

Oliver Dowden's statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 17 June 2020

Coronavirus press conference (17 June 2020)

Good afternoon, and welcome to today's Downing Street press briefing. I'd like to start with the daily update on the latest data on coronavirus.

The first slide shows cases confirmed with a test:

- 7,121,976 tests for coronavirus have now been carried out or posted out in the UK. This includes 140,359 tests carried out or posted yesterday.
- 299,251 people have tested positive, an increase of 1,115 cases since yesterday.

The second slide shows the latest data from hospitals:

- 387 people were admitted to hospital with coronavirus in England, Wales and Northern Ireland on 14 June, that is down from 435 a week earlier, and down from a peak of 3,432 on 1 April.
- 379 coronavirus patients are currently in mechanical ventilation beds in the UK, down from 494 a week ago, and down from a peak of 3,301 on 12 April.

The third slide shows what is happening in hospitals across the country:

- There are now 5,308 people in hospital with coronavirus in the UK, down 13% from 6,123 a week ago and down from a peak of 20,698 on 12 April.
- As you'll see from the graphs while there is some variation, most nations and regions of the UK are broadly following a similar pattern.

The fourth slide shows the daily figures for those who have sadly lost their lives after testing positive for coronavirus:

- Across all settings, the total number of deaths now stands at 42,153. That's sadly an increase of 184 fatalities since yesterday.
- When you measure that on a 7-day rolling average, the daily number of deaths currently stands at 146, down from a peak of 943 on 14 April.

As you'll see from those slides we're making important progress, and today marks another milestone.

In just under an hour's time, the best league in the world will be back up and running after a 100 day pause.

All but five countries will be airing tonight's games – underlining football's global reach and the soft power of UK sport. The Premier League is returning and the world will be watching.

Of course it will be very different to what we're used to. But there is no

doubt that this is a hugely symbolic moment.

An important step forward in our careful journey back towards normality, players back at their place of work, and a boost for our football loving nation.

We've worked really hard with the football authorities, police and medical experts to get to this point. But we do need fans to play their part too.

So please, look after your fellow fans and your communities by watching from home. To keep the home advantage, support from home.

All 92 remaining Premier League games will be shown live on television, and I'm delighted that I and others managed to work hard to get a third of them on free-to-air channels.

Friday will be the first on free-to-air, with Norwich versus Southampton. Then an important day on Saturday, that will be the first ever Premier League game on the BBC, followed by the Merseyside Derby again free to air on Sunday.

And there will be extended highlights of all the games free to air. So you won't have to miss a single goal.

Our sports men and women have set some incredible examples during this pandemic, using their profiles to support worthwhile causes across the UK.

England's men's and women's cricket teams have donated half a million pounds towards charitable causes.

Rugby League's Cheshire West Bank Bears have delivered food and parcels to the elderly.

And of course, England and Manchester United footballer Marcus Rashford has made the front pages and the back pages for the very best reasons – highlighting the struggles facing many families during this difficult time but that is of course in addition to the fantastic work he's been doing helping to feed millions of children through the FareShare charity.

The last three months have demonstrated the immense power of sport. It brings us together through kindness and common humanity.

I was struck by this last week when I teamed up with the His Royal Highness the Duke of Cambridge and some of Britain's biggest sports stars on mental health awareness.

We chatted about the need to deliver generational change in perceptions, and develop tools for good mental health – whether you're a sports star at the top of your game, or a junior just starting out, or a fan going through a difficult period. As we get sport back, I really think this is a great opportunity for all of us to be much more open about talking about mental health.

The sports recovery was never just about elite sports. I know countless people are itching to get back to their gyms and leisure centres, to their five-a-side leagues and all their other normal fitness activities.

We're working closely with the sector to get grassroots and community sport back up and running as soon as it is safe to do so, with an aim of the start of July at the very earliest. And as we continue our efforts to get children back to school, I want to focus on the role sport can play in improving young people's physical and indeed their mental health.

Today is an important moment in our recovery. The return of elite sport has provided a model to follow. One based which is based on close partnership working with government, sport and the medics to bring it back safely.

It's a model we are applying to other much-loved and much-missed parts of our economy – in particular the performing arts.

I know they face enormous challenges, particularly given the impact of social distancing on live venues, and I am looking hard at how we can address those challenges.

Over the last few weeks and months, I have been talking extensively and intensively with people from across the UK's cultural sector to find a way through these issues – from some of our most creative directors and producers, to those running our greatest museums, theatres and music venues.

An important part of this is to get performances back up and running again. We have made a lot of progress through both the Cultural Renewal Taskforce and indeed the Entertainment and Events working group which sits within that. However, it is clear that we need greater flexibility to overcome some of the very specific and practical obstacles to the return of live performance.

That's why over the next week we will be convening experts in a targeted way – bringing together some of our leading performers in theatre, choirs and orchestras with medical experts and advisers.

The idea is they will work together in detail on to develop that roadmap which is so badly needed to performing safely, with a particular focus on piloting innovative ideas that may permit live performances.

I know how essential our theatres, our music venues and the performing arts are to our wider cultural ecosystem.

Culture is our calling card. It's respected around the world, and I am determined to work with them and across government to support it and to preserve its world leading position.

Today's return of live football represents a significant milestone. But I hope it's just another step towards normality, to be followed by many more in the months to come.

Thank you.