

# Foreign Secretary's statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 7 May 2020

Good afternoon and welcome to today's Downing Street Press Conference.

I'm very pleased to be joined by Sir Ian Diamond the UK's National Statistician from the ONS, And also by Dr Jenny Harries, Deputy CMO.

The latest data from our COBR coronavirus data file shows that, as of today:

- there have now been 1,534,533 tests for coronavirus across the UK
- that includes 86,583 tests carried out yesterday
- 206,715 people have tested positive, that's an increase of 5,614 cases since yesterday

And those who tested positive, very sadly, 30,615 people have now died, and my deepest condolences go out to anyone who has lost a loved one throughout this pandemic.

Three weeks ago, before the Easter bank holiday weekend, I set out five tests for the UK to move on to the next phase in this pandemic. Then, just as now, there were calls to ease up on the restrictions. But as the science made clear, we couldn't responsibly do that. In fact, the advice from the group of scientific experts, SAGE, who advise the government made it very clear that there weren't any changes at all that we could confidently take, Without risking a second peak of the virus.

That's why we asked the public to keep going. We weren't done yet.

We said 'stick to the plan', and the British public kept going. People stuck to the rules. That meant working from home, it meant worries about money it meant adjusting to home schooling, time apart from family and friends, and just not doing many of the things which we all enjoy in life.

At the same time, there's been a lot of people who, despite their own personal sacrifices, have gone the extra mile. They volunteered to support the elderly and the vulnerable in their community, who have been shielded themselves away from the virus.

And each Thursday, of course, we now come together to applaud the NHS staff, and the carers, the people who just kept going to keep our country going.

And because of that monumental effort we have now passed the peak of the virus. The NHS hasn't been overwhelmed. We haven't seen hospital wards overwhelmed with patients, people left without hospital beds, people left without the ventilators that can mean the difference between life and death.

Now I know the tragic death toll in this country and around the world has been sobering for all of us, and there have been real challenges in this country – with PPE, and with care homes.

But, in this first stage of the fight against COVID-19, through this national team effort, we've prevented the number of deaths rising to even higher levels, and we've ensured critically that the NHS had the capacity to cope.

Today the Cabinet was updated on SAGE's advice on the progress that we've made to date. And as a result of the social distancing measures that we've put in place the R level, which signifies the rate of infection, is now between 0.5 and 0.9. The overall number of new cases has been steadily falling and the rate of deaths is also steadily falling.

Now, just to be clear about what all of this means in practice. The virus is not beaten yet.

It remains deadly and infectious, and we are working very hard right across government and with local government to bring it down in areas of concern, like in care homes, and I'm confident we can do it and we will do it.

But, because we held firm three weeks ago, we are now in a position to start to think about the next phase in this pandemic.

So, this weekend, the Prime Minister will set out the next steps which we can responsibly take over the following weeks, guided by the scientific advice and mindful, as we've said right from the word go, of taking the right decisions at the right time.

Now, we can start setting out how we will live and work, whilst maintaining the necessary social distancing rules, we can also be clearer about those measures which are still necessary to prevent a second peak.

The Prime Minister has been directing Ministers and our teams of officials right across government to carefully develop a road-map for the next phase.

It contains appropriate measures to be taken at appropriate milestones, subject to very clear conditions.

And there be detailed guidance to help inform, advise and reassure the public, businesses and other organisations.

To get this right, we have set milestones. Some changes can confidently be introduced more quickly than others, and some of those other ones will take longer to introduce.

And, it's important to say this, at each point along the way when we take these decisions, they will be based on the five tests and the scientific advice that we receive.

And as I set out in the fifth of our five tests when I spoke here at this lectern, on 16 April, the point at which we make even the smallest of changes to the current guidance will be a point of maximum risk.

If people abandon the social distancing, if we forget the sacrifices that were made to get us through the peak, to get us to this point, the virus will grow again at an exponential rate.

That would lead to a second peak which would threaten the NHS. It would trigger another lockdown, which prolong the economic pain, and we we're determined to keep it temporary, to keep it as short as possible.

So, we've kept the current measures in place for this long, precisely so that we can bounce back with vigour and energy as soon as possible, as soon as it is responsible to start looking at the second phase.

And because of that, our next steps will be surefooted and sustainable. Any changes we make will be carefully monitored. If people don't follow the new rules, or if we see that the R-level goes back up, we will tighten the restrictions again, we will always retain the option to do so. That way we can safeguard public health and we can also safeguard the economy in a sustainable way.

So having prepared carefully, and based on the updated advice from SAGE, this weekend, the Prime Minister will set out the roadmap for the next phase, along with the conditions for reaching each milestone.

That way we can provide the country with a better understanding of what lies ahead, we can offer reassurance that we will adjust the restrictions to the minimum necessary to prevent a second spike in the virus, and we can give people the confidence that we're doing it in a way that will protect life and preserve our way of life.

