

Health and Social Care Secretary's statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 4 May 2020

[Coronavirus press conference: 4 May 2020](#)

Good afternoon and welcome to Downing Street for the daily coronavirus briefing.

I'm joined by the Deputy Chief Medical Officer, Professor Jonathan Van Tam, and our national testing coordinator, Professor John Newton.

Today, I want to update you with the latest plans for our programme of test, track and trace and how we are going to use this massive testing capability that we've built to get R down and keep R down.

Before I do, I just want to remind you of what we are trying to achieve.

Our plan is to slow the spread and protect the NHS, so the NHS is always there for you and your family whenever you need it, whether for coronavirus or anything else as we lead the nation through this crisis.

Our goal is working.

The number of spare critical care beds in the NHS is 3,413.

On the latest figures:

- there have been 1,291,000 tests for coronavirus, including 85,186 tests on Sunday, yesterday
- 190,584 people have now tested positive for coronavirus, an increase of 3,985
- 13,258 people are in hospital with coronavirus
- and 28,734 people have died, an increase of 288

That figure is lower than at any point since the end of March. But, as with testing, these reported figures tend to be lower over the weekend so we do expect that number to rise.

And remember, this is not just a number but it is a constant, insistent reminder that we must go further and faster in our national effort in dealing with this virus.

Over the last month we have built a national testing infrastructure capable of over 100,000 tests a day. Today, the capacity stands at 108,000.

This means we are now in a position to start implementing the next part of our plan: track and trace.

The aim of test, track and trace is to hunt down and isolate the virus so it's unable to reproduce. And, crucially, test, track and trace allows us to take a more targeted approach to lockdown while still safely containing the disease.

Creating this system is a huge national undertaking of unprecedented scale and complexity. We've already taken Britain's small but brilliant diagnostics industry and taken it to global scale. We're building an army of human contact tracers who can man the phones, and find the contacts and support people. And, of course, we're developing the contact tracing app, which can help us deliver test, track and trace on the mass scale that we need across the country.

The app, which takes full consideration of privacy and security, has already been tested in closed conditions at an RAF base. And, today, I can announce the next steps.

From tomorrow, we will begin to pilot test, track and trace on the Isle of Wight, starting with health professionals and rolling out this week to all citizens. I am grateful to the huge enthusiasm shown by islanders, who know that by participating in this pilot they are at the forefront of helping get Britain back on her feet.

Where the Isle of Wight goes, Britain follows.

The island has a single NHS Trust, one local authority with the responsibility for public health, a relatively low number of COVID cases and, because it's an island, we can run this trial in proper scientifically controlled conditions, comparing the effect with what's going on in the mainland before we roll it out to the rest of the country.

So here's how it will work.

Last week, we put in place the testing capability on the island. From tonight, the contact tracing capability will go live. And then, tomorrow, NHS staff on the island will be able to download the app.

And, from Thursday, each one of the 80,000 households on the island will get a letter from the Chief Nurse with comprehensive information about the trial. Islanders will then be asked to install the app. Once you've installed the app, it will start logging the distance between your phone and other phones with an app nearby.

It's been designed with a form of Bluetooth that conserves power so the app won't drain your battery.

This log of proximity information will then be securely stored on your phone.

If you become unwell with COVID symptoms, you inform the NHS via the app. Other app users who you've had significant contact with in the last few days will then be sent an alert by the NHS, along with advice about what to do.

A test-ordering function will then be built in.

If you're watching this and you live on the Isle of Wight, I have a simple message: please, download the app to protect the NHS and save lives. By downloading the app, you're protecting your own health, the health of your loved ones and the health of your community.

I know the people of the Isle of Wight will embrace this with enthusiasm, because, by embracing test, track and trace, you will be saving lives.

The pilot is important to help make sure this app works as well as it possibly can alongside the contact tracing system. And with your help we will learn a lot, we will use it to make things better and we want to hear from you.

I want to stress – and this is really important – that this trial does not mean the end of social distancing on the Isle of Wight, or anywhere else for that matter. We will only change the social distancing rules once our 5 tests are met.

So, I'll end with the instruction that we all know: please, stay at home, protect the NHS and save lives.

Or, if you live on the Isle of Wight: stay at home, install the app, protect the NHS and save lives.