

Olympics chief brought in to boost PPE production

Paul Deighton, London 2012 Chief Exec, has been appointed by Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock to lead the national effort to produce essential personal protective equipment (PPE) for frontline health and social care staff.

He will coordinate the end-to-end process of design through to manufacture, including streamlining the approvals and procurement process to ensure new domestic PPE supplies are rapidly approved and get to where they are needed. The “make” programme will start to deliver PPE supplies in the next week.

He will also support the scaling up of engineering efforts for smaller companies capable of contributing to the wider supply chain.

Lord Deighton previously served as Chief Executive of the London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games (LOCOG), the organisation responsible for planning and delivering the 2012 Summer Olympics and Paralympics. He also served as Commercial Secretary to HM Treasury from January 2013 to May 2015.

As part of the comprehensive UK-wide plan to ensure PPE gets to where it is needed most, unveiled by Matt Hancock earlier this month, Deighton will lead the “make” programme to unleash the potential of UK industry to scale up domestic PPE manufacturing.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

Our response to this global pandemic demands a national effort. Manufacturers big and small are already responding to the challenge but we must go further and faster. I am determined to do everything I can to get more protective equipment to the NHS staff who are fighting this virus on the front line.

Just as Lord Beaverbrook spearheaded the wartime efforts on aircraft production, the appointment of Lord Deighton will bring renewed drive and focus to coordinate this unprecedented peacetime challenge.

Lord Deighton led the delivery of the Olympics. Now he will lead a singular and relentless focus on PPE as the country’s top manufacturing priority, with the full weight of the government behind him.

Lord Paul Deighton, advisor to the Secretary of State on PPE said:

Countries around the world face unprecedented demand for personal protective equipment and this necessitates an equally unprecedented domestic manufacturing response.

I look forward to bringing together new partners in the pursuit of this single goal: to get our dedicated frontline workers the essential equipment they need.

This effort calls for exceptional teamwork and I am confident that we, together, will rise to this challenge.

As part of the national effort to focus the UK's manufacturing industry on this immediate challenge, the government has issued a 'call to arms' for industry partners to make essential PPE that demonstrably meets our technical specifications. Companies such as Burberry, Rolls-Royce, McLaren, Ineos and Diageo have already started work to produce equipment including gowns, visors and hand hygiene products.

The government is working around the clock to give the social care sector and wider NHS the equipment and support they need to tackle this outbreak. As of 16 April 2020, we have delivered almost a billion pieces of PPE around the country.

Notes to editors

This will be an unpaid position and will work across the Department of Health and Social Care, NHS England, and other government departments.

[New major package to support online learning](#)

Disadvantaged children across England are set to receive laptops and tablets as part of a push to make remote education accessible for pupils staying at home during the coronavirus outbreak.

Devices will be ordered for children in the most vital stages of their education, those who receive support from a social worker and care leavers.

The government will also provide 4G routers to make sure disadvantaged secondary school pupils and care leavers can access the internet – where those families do not already have mobile or broadband internet in the household.

The country's major telecommunications providers will make it easier for families to access selected educational resources by temporarily exempting

these sites from data charges.

In addition, to support the hard work of schools in delivering remote education, the Oak National Academy is due to launch on Monday 20 April. This brand-new enterprise has been created by 40 teachers from some of the leading schools across England, backed by government grant funding. It will provide 180 video lessons each week, across a broad range of subjects from maths to art to languages, for every year group from Reception through to Year 10.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

I want to thank all the teachers and staff who are working so hard to ensure vulnerable children and those of critical workers are supported at this time.

Schools will remain closed until the scientific advice changes, which is why we need to support the incredible work teachers are already doing to ensure children continue to receive the education they deserve and need.

By providing young people with these laptops and tablets and enabling schools to access high quality support, we will enable all children to continue learning now and in the years to come. We hope this support will take some of the pressure off both parents and schools by providing more materials for them to use.

Schools and colleges will be able to keep their laptops and tablets once they have reopened. This means that they will play a crucial role in enabling children to learn while schools and colleges are closed, and will also continue helping children learn in the future.

Oak Academy joins a broad range of support and resources available for schools and parents. This includes a list of [high quality resources](#) recently published by the Government, as well as the existing tools and resources schools use to provide remote education. Many suppliers are making resources, both online and hard-copy, available to schools for free.

This week (Monday 20 April) the BBC is launching its own education package across TV and online, featuring celebrities and some of the best teachers – helping to keep children learning and supporting parents.

This is alongside new guidance published today (Sunday 19 April) for parents on how best to support their child's education and development.

While families stay at home to reduce the spread of the coronavirus, some children and young people may face increased risk of abuse or neglect at home – or from strangers online.

The Government will make funding worth £1.6 million available immediately for the NSPCC to expand and promote its national helpline for adults.

While schools and social workers remain at the forefront of work to protect vulnerable children, including by supporting them to attend school, expanding the NSPCC Helpline will mean many more adults know how and where to raise concerns and seek advice or support about the safety and wellbeing of any children they are worried about.

UK Government expands return flights programme for thousands of stranded Brits from across South Asia

7,000 more people will be able to get home from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, after a further 31 charter flights were announced by the Foreign Office.

On Friday, the following charter flights were announced:

- 17 from India, which will run from 20-27 April
- 10 from Pakistan, running between 21-27 April
- 4 from Bangladesh, which will run from 21-27 April

The UK has worked closely with South Asian governments to keep commercial flight routes running and airports open. It has already chartered 24 flights from the region to help vulnerable British nationals return home in previous weeks.

The Foreign Secretary, Dominic Raab said:

We are working around the clock to get British travellers home. Since the outbreak of coronavirus in Wuhan, we've helped more than a million British citizens return home on commercial flights – backed up by our work with the airlines and foreign governments to keep flights running.

Our special charter deal with the airlines has enabled us to return thousands more. Now, I can announce the next 31 flights from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh which will get 7,000 more Brits safely back home.

The addition of 31 flights will mean the UK Government has facilitated the return of more than 10,000 British travellers on 55 flights from the region since the coronavirus crisis began.

- Around 5,000 British nationals will have returned to the UK from India between 8-19 April on 21 UK charter flights from 11 Indian cities. The 17 extra flights from India announced on Friday will be able to carry around 4,000 passengers, and bring the total number chartered by the UK Government from India to 38.
- The flights from Pakistan will bring around 2,500 people home. More than 8,000 British nationals returned to the UK between 4-16 April, via 23 commercial flights, following extensive cooperation between the UK and Pakistan.
- The four flights from Bangladesh will have the capacity to bring home up to 850 passengers.
- Three charter flights from Nepal have also returned more than 700 passengers to the UK.

The UK Government is working with the airline industry and host governments across the world to help bring back British travellers to the UK as part of the plan announced by the Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab (on 30 March) – with up to £75 million available for special charter flights from priority countries, focused on helping the most