[Coronavirus press conference 7 May 2020](#)

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## **UK Armed Forces Maintaining Critical Defence Activities**

While some basic training and exercises were paused as a result of Covid-19, including the NATO exercises 'Cold Response' and 'Defender 2020', the Armed Forces have continued to fulfil non-discretionary activities:

- Deployed roughly 4,000 troops, with a further 16,000 held at high readiness, as part of the Covid Support Force, which has helped with a significant number of tasks in the UK. (More information can be found [here](#).)
- Provided specialist support to the UK's Overseas Territories, including the deployment of RFA ARGUS to the Caribbean.
- Conducted air strikes against Daesh terrorists in Iraq, on April 10 and April 28, in addition to routine armed reconnaissance flights.
- Deployed RAF Typhoons jets to the NATO air policing operation in Lithuania.
- Maintained the 24-7 Continuous At-sea Nuclear Deterrent.
- Patrolled UK and international airspace and waters monitoring Russian

military activity.

- Continued critical operations in the Gulf, Iraq, Afghanistan and across Africa and Europe, alongside our international partners, NATO and the UN.

Maintaining all these operations requires a level of training to continue, ensuring both personnel and equipment remain ready to be deployed, both for scheduled operations and in case of unexpected tasks needed to guarantee national security.

In order to continue defending the nation over the longer term, the UK Armed Forces must also conduct routine force-generation, and is doing so in line with government guidelines.

This activity includes all types of training, including sea training for HMS QUEEN ELIZABETH, the UK's future flagship aircraft carrier; basic and advanced flying training by the RAF; Royal Marine Commando training; Basic Training for Army recruits and Officer Cadet Training at the Royal Military Academy of Sandhurst.

Our Armed Forces are rightly classed as 'key workers' because they are tasked with keeping the nation safe. The health of our personnel and their families are also important, so this is being conducted in accordance with official guidance, and full activity will only resume following Government direction.

For the ongoing training, stringent protective measures are in place after specific planning processes and full risk assessments have been conducted, in accordance with Government and health guidance. The training is being configured and scaled in a deliberate and disciplined manner, enabling the military to continue its routine activities safely and while maintaining an infection rate below the national average.

Examples of steps taken to enable safe training include social distancing during roll calls and physical training, isolating at the beginning of courses and reconfiguring communal spaces such as canteens, sleeping quarters and classrooms.

Minister for the Armed Forces, James Heappey said:

It has been an enormous effort from people across the UK Armed Forces to reconfigure the training activity that simply cannot be stopped without impacting our national security in the months ahead. I am grateful to all of them for their hard work and ensuring essential training continues to happen safely.

There is a great deal of Defence activity that will remain paused, which is entirely right, as we will always ensure the safety of our service personnel, their families and the communities that support them.

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# Search for new Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration begins

News story

The recruitment process for the new Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration has opened.



The recruitment process for a new Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration (ICIBI) has been launched.

This is an important role providing independent scrutiny of the Home Office's border and immigration functions, helping to drive improvements so it works as effectively as possible.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

I would like to thank David Bolt for his time in office and all the work he has done to monitor and drive efficiency in the immigration systems.

I am certain that the next appointment will continue to constructively challenge and scrutinise the department's immigration functions so that they are as effective and efficient as they can be.

The appointment of the Independent Chief Inspector will be through a full and open competition, and will be run in accordance with the Governance Code on Public Appointments.

This will involve an advisory assessment panel, with an independent chair, that will review the applications and interview shortlisted candidates. The

appointment will also be subject to pre-appointment scrutiny.

Applications for this post will be open until 11:00pm on 4 June. You can find out how to apply on the [HM Government Public Appointments website](#)

The government has adapted the recruitment process around the UK's coronavirus restrictions while ensuring a fair and open competition. This includes planning for remote interviews.

David Bolt has been the Independent Chief Inspector since May 2015 and will remain in post until October 2020.

Find out more about the [Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration](#).

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## [Domestic abuse charities can apply for vital funds](#)

- Charities can bid for a share of £10 million funding to support victims of domestic abuse
- The money will be used to support additional refuge bed spaces and specialist support
- A further £6 million will also be given to homelessness charities to support their work during this time

Details on how domestic abuse charities can access the vital funds they need to support vulnerable groups over the coming months have today (7 May 2020) been set out by Housing Secretary Robert Jenrick.

Last week, it was confirmed that there would be an additional £10 million for domestic abuse accommodation services over the coming months.

This is part of a [£76 million package of government support](#) for the most vulnerable in society, including those affected by domestic abuse.

This funding will support domestic abuse safe accommodation services who not only provide beds, but also offer the critical help victims and their children need.

