

Health and Social Care Secretary's statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 5 June 2020

Good afternoon and welcome to Downing Street's daily coronavirus briefing.

Before taking questions from members of the public and the media, I'd like to start by sharing the latest data.

First slide please.

The first slide shows the information on infections, and the data published by the Office for National Statistics this morning shows the number of people who had coronavirus in England fell from around 139,000 between 3 and 16 May to around 53,000 between 17 and 30 May.

That's represented in percentage terms in this right-hand chart. It demonstrates that the percentage of the population testing positive has been falling consistently over recent weeks. SAGE have confirmed that the R across the whole of the UK is between 0.7 and 0.9.

The ONS survey also estimated the number of new coronavirus infections which stands at 39,000 per week which is equivalent to around 5,600 per day. And this is lower than the similar estimate made last week. So these are encouraging trends about the reducing spread of coronavirus across the country.

This slide shows progress on testing and the number of new confirmed cases. In total 5,214,277 tests have been carried out including 207,231 tests yesterday. And these data on tests include both the swab tests to find out if you have coronavirus and also the antibody tests, which stand at just over 40,000 antibody tests a day.

The antibody tests find out if you have had the virus. And if you have had the virus you can help make a difference because by donating your plasma from your blood that has your antibodies in it then you can help somebody who is currently suffering in hospital with coronavirus.

I did this earlier today. I gave my antibodies and the process is simple, it's straightforward. If you have had coronavirus, if you go to the NHS Blood and Transplant website NHSBT then you too can donate your antibodies and help protect somebody who is currently in hospital with coronavirus. And I'd encourage anybody who can do that to step forward.

The chart also shows that the number of confirmed cases is 1,650 yesterday which brings the total of confirmed cases, confirmed by swab tests, to 283,311.

This slide shows the data from hospitals. There were 694 admissions, new

admissions, with COVID-19 on the latest data, which has fallen over the last week. Those data include England, Wales and Northern Ireland. They don't include Scotland. And also the bottom data which is across the whole UK, shows the number of people in ventilator beds has fallen from 751 on 28 May, a week ago, down to 571. This is down from a peak of over 3000 on 12 April.

Slide 4 shows the regional breakdown of people in hospital. And it shows that over 7,000 people remain in hospital, 7,080 to be precise. But this is down 15% from 8,285 a week ago and a peak of over 20,000 in April. The final slide shows the number of people who have sadly lost their lives. And this number stands at 40,261 on the latest information, which is 357 higher than yesterday.

These slides demonstrate, although the past few months have been a time of sorrow for so many people, because of these deaths is not a statistic but the loss of a loved one for so many families. The slides also show that we have made a progress in our fight against this virus. But they also show that there is so much more to do.

It shows that we must always remain vigilant.

Especially when it comes to protecting our NHS, which has been at the front line of the battle.

And of course thanks to an enormous national effort, we protected the NHS and prevented it being overwhelmed which in turn saved lives.

And today I want to set out further that we are taking further steps to protect the NHS and especially around face coverings and face masks.

Yesterday, the Secretary of State for Transport announced that face coverings will become mandatory on public transport from June 15 – with a few specific exceptions – for instance those with breathing difficulties.

This doesn't mean surgical masks, which need to be kept for clinical settings, but the kind of face masks that you can easily make at home – in fact there's a good [guide on GOV.UK](#).

As more people go back to work, and the passenger numbers start to increase, so face coverings on transport are more important.

Likewise, as the NHS reopens right across the country, it is critically important to stop the spread amongst staff, patients and visitors too.

So today we are setting out that all hospital visitors and outpatients will need to wear face coverings.

One of the things that we've learnt is that those in hospitals, those that are working in hospital are more likely to catch coronavirus, whether they work in a clinical setting or not.

And so to offer even greater protection, we are also providing new guidance for NHS staff in England which will come into force again on the 15 June, and

all hospital staff will be required to wear Type 1 or 2 surgical masks.

And this will cover all staff working in hospital.

And it will apply at all times, not just when they are doing their life-saving work on the frontline. It will apply in all areas, except in those areas designated as covid-secure workplaces.

And of course where PPE guidance recommends more stringent protection, of course, that remains in place.

We are upgrading this guidance to make sure that even as this virus comes under control, as we saw the falling incidences across the country, our hospitals are a place of care and of safety.

We have also strengthened infection control in care homes. And we are working with the social care sector on how this approach can apply appropriately in social care too.

It's about protecting our NHS and social care, which means protecting our colleagues who work in the NHS and in social care.

And I want to say this to you all my colleagues in health and social care.

As we get this virus under control, it is so important that we stamp out new infections and outbreaks.

And of course in health and care you do this brilliantly all the time – and coronavirus is no exception.

That means that if one of your team tests positive, you have to follow the isolation advice.

The natural impulse of course of anyone in care, in the NHS is the thing you can best do is be there to help. To be there for the patient.

But if you have the virus, or are at risk of having the virus, the best thing you can do for them, as well as yourself, is to isolate at home.

And this means that social distancing in the workplace also must be reiterated and it matters just as much as anywhere else.

And I know that social distancing and self-isolation can cause big logistical challenges, and we will support you in doing what is right and necessary.

All of us have a role to play here.

And the last thing I want to say is this, ahead of this weekend, when I know there are plans for further protests, I want to say something to you as Health Secretary.

Like so many, I am appalled by the death of George Floyd and I understand why people are deeply upset.

But we are still facing a health crisis and coronavirus remains a real threat.

And the reason that it is vital that people stick to the rules this weekend is to protect themselves and their family from this horrific disease.

So please for the safety of your loved ones, do not attend large gatherings – including demonstrations – of more than 6 people.

We all need to stay alert, control the virus and save lives.