

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster's statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 3 May 2020

Coronavirus press conference 3 May 2020

Good afternoon and welcome to this No10 press conference on our progress in the fight against COVID 19.

I am joined today by Professor Steve Powis, the National Medical Director at NHS England.

In a moment or two I will hand over to Steve to take us through the slide updates from the Cabinet Office briefing room.

But first I want to set out the latest coronavirus data.

1,206,405 tests for coronavirus have now been carried out in the UK, including 76,496 yesterday.

Overall, 186,599 people have tested positive. That's an increase of 4,339 cases since yesterday.

14,248 people are currently being treated in hospital for coronavirus, compared to 14,695 yesterday.

Sadly, of those who have tested positive for coronavirus across all settings, 28,446 have died.

Behind the numbers there has been an increase of 315 deaths since yesterday across all settings.

This pandemic has claimed more than 28,000 lives, and each one of them is precious, each one valued, each one irreplaceable.

The pain of bereavement and heartbreak is deeply personal.

But as a society, we are showing care and compassion across boundaries, offering support and a chance to talk through grief together.

For those experiencing the first Ramadan without a loved one, this will be a particularly painful time. I send my sincere condolences to all families who are grieving.

As with Christians who could not celebrate Easter together in church, and the Jewish community whose Passover rituals were affected by social distancing, our thoughts are with Muslim neighbours who cannot break their fast together and must adapt their religious and cultural practices because of the crisis.

We have all learned to adapt, and we must carry on doing so after the Prime Minister sets out how we will get back to work later this week. His comprehensive plan will explain how we can get our economy moving, how we can get our children back to school, how we can travel to work more safely and how we can make life in the workplace safer.

But before we can ease the existing restrictions we must ensure the government's five tests are met – that the number of cases are falling, that death rates are declining, that the NHS has what it needs and that measures are in place to stop a second peak overwhelming the NHS.

I am particularly conscious that those in the frontline of our public services will need clear guidance on safe working, they'll need the right personal protective equipment and appropriate access to testing if we are to make all the progress that we want in the weeks ahead.

We are consulting with employers and unions, professionals and public health experts, to establish how we can ensure that we have the safest possible working environments and the Prime Minister will be saying more later next week.

On personal protective equipment for key workers, we are increasing the spread of distribution and supply.

From February 25 to May 2 we have delivered over 1.08 billion items of PPE across the health and social care system within England – and tens of millions more have been distributed by our colleagues in the Devolved Administrations.

This overall figure includes:

- 149 million masks
- 173 million aprons
- 2 million gowns
- 614 million gloves

On 2 May alone, we delivered an additional 20 million items of PPE within England.

But there is much more to do and the work led by Lord Deighton to improve domestic production of PPE is vital to our efforts.

And on testing, thanks to the hard work of so many across the NHS, Public Health England, our pharmaceutical sector and our universities, we have tested over 200,000 key workers and their families, allowing those who don't have the virus to go back to work, and protecting those who do.

We have now, of course, extended the criteria for testing beyond key workers to anyone over 65 displaying symptoms, and anyone who has to travel to get to work.

And this week we will be piloting new test, track and trace procedures on the Isle of Wight with a view to having them in place more widely later this

month.

All of these steps will help us to get more people back to work and help to support the delivery of our public services.

And I want to thank those who have done so much to maintain the provision of critical public services during this crisis.

Our teachers have worked incredibly hard to provide educational support to millions.

And the government has committed £100m to boost remote learning for those who need it most. Our newly-launched Oak National Academy is supplementing all the work going on by schools and teachers by providing 180 video lessons each week.

We are particularly keen to help vulnerable and disadvantaged children carry on with their education during the pandemic. Schools continue to receive additional funding in the form of the pupil premium, for those pupils who most deserve it – worth around £2.4 billion annually.

We have ordered laptops to help disadvantaged young people who will be sitting key exams next year. We are also providing laptops and tablets for those children with social workers and care leavers, to help them stay in touch with the services they need, keeping them safe and supporting home learning.

And if disadvantaged secondary school pupils and care leavers who are preparing for exams do not have internet access, we will provide free routers to get them connected while schools are closed.

