

Foreign Secretary's statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 13 April 2020

Good afternoon and welcome to today's Downing Street Press Conference. I'm pleased to be joined by Professor Chris Whitty, Chief Medical Officer, and Sir Patrick Vallance, Chief Scientific Adviser.

On Saturday, I spoke to the Prime Minister. I updated him on coronavirus, the progress we're making, and our plans for the next few weeks.

The government is united in our focus, our determination and our national mission to defeat the coronavirus. And defeat it, we will.

I want to join the PM in expressing our heart-felt thanks to the brilliant NHS team at St Thomas's hospital. And, as the Easter bank holiday weekend draws to a close, I also need to thank all of the NHS staff, all of the other frontline staff, who have been working so hard over the long weekend to care for those suffering from coronavirus.

We thank you.

We pay tribute to you.

And we're immensely proud of all you are doing.

Can I also take the opportunity to thank everyone who followed the advice to stay home, despite the wonderful weather, and despite the challenges and sacrifices that sticking to the advice presents to many families. I have to say that at the end of last week, we were concerned that people might start ignoring the advice, or cutting corners given the temptation to go out into the sunshine.

In fact, the overwhelming majority of people stayed at home and understood the importance of doing so.

You stuck to the advice.

You denied the coronavirus of the social contact it needs to spread.

People should be in absolutely no doubt that, by staying home this weekend, you have saved lives, and you also helped protect our precious NHS at this critical moment in the crisis.

So thank you.

Your efforts are making all the difference, and please keep them up.

We've come too far, we've lost too many loved ones, and we've sacrificed far too much to ease up now.

I can tell you on the latest data that 290,720 have been tested for coronavirus, 88,621 have now tested positive. And, I'm very sorry to say, 11,329 people have now died from coronavirus, every one of them a tragedy, and our hearts go out to all of the loved ones who are grieving their loss at such a difficult time.

Amidst this sobering death toll, there are also some positive signs from the data that we are starting to win this struggle, but we have still got a long way to go and as those grisly figures I just read out show, we're still not past the peak of this virus.

So please continue to follow the advice, now more than ever, to stay at home, save lives and protect our NHS. This week, SAGE will review the evidence of the effectiveness of the social distancing measures we've taken, and we will consider their assessment, based on the evidence, at that point.

I should say, we don't expect to make any changes to the measures currently in place at that point, and we won't, until we're confident as we realistically can be, that any such changes can be safely made.

In the meantime, the government will continue to redouble all of our efforts to buy and deliver the ventilators so we can treat the most vulnerable in our hospitals.

To deliver the masks, the gowns and other protective equipment to protect those on the frontline, in the NHS, but also in care homes.

And to ramp up testing so that the NHS and other key staff can return to the frontline just as soon as possible. The Chancellor and Business Secretary are working round the clock to mitigate the damage that this crisis has undoubtedly done to our economy – getting support to businesses, to workers and to the most vulnerable in our society.

So please, once again, keep following the guidance to stay home, save lives and protect the NHS.

If we let up now the virus will only take full advantage.

It will spread faster and it will kill more people.

If we refuse to give into it, if we keep up this incredible team effort, we will beat this virus, and we will come through this national test.

Our plan is working.

Please stick with it, and we'll get through this crisis together.

Further information