The support can be used to ensure existing services remain open as well as to create additional capacity and support during these unprecedented times.

The [fund will be open for domestic abuse charities in England](#), including

refuges, to bid for a share. Charities providing Domestic Abuse Safe accommodation (including refuges) in England can apply for this funding.

In order to ensure the funding can be shared as quickly as possible, the bidding process has been streamlined meaning people can access the help they need as soon as possible.

Further information on funding streams for charities providing other domestic abuse services will be made available in due course.

Housing Secretary Robert Jenrick said:

Domestic abuse leaves vulnerable people, including children, living in fear in the very place where they should feel most safe and secure – inside their own home.

Protecting victims is an absolute priority and the funding charities can now apply for from today will help them meeting the challenges and support those that need it the most.

As well as this emergency funding, the government has also set out plans to support survivors of domestic abuse in the long-term by giving them better access to local housing services.

Government will bring forward legislation to give domestic abuse victims 'priority need' access to settled housing, ensuring they can find a home which is safe, secure and away from the threat of abuse.

Sandra Horley, CBE, chief executive of Refuge says:

Refuge welcomes the government's promise of extra funding for domestic abuse services. Over the last few weeks, calls to Refuge's National Domestic Abuse Helpline have risen by around 50%, showing the sheer numbers of women needing support.

This extra funding will help ensure those providing specialist domestic abuse services can give abused women and children life-saving refuge accommodation. No woman or child seeking sanctuary and support should ever be turned away.

Linked to this, an additional £6 million will be made available for frontline homeless charities. This funding will be shared amongst organisations who are on frontline, keeping vulnerable people without a home safe and giving them the help they need during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This follows the [appointment of Dame Louise Casey](#) to spearhead a new government taskforce on the response to rough sleeping during the coronavirus pandemic.

The taskforce will work hand-in-hand with councils and agencies across the

country on plans to ensure rough sleepers can move into long-term, safe accommodation once the immediate crisis is over – ensuring as few people as possible return to life on the streets.

In addition to the £10 million for accommodation services, the government is also providing further support to protect the most vulnerable. This includes:

- The Department for Education will provide £26.4 million to support vulnerable children, including support for families of disabled children and working to safeguard vulnerable children including care leavers and children in the early years. This funding applies to England, except for funding for Childline, which will apply to the UK.
- The Ministry of Justice will provide £25 million to help victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence in the community access support services during the coronavirus outbreak, and a further £3 million per annum investment in Independent Sexual Violence Advisers until 2022. This funding applies to England and Wales.
- The Home Office will be providing £3.8 million for community-based domestic abuse services and modern slavery services, and for added support for modern slavery charities who have been impacted by the coronavirus outbreak. The Home Office will be providing £7.8 million in emergency support for charities helping vulnerable children who have been impacted by the coronavirus outbreak. This includes children at risk of sexual abuse and criminal exploitation. This funding applies to England and Wales.

Nicki Norman Women's Aid Acting CEO said:

The government's announcement of emergency funding for specialist refuges and safe accommodation services is very welcome. A recent Women's Aid Survivor Survey found it is significantly harder for survivors to leave the abuser and seek specialist help. Over three-quarters of survivors responding said Covid-19 has made it harder for them to leave.

Refuges are working around the clock to support women and children who are no longer safe at home. However, these life-saving services are facing the additional challenges of staff shortages, lost income and managing self-isolation in communal buildings.

We are pleased that domestic abuse charities can bid directly to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government for the urgently needed emergency cash. We hope all departments will now work in partnership with the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) sector to ensure funding is fair, flexible and reaches the frontline effectively.

It is also critical that funding for services led 'by and for' BME women, Deaf and disabled women and LGBT survivors is ring-fenced. These highly specialist services are vital for meeting survivors' needs but are often marginalized within current funding systems.



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# Helen Chamberlain appointed as interim chair of the Independent Family Returns Panel

News story

Home Secretary Priti Patel has agreed the appointment of Helen Chamberlain as interim chair of the Independent Family Returns Panel (IFRP).



The IFRP is an expert committee, sponsored by the Home Office, that provides independent advice to the department on how best to safeguard children's welfare during a family's enforced return.

Helen Chamberlain has been a member of the IFRP since August 2018. Her previous roles have included Chief Superintendent and Head of Public Protection at Nottinghamshire Police.

Interim chair of the IFRP Helen Chamberlain said:

I'm delighted and honoured to have been appointed as interim chair of the Independent Family Returns Panel.

We have an important role to play in ensuring the welfare needs of children are met when families are returned to their home country.

This interim appointment follows the expiry of Paul Greenhalgh's three year tenure as chair of the IFRP, on 1 May 2020.

The recruitment process to find a permanent replacement has already begun and will be conducted in line with the Governance Code on Public Appointments.

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