Over the Easter holidays, we were able to ensure that more than 60 percent of schools were open every day, with places for both vulnerable children and those of critical workers.

And the Free School Meal Voucher Scheme ensured that children who needed it can continue to access food despite school closures. So far, 15,500 schools have placed orders for vouchers, of which over £35 million has been redeemed.

The latest available data shows that around 49,000 of the children in attendance on April 24 were classed by schools as vulnerable – more than double the figure from a week earlier.

While this is going in the right direction, we estimate this still represents only around one in ten of all children and young people classified as vulnerable. We want to see this figure go up further, and we're working with local authorities, schools and colleges to provide improved support to vulnerable young people.

Support for local authorities/military

All this additional support of course takes time, puts pressure on existing staff and costs money.

That is why we have pledged an additional £1.6bn to councils across England to support their essential frontline services including adult social care. This sum takes the funding given to councils to over £3.2billion, to help communities through the crisis.

We have also deployed military support to assist the public sector. The Covid Support Force mobilised by the MoD is now 20,000-strong.

Today, over 3,600 personnel are deployed in support of 86 separate projects in which military aid is being given to civil authorities.

On a national level, they are helping the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, the Department of Health and Social Care and also the NHS, with planning and logistics in England, Scotland and Wales.

On the ground, they are helping to build and to staff temporary Nightingale hospitals, and to operate both Regional Testing Centres for coronavirus, of which there are now 49 around the country. And also the Mobile Testing Units that we are rolling out: to date there are 77 of them.

Across the country, 156 military planners are embedded at grass-roots level with our existing Local Resilience Forums – partnerships of emergency services, local authorities, the NHS, the Environment Agency and others. They are helping to coordinate and protect our vital local services and supplies, with the additional support of senior Whitehall officials.

In addition, we have to thank local government for their energetic work, because since the end of March, 90 percent of rough sleepers known to councils have been made an offer of accommodation, reassuring them about their safety.

The government, more widely, is also working hard to support those who have not been identified as 'shielded' but are still vulnerable. In the coming days, we will be delivering our one millionth parcel of essential food to those at highest risk across the country.

Up to 200,000 telephone calls a day are being made to the shielded, and councils are helping to support them in other ways – including organising regular calls from volunteers to those who are isolated.

In our communities, the support put in place by many local organisations has been inspirational as people step up to help friends and neighbours.

The government has helped to mobilise another important lifeline through the NHS Volunteers Responders programme.

Over 600,000 people have had their ID verified and are helping with the daily errands that make such a significant difference – collecting shopping, making contact as a human voice on the end of a telephone, transporting patients and supplies for the NHS.

And, of course, we are all working with supermarkets to ensure that a greater number of online delivery slots are made available to those most in need.

Importance of working as a team across the UK

In every one of these areas, the government in Westminster has been working with ministers from the Scottish Government, the Welsh Government and the Northern Ireland Executive. This has helped us to monitor and react to the path of the virus across the nations, enabling us to intervene wherever people are in need.

At each of these daily press conferences, we have paid tribute to the compassion and dedication of our key public-sector workers.

I recognise how much we all owe to their stoicism and steadfastness. Nurses, doctors, porters, cleaners, paramedics, pharmacists, care home staff, prison and police officers, teachers, social workers, those preparing and delivering food, collecting our refuse and administering our welfare system. They deserve our gratitude, they deserve our support, they are in all our minds. They are the very best of us.

We owe them so much – and we in government will do everything we can to support them during the next phases of our pandemic response.

I will now hand over to Professor Steve Powis to take us through the latest developments on the pandemic.

Multi-billion pound road and railway investment to put nation on path to recovery

- investment across road and rail will support the country's economic recovery and continue to level-up infrastructure.
- £1.7 billion to improve journeys for cyclists, pedestrians and drivers across England through repairs to local roads.
- fast tracked construction works worth £175 million will ensure networks get vital repairs while fewer passengers are using transport system.
- plans to lock in environmental benefits seen during lockdown with vision to boost England's charging infrastructure for electric vehicles over next decade.

