

Environment Secretary's statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 8 May 2020

[This transcript is for the coronavirus statement delivered on 8 May 2020:](#)

Good afternoon, and welcome to today's Downing Street Press Conference. I'm pleased to be joined today by Steve Powis the medical director of NHS England.

Before we give an update on the latest figures on the Coronavirus and also our work to help support the vulnerable get access to food.

Today is of course the 75th anniversary of VE day and although many of the lockdown measures and the social distancing measures that are in place mean that many of the planned events have been unable to take place as originally envisaged, today is an important day to pause and remember and 75 years ago people poured into the streets of our scarred cities to celebrate the end of that most difficult conflict.

Our soldiers fought around the world, there were countless acts of bravery, 450,000 British people sadly lost their lives and it was a moment when our whole country pulled together.

As Defra secretary I would like to take this opportunity to record the efforts of those who also contributed in a non-military way, in particular our farmers who stepped up to ensure the nation was fed and the many women who responded to the call to join the Women's Land Army.

In a moment I am going to give an update on our work to support the vulnerable get access to food, but firstly let me give you an update on the latest data from the COBR coronavirus data file. I can report through the governments ongoing monitoring and testing programme as of today:

- 1,631,561 tests for coronavirus have now been carried out in the UK, including 97,029 tests carried out yesterday;
- 211,364 people have tested positive, that's an increase of 4,649 cases since yesterday;
- 11,788 people are currently in hospital with coronavirus, down from 12,688 the previous day.

And sadly, of those tested positive for coronavirus, across all settings, 31,241 have now died. That's an increase of 626 fatalities since yesterday. This new figure includes deaths in all settings not just in hospitals.

We express our deepest condolences to the families and friends of these victims.

Turning now to our work to help the vulnerable get access to food, firstly for the so called shielded cohort. That's those who are clinically vulnerable.

Over a million food parcels have now been delivered to these households and in addition, all those in the shielded cohort have been added to a list giving them priority access to supermarket delivery slots. So far around 400,000 people have been offered priority delivery slots by supermarkets and around 1 million orders have been placed ensuring that people can shop normally and purchase the goods that they want to buy.

There is of course a wider vulnerable group, those who perhaps have disabilities or who are elderly and perhaps don't have neighbours or relatives close by to help them. Or indeed those with other conditions that don't put them in the clinically shielded group but nevertheless make them vulnerable and we have been working with local authorities, and some of the leading charities such as Age UK to put together a package of support to help these people get access to food.

And many local authorities and charities have also been accessing the Good Samaritan app as part of the NHS responder volunteer programme and so far 79,000 shopping runs have been carried out by volunteers engaged in that programme.

In addition we are continuing to work with supermarkets to make available additional priority slots for those in this group. But we also recognise that the economic impacts of coronavirus means that vulnerability is not about physical access to food, for some there is also financial vulnerability, so today we are announcing a new £16 million fund to support frontline food charities. The fund will be used by Fareshare and WRAP to continue and support and increase the food redistribution work that they already do and will significantly expand their sourcing capacity. They will be delivering food to around 5,000 frontline charities and these include refuges, homeless shelters and rehabilitation centres.

Finally I am conscious that there is a great deal of speculation about what the Prime Minister might say on Sunday when he outlines the roadmap for the future and how we will evolve the current restrictions. The Prime Minister will outline any changes to the guidance on Sunday but in the meantime in spite of the sunny bank holiday it is vitally important that we continue to abide by the current restrictions, stay at home to protect the NHS and save lives.

Concluding the press conference the Environment Secretary said:

I would also as I have done before like to conclude by recording my thanks to all those working in the food industry; from supermarkets and food

manufacturers right through to farmers, there has really been quite an extraordinary effort over the last couple of months to ensure that we keep food on our supermarket shelves.

Thank you all very much.

[UK diplomats in Canada take part in 24hr Global Relay Marathon](#)

On Saturday 9th May 2020 British Government staff in diplomatic posts around the world will take part in a live 24hr global relay marathon to raise money for charities on the frontline battling COVID-19.

From Samoa to Vancouver the #diplomile will cover 101 countries over 23 time zones travelling from East to West. More than 3000 UK government staff and their families will run, walk or ride one mile over a 24-hour period creating a global wave that will be shared on social media.

