come out the other side stronger, more resilient and more united.

Thank you.