Journeys on local roads, railways and motorways will be smoother and safer thanks to a multi-billion-pound infrastructure package Transport Secretary Grant Shapps will announce today (14 May 2020).

Hundreds of millions of pounds worth of upgrades have already been made to the nation's road and rail networks during the lockdown period with more

planned over the coming weeks and months.

Drivers and cyclists beginning to return to England's streets will benefit from a £1.7bn Transport Infrastructure Investment Fund to improve roads, repair bridges and fill in millions of potholes.

The package will target around 11 million nuisance potholes, enough to tarmac a road stretching a third of the way around the Earth. It will also see smaller improvements completed to upgrade local networks, such as enhancing road safety at key locations, the installation of priority bus lanes, and the creation of projects to help lock in improvements in air quality experienced during lockdown.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

There has been a monumental effort in every corner of the country to slow the spread of the virus and protect our NHS. However, the battle is not over yet and we urge everyone to keep up the good work and only travel when they need to.

To help those who do have to use public transport or get out on the roads to do their jobs, we've been accelerating infrastructure upgrades to make sure that, as we gradually reopen our society, everyone can benefit from smoother and safer journeys with better connections for our future.

On top of this fund, the government is also accelerating more than £175 million worth of work during the quieter period across our road and rail network while people follow the guidance to avoid unnecessary travel.

It comes after the Transport Secretary last week [announced £2 billion in funding to boost more sustainable greener travel and encourage more people to begin cycling and walking.](#)

Major improvement works have already taken place over the past month. England's motorways and major A-roads benefitted from £200 million of work carried out in April while some £550 million of improvements and maintenance were also completed on the rail network.

Sir Peter Hendy CBE, chairman of Network Rail, has also been asked by the Transport Secretary to oversee how operators can best act in line with the government's guidance to keep passengers safe. As part of this, rail operators have been asked to deliver regular station speaker announcements, clear signage and floor markings, while ensuring extra staff are available to manage crowding and provide guidance to passengers. Enhanced cleaning regimes on trains and at stations have also been introduced by operators and Network Rail. As more people return to their cars, it is critical this is done in a sustainable way. The government has therefore today outlined its vision to supercharge the electric car chargepoint network by boosting the numbers of rapid chargepoints across England's strategic road network over the next decade.

On England's motorways and major A roads, drivers are currently never more than 25 miles away from a rapid chargepoint. Today's [vision](#) aims to ensure every motorway service area will have a minimum of six ultra-rapid chargepoints, with some larger sites having as many as 10-12, by 2023. This means that many drivers will be able to charge their cars in around 15 minutes – three times faster than they can currently and in the same time it takes to have a rest break, or grab food for their journey.

It will also allow people to charge their electric vehicles quickly and easily using their debit or credit card and access information on available chargepoints and pricing information during their journey.

[Recovered appeal: land at Hawthorns, Bells Piece, Farnham, Surrey, GU9 9RL \(ref: 3211033 – 14 May 2020\)](#)

[unable to retrieve full-text content]Decision letter and Inspector's Report for a recovered appeal.

[Dame Ottoline Leyser appointed new CEO of UK Research And Innovation \(UKRI\)](#)

Business Secretary Alok Sharma has today (14 May) appointed Professor Ottoline Leyser DBE FRS as the new CEO of [UK Research and Innovation](#) (UKRI).

Professor Ottoline Leyser is a leading British plant biologist and Director of the [Sainsbury Laboratory](#) at the University of Cambridge. Starting the position on Monday 29 June, as UKRI CEO, Professor Leyser will guide the delivery on the government's ambitions to increase investment in research and development (R&D) to 2.4% of GDP by 2027, establishing the UK as a global hub for science and technology, now and far into the future.

This appointment will ensure the UK research sector remains at the forefront of new advances to tackle the biggest industrial and societal challenges affecting the world today including climate change, healthcare and the current coronavirus pandemic.

Business Secretary Alok Sharma said:

Professor Leyser's appointment comes at a critical time for the UK. The coronavirus pandemic has shown the importance of science for our future and UKRI has a vital role to play in this.