Here in Canada we're using this event to mark Mental Health Week, with a target to raise \$2000 for the Canadian Mental Health Association and Canadian Women's Foundation.

How will it work?

- UK government staff in Apia, Samoa, will kick off the marathon at 1000 AST on 9th May. Participants will take a picture or video of themselves which will then be shared on social media using #diplomile. The virtual baton will then be passed on via text message to the next participant in Fiji and so it will continue around the world.
- The Canadian leg of the marathon will begin in Ottawa at 0800EST at the British High Commissioners residence. It will then pass through Toronto, Montreal, Calgary, BATUS, the British Army base in Suffield, finally ending in Vancouver at 1700PST

Why are we doing this?

- The Coronavirus has changed lives irrevocably. From social distancing and unemployment to daily updates on those who have died, many are feeling the strain on our mental health.
- Our teams have also been on the frontline, ensuring the safety of British nationals in all corners of the world, and helping the most vulnerable to return home to the UK.
- Research also indicates that women and girls are more vulnerable during this time, with reports on gender based violence on the rise across the country.
- For these reasons and more the UK High Commission in Canada is proud to

support this marathon and the important work done by the Canadian Mental Health Association and the Canadian Women's Foundation.

Where can I find out more?

Quotes:

Susan le Jeune d'Allegeershecque, UK High Commissioner to Canada:

The @UKinCanada network is delighted to be taking part in the #diplomile global marathon with colleagues across the world. The COVID-19 pandemic has made it even more important than usual to look after our mental health – anxiety about loved ones, isolation and fears about our jobs and our future all contribute to new, difficult stresses for many of us. Mental health charities complement the vital work undertaken by our wonderful health professionals, and that is why @UKinCanada is delighted to be raising funds for the Canadian Mental Health Foundation and the Canadian Women's Foundation as we run, walk and scoot this weekend.

Caroline Saunders, Consul-General to the British Consulate-General in Calgary:

Our global network has worked tirelessly on our COVID-19 response and now we are uniting in a 24-hour virtual marathon across the world to raise money for good causes. British government staff across the globe and across Canada have shown a real desire to come together and support COVID-19 related charities.

Andreeane Lafrance, Political and Public Affairs Officer, British Consulate General in Montreal:

Raising awareness on mental health is very important for me, as I've experienced over the years the toll anxiety and grief can take in someone's life. And in those disturbing times, it is crucial that people have the tools and resources to get the help needed. Don't suffer in silence. And for that reason, I'll be running in the #diplomile.

Background:

The British High Commission in Ottawa, is the UK government's main diplomatic mission in Canada. Along with Consulates-General in Montreal, Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver, we work closely with the Canadian government and partners across the country to develop and maintain a wide range of substantive partnerships of real value to both countries. These partnerships cover business, defence, climate change, science and innovation, education,

and culture.

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Prime Minister's call with President Putin: 8 May 2020

News story

Prime Minister Boris Johnson spoke to President Putin today to mark the 75th anniversary of VE Day.



The Prime Minister spoke to President Putin today to mark the 75th anniversary of VE Day.

They paid tribute to the collaboration between British and Russian forces during the Second World War, including through the Arctic convoys, and to the heroism and sacrifice of all those who lost their lives.

They also discussed the bilateral relationship between our countries. The Prime Minister was clear we should maintain dialogue but that obstacles to further progress remained.

The leaders spoke about the coronavirus pandemic and agreed on the importance of continuing to work together and with other countries to defeat the disease.

The Prime Minister invited President Putin to take part in the Global Vaccine Summit that the UK will host virtually in June, to strengthen healthcare systems and tackle coronavirus in some of the world's poorest countries.

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[£16 million for food charities to provide meals for those in need](#)

The government has today announced up to £16 million to provide food for those who are struggling as a result of coronavirus.

The programme will provide millions of meals over the next 12 weeks and be delivered through charities including [FareShare](#) and [WRAP \(Waste and Resources Action Programme\)](#).

At least 5,000 frontline charities and community groups in England will benefit, including refuges, homeless shelters and rehabilitation services. It will cover rural areas as well as cities, targeting those who are struggling to get food.

Both WRAP and FareShare have well-established networks for funding local charities and delivering food, ensuring support can get to where it is needed as quickly as possible. Part of the fund will also be available for smaller food distribution charities.

