

Home Secretary's opening statement to the government's daily briefing on coronavirus

[Coronavirus press conference \(22 May 2020\)](#)

Good afternoon, welcome to the government's daily briefing on coronavirus.

I am pleased to be joined by Paul Lincoln, Director General of our Border Force, and Patrick Vallance, our Chief Scientific Advisor.

First, I will update you on the latest daily figures.

- 3,231,921 tests for coronavirus have now been carried out in the UK, including 140,497 tests carried out yesterday.
- 254,195 people have tested positive, that's an increase of 3287 cases since yesterday.
- 9,307 people are currently in hospital with coronavirus, down 14% from 10,781 this time last week.
- And sadly, of those tested positive for coronavirus, across all settings, 36 393 have now died. That's an increase of 351 fatalities since yesterday.

All our thoughts, prayers and deepest sympathies remain with all those who have lost loved ones.

At this time of national emergency, it is crucial that we remain alert to save countless more lives.

That means doing everything in our power to control this terrible disease – taking the right action, at the right time, to prevent a deadly second wave.

That is why I am today announcing the next step in our cross-government approach – and these include temporary public health restrictions at the border.

Let me explain why we are bringing forward these measures as other restrictions finally start to ease, following two hard months of lockdown.

The answer why is simple: it is to protect that hard-won progress and prevent a devastating resurgence and a second wave of the virus.

We are following the science and introducing public health measures that are supported by SAGE.

This will require international arrivals to self-isolate for 14 days – that is the incubation period of the virus – so that if people have become infected overseas, we can limit the spread of the virus at home.

And as we are taking this action, we are taking it at a time when it will be most effective.

Passenger arrivals have been down by 99% compared to the previous year.

Now we are past the peak of this virus, we must take steps to guard against imported cases, triggering a resurgence of this deadly disease.

As the transmission rate across the UK falls, and the number of travellers arriving in the UK begins to increase, imported cases could begin to pose a larger and increased threat.

This is because they could become a higher proportion of the overall number of infections in the UK and therefore increase the spread of the disease.

So, with far fewer people being infected in this country and the public having worked so hard to bring the R number down, any new arrivals entering the country with the disease during this next phase will have a much bigger impact – potentially causing a second wave.

This is of course a different story from when domestic transmission was at its peak and when overseas travel was at an all time low.

Led by the Prime Minister, the whole government has worked together across all departments including with the devolved administrations to develop these measures.

We do not take these steps lightly.

This is extremely challenging and these are difficult times for the entire nation as our freedoms have been sadly, but necessarily, curtailed.

We do not underestimate how hard the new restrictions will be for people up and down the country, and also those who have already sacrificed so much to help beat and drive down the spread of coronavirus.

I know that families both at home and abroad are desperate to be reunited.

But, by taking these steps, we could save many more lives – making it possible for more friends and family to be safely together in the future.

We also recognise how hard these changes will be for our travel and leisure sectors who are already struggling in these unprecedented times.

Across government, we continue to work with them and support what is an incredibly dynamic sector to find new ways to reopen international travel and tourism in a safe and responsible way.

We will review these temporary public health measures every three weeks to ensure they remain the right ones for our road map to recovery.

And these measures will be introduced from 8 June, so that people arriving into the UK will be required to self-isolate for 14 days, except those on a

short list of exemptions.

Arrivals will also be required to provide contact and address details to help trace them should we need to.

And given the amazing public spirit and the level of compliance we have seen so far we expect the vast majority of people to do the right thing and comply with these new requirements.

We know that the vast majority of people will continue to play their part and act responsibly, to control the spread of this virus and stop a second wave.

But we will not allow a small, reckless minority to endanger us all – so there will be penalties for those who break these mandatory measures.

Border Force will be on the frontline of implementing the changes with spot checks as people arrive in the UK.

Paul Lincoln, Director General of Border Force, will shortly provide an update on the steps people will need to take.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank our border officers and staff for the role they will play, and for all they are doing to protect our nation at this deeply challenging time.

We are working across all four nations of the UK to make these public health measures work, but I will now turn to the enforcement approach that is being taken here in England.

We will conduct spot checks by mid June to ensure people are self-isolating.

And those from overseas who refuse to comply, could be refused entry.

Public Health England will set up an assurance service to contact people at random to ensure they understand the requirements and are self-isolating.

And our outstanding police will continue as they have done so diligently across the country, to engage, explain and encourage people to follow the rules.

We will empower them to use enforcement as a last resort.

So anyone breaking their 14-day quarantine could face a one thousand pound fixed penalty notice.

And, ultimately, there could be potential prosecution and an unlimited fine for failure to comply with these sanctions.

We will keep these penalties under review and will be unafraid to increase them if that is required.

But have no doubt: we are taking these measures at the right time because we are serious about saving lives and controlling the virus.

We will be guided by the science and the health of the public and the country will always come first, which is why we are implementing these restrictions at the border now.

Our absolute priority remains to stop the spread of this infection, to save lives and to stop and prevent a dangerous second wave of this virus.

That also means supporting our NHS and making short-term sacrifices together, to stop coronavirus taking more lives.

I will now handover to Paul Lincoln, from Border Force, who will provide an operational update and also talk about the measures and how they will be implemented.