As the new Chief Executive, Professor Leyser will drive forward UKRI's mission to create the great British companies of the future and help keep the UK at the cutting edge of global research and development.

I would like to thank Sir Mark Walport for his dedication to UKRI, leading its transformation programme and championing science, engineering and technology across the UK.

Science Minister Amanda Solloway said:

I am thrilled with the appointment of Professor Leyser and I look forward to working closely with her to drive forward our shared ambition to boost our world-leading research and development.

Since its launch in 2018, UKRI has gone from strength to strength. Professor Leyser has already led a highly collaborative lab in her previous role which will be a great skill to bring to UKRI as it embarks on a new stage of exciting evolution.

I would also like to personally thank Sir Mark Walport for his dedication to this role.

Professor Ottoline Leyser commented:

UKRI has a unique opportunity to make a profound contribution to tackling the many challenges facing the world.

During my career, I have seen the power of genuinely collaborative cultures to catalyse the transformative thinking needed to create effective solutions.

I look forward to working with the UKRI team to ensure that the UK's superb research and innovation system continues to work for everyone, by pioneering new partnerships, developing innovative funding models and strengthening international collaboration.

About UKRI

UKRI works in partnership with universities, research organisations, businesses, charities and government to create the best possible environment for research and innovation to flourish, ensuring the UK remains a world-leader in science and research.

UKRI was established on 1 April 2018, bringing together 7 existing research

councils, Innovate UK and Research England. It has a combined budget of £7 billion.

About Professor Ottoline Leyser DBE FRS

Ottoline received her BA (1986) and PhD (1990) in genetics from the University of Cambridge. After post-doctoral research at Indiana University and Cambridge, she took up a lectureship at the University of York, where she worked from 1994-2010.

Among her honours are the Society of Experimental Biology's President's Medal (2000), the Royal Society Rosalind Franklin Award (2007), the International Plant Growth Substance Association's Silver Medal (2010), the UK Genetics Society Medal (2016), the European Molecular Biology Organization (EMBO) Women in Science Award (2017) and the British Society for Developmental Biology's Waddington Medal (2020).

She was appointed a Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire (DBE) in the 2017 New Year Honours list for services to plant science, science in society and equality and diversity in science. She is a Fellow of the Royal Society, an International Member of the US National Academy of Sciences and a Member of the European Molecular Biology Organisation and the Leopoldina. She is a Fellow of Clare College.

She currently chairs the Royal Society's Science Policy Expert Advisory Committee and serves on the Council for Science and Technology.

Making a difference

News story

Juggling HR activities and supporting elderly isolated people in her spare time – that's Helen Roughley who has continued both activities during the Covid-19 pandemic.



Helen Roughly volunteering in her community

Helen is a HR Advisor at Sellafield Ltd for project delivery, supply chain and general counsel and has been volunteering for the Re-engage charity in Wigan for over 3 years that provides social contact for isolated individuals.

Helen said:

There are currently 2 groups in Wigan, each with around 6 to 8 people, and our group regularly meet for afternoon tea at someone's house. Some volunteers are 'hosts' who will open their home and provide refreshments, others are 'drivers' who will chauffeur the guests to the house.

Obviously since the pandemic, gatherings have not been possible, so to maintain social contact our volunteers now make regular telephone calls to the individuals instead to check whether anything specific is needed, but mostly they just have a chat.

Most charities need people during the week but Re-engage wanted people at the weekend. It's great to hear tales of old Wigan but our individuals certainly don't live in the past – we have heated debates about sport and politics. I anticipate when we get back together there will be strong opinions on the current political landscape – and of course I am looking forward to getting back to afternoon tea.

On top of her Re-engage role, Helen has also offered her services to the Volunteer Centre Manchester where she was invited to apply to Northern Care Alliance NHS Group as a 'day to day volunteer' at Fairfield Hospital.

This role involves carrying out reception duties, cascading daily communications to staff, assisting with stock checks, pharmacy runner etc.

Helen added:

Volunteering is a great way to give back to your community in any circumstance, and it's even more important to help out one another in these testing times.

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