These supplies will be in addition to those already donated by supermarkets, hospitality businesses, wholesalers, smaller retailers, suppliers and manufacturers who have been working collectively, co-ordinated by the Institute of Grocery Distribution (IGD).

The funding is part of the [£750 million pot announced by the Chancellor for frontline charities across the UK](#) during the coronavirus outbreak. This is a further step in work to allocate that funding package, with Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport leading on the allocation of funding. It builds on [existing government support](#) for those struggling as a result of COVID-19.

Environment Secretary George Eustice said:

During this difficult time our frontline food charities are doing brilliant work amid a significant increase in demand – working in refuges, drop-in services, homeless centres and other places.

It is absolutely vital they have the resources they need and this funding will help the most vulnerable in our society get the food they need at this enormously challenging time.

Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden said:

We're doing all we can to support vulnerable people through this

crisis and this vital initiative will help provide meals for those who need them.

It is part of the unprecedented £750 million of government funding to provide support for our brilliant charities and volunteers that are so vital to the national effort.

Lindsay Boswell, CEO of Fareshare said:

We welcome this support from Defra to obtain vital food supplies, on top of the generosity already shown by the UK food industry. This will enable us to continue to supply much-needed food and drink to the many thousands of frontline charities and community groups across England that are doing the humbling work of getting meals to very vulnerable people during this crisis.

We want to make clear that this funding will only be used for the procurement of food and drink and that our own running costs are funded through other gratefully received charitable donations. We have seen the generosity of the food industry who have stepped up to donate food and logistical support to help us do this, and government has now come in to play its part alongside . If businesses or local authorities wish to join our efforts in the fight against hunger and food waste, be they in food, logistics or have fleets, we urge them to get in touch with us today.

Marcus Gover, Chief Executive of WRAP, said:

We've worked with Defra to create a grant scheme of support for the many organisations across England who are feeding the most vulnerable among us. In only two weeks we've received a huge response and are finalising the first batch of applications. This additional funding will be used to expand that essential work with support for the very smallest, to the largest charities and enable them to support many more people at this difficult time.

The government continues to urge people to support family, friends and neighbours by helping with shopping for food and other supplies. Information on how to help safely can be found on [gov.uk/safehelp](https://www.gov.uk/safehelp). Those who meet the criteria for support from the NHS Volunteer Responders programme can refer themselves or a family member by calling 08081963646.

Local councils may also be able to offer support and give advice to those who do not have friends and family nearby to help. You can find your local authority [online here](#).

Those who are well and able to get to the shops are also encouraged to do so, leaving online delivery slots for those who need them most.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

The role of FareShare and WRAP is as follows:

- Fareshare – the largest not-for-profit organisation that redistributes food in England and nationwide – will buy food from manufacturers to provide at least 5,000 frontline charities with food.
- WRAP – specialists in sustainability and reducing food waste – will use the extra funding to boost existing work redistributing surplus food in the supply chain. WRAP is already managing the government's £3.25 million fund to redistribute up to 14,000 tonnes of surplus stock during the coronavirus outbreak.

We will also be setting up a Covid-19 Food Charity Grant Scheme, which will enable other charities that provide food to apply online for funding. More details on how to apply for this funding will be available on Monday at [this link](#).

Grocery food retailers , suppliers and manufacturers, coordinated by IGD, are also making significant donations to local communities and charities in response to the outbreak. For example:

- Tesco is providing a £30 million package of support for local communities tackling COVID-19, including a £25 million food donations programme.
- Sainsbury's has donated £3 million to FareShare and Asda donated £5m to community charities to help people through COVID-19.
- Morrison's has promised £10 million of dedicated stock to be set aside in Morrison's supermarkets to be donated.
- Coop has donated £1.5 million of food to FareShare.
- Suppliers and manufacturers have also donated thousands of pallets of food to Fareshare across a range of fresh and ambient food types.
- To see the full list of actions that the supermarkets are taking to support the public please visit the [Defra in the media blog](#).

Further guidance on how to access food and other essential supplies during the coronavirus pandemic is on [gov.uk](#).

[Countering online child sexual exploitation and abuse during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) pandemic](#)

- Only go outside for food, health reasons or work (but only if you cannot

work from home)

- If you go out, stay 2 metres (6ft) away from other people at all times
- Wash your hands as soon as you get home

Do not meet others, even friends or family.

You can spread the virus even if you don't have symptoms.