

PM to set out Government's action plan on the coronavirus outbreak

Prime Minister Boris Johnson will today (Tuesday 3 March) set out the Government's action plan to tackle the spread of coronavirus.

He will host a press conference in Downing Street to launch the plan, alongside the Chief Medical Officer Professor Chris Whitty and Chief Scientific Adviser Sir Patrick Vallance.

The new plan, agreed by all four parts of the UK, sets out how Ministers will take every reasonable step to confront the virus, consistent with the best scientific evidence, and ensure the Government is able to adapt quickly to changing circumstances.

Yesterday the Prime Minister brought together the Government's emergency COBR committee on the coronavirus outbreak, where attendees discussed, finalised and signed off the battle plan.

Later in the week, a major public information campaign will be launched setting out clear steps the public can take to limit the spread of the virus, including washing their hands regularly with soap and water.

A new Bill will be published in the coming weeks to ensure Government has all the necessary powers to prepare for and tackle the coronavirus outbreak.

New measures already set out as part of the battle plan include:

- Every government department having a designated Ministerial virus lead to oversee the response to the global threat of the virus, for instance on schools or businesses
- A war room set up in the Cabinet Office, bringing together communications experts and scientists from across government and the NHS to roll out the public information campaign `* Coronavirus being a standing item on the weekly Cabinet agenda, with the PM continuing to oversee the Government approach
- The option, should the virus spread, to encourage more home working and discourage unnecessary travel as part of a 'social distancing' strategy that could delay the peak of the outbreak until later in the year, potentially helping combat the virus in warmer weather conditions
- Looking at emergency registration of health professionals who have retired, the introduction of emergency indemnity coverage for health care workers to provide care or diagnostic services and relaxation of rules around staff to pupil ratios in education and childcare settings

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

It is highly likely coronavirus will spread more widely in the coming days and weeks, which is why we're making every possible

preparation.

We have agreed a plan, which I will set out in detail today, so if the virus should spread, we are ready to take necessary steps to contain it and protect the most vulnerable.

But we can all continue to do our bit to fight this virus – by washing our hands with soap and water for the length of time it takes to sing Happy Birthday twice.

The Prime Minister has also made a number of visits the last few days, including to:

- Kettering General Hospital – The PM met NHS frontline staff and saw their new coronavirus pod, a special sterile cabin outside the hospital, where people can come to be checked
- Public Health England's laboratory in Colindale – one of a number of labs across the UK where tests are carried out to confirm or rule out coronavirus
- The Royal Free Hospital – The PM met staff who are treating patients with the virus