

Health and Social Care Secretary's statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 8 June 2020

Good afternoon and welcome again to Downing Street for the daily coronavirus briefing. Today I want to update you on social care, something I know is of huge importance to everybody watching. I'd also like to welcome David Pearson to the press conference in his new role as Chair of our National COVID-19 Social Care Support Taskforce.

Before turning to social care, I'd like to take you through latest coronavirus data.

Slide 1 – testing capacity and new cases

The first slide shows number of new cases confirmed in the UK and also the level of testing. There were 138,183 tests done yesterday, bringing the total to over 5.7 million. As you can see in this chart, the number of confirmed cases was 1,205. And that is the lowest since the end of March and you can clearly see the 7-day rolling average also continuing to fall.

Slide 2 – admissions and ventilators

The data from hospitals also shows a continued fall. The number of admissions with COVID-19 across England, Wales and Northern Ireland has fallen again to 519 – that's down from 661 a week ago so we can see the continued downward trend in the number of new daily admissions. And the number of people on mechanical ventilators in UK as a whole is also falling and is now 516.

Slide 3 – overall number of people in hospital

Here we can see the number of people in hospital with COVID on a regional basis. I know there's been a lot of interest in the regional R figure in recent days. The estimate of SAGE, taking into account all of the evidence is that R is below 1 in all regions.

In all areas the number of people in hospital with coronavirus is falling in all regions – faster in some areas than others. It is on that downward trajectory in each individual case and the total number of people in hospital is 6,403, which is down from over 7,500 this time last week.

Slide 4 – mortality

The number of deaths from coronavirus with a positive test yesterday was 55. That recorded figure is the lowest since 21 March. This data does tend to be lower at weekends so we do expect it to rise again in future, but you can see the 7-day rolling average continues to fall. That means the total number of

deaths stands at 40,597.

As I've said in the House just now, though the number is much lower than it has been, each of these deaths still represents a tragedy for a family and a community so we will continue all of our work to drive that figure down.

I'm glad to report also that the number of deaths recorded in London hospitals yesterday was 0 and likewise in Scotland there were no recorded deaths – that is very good news for the capital and for Scotland.

All of this data is pointing in the right direction and it shows that we are winning the battle with this disease, but they also show there's further to go.

Care homes

I will now turn to care homes.

The number of people dying in care homes is also falling.

Figures from the CQC show there's a 79% fall from the peak of the crisis in care homes the week ending April 24 to weekend ending 29 May, the latest when the data is available. The latest ONS data shows there were 12,739 registered deaths in care homes in the year up to 22 May and this represents 29.1% of all registered COVID deaths.

From the earliest days of this crisis, we recognise that people in social care were uniquely vulnerable. Two-thirds of people in social care are over the age of 85 and the latest data from PHE show that the over 80s are 70 times more likely to die from coronavirus than the under 40s.

I know personally what an anxious time it is, and it has been for anyone with a loved one in social care. Right from the start we've given guidance and financial support for care homes, we've prioritised testing, we've strengthened the links between the NHS and social care with a named clinical lead for every care home in England and we've asked councils to conduct daily reviews of the situation on the ground.

And the social care COVID-19 support taskforce, which David will be chairing, will oversee delivery of the next phase of our plan for social care, ensuring care homes have the support, training, resources they need to control this virus. Crucially, this involves working with the care system to develop a plan for keeping staff and residents safe in the months after, as the lockdown measures are eased.

David Pearson brings a wealth of experience in public health and in social care, so I am very glad to have him onboard and he's perfect for the role of driving this forward over the weeks and months ahead.

I also want to say a word about testing.

Last month I announced that all residents and staff of elderly care homes in

England would receive a test by early June regardless of whether they had symptoms or not. And I want to thank my team and those colleagues in social care who delivered that target on time on Saturday. We've now sent over 1 million test kits to almost 9,000 elderly care homes and the care homes themselves asked they have the flexibility to do the test when it works for them.

And the good news is that the test results so far do not show a significant rise in positive cases, despite going through and testing all of the residents and staff. Throughout the crisis we've been rapidly testing any care home with an outbreak, or any resident or staff member with symptoms. And as we built up testing capacity, we prioritised testing of care homes for the elderly, making sure that every resident and staff member could be tested whether or not they had symptoms. And the reason we did this is because the evidence shows that age is by far the greatest risk factor.

We will now make sure we do all of this in working-age care homes as well.

So, I can announce that from today, all remaining adult care homes in England will be able to order the whole care homes testing service for residents and staff. This service will benefit residents and staff in over 6,000 more care homes.

It'll mean that right across adult social care, everyone will have the certainty and confidence of a high-quality coronavirus test whether symptomatic or not, certainty about whether or not they're carrying the virus, and confidence that they're doing the right thing both to protect themselves and others.

Finally, this is carers week and I want to say a heartfelt thanks to each and every carer, whether paid or unpaid, for all the work they're doing to support family and friends and loved ones, especially in this time of crisis. Your duty and your devotion to a job that you do with love in incredibly challenging circumstances – they're a huge inspiration as we work through this crisis together.

I understand what a worrying time it is and it's not just because of the risk of the virus but because you haven't been able to physically be with your loved ones.

But that day when we can reunite is getting closer. The curve continues to come down, the NHS has been protected, our vaccine work is making progress, we are winning the battle against coronavirus so please stay alert, control the virus and save lives.

I'm now going to ask David to set out the next steps in the social care action plan and the work to control coronavirus within social care and protect residents and staff that he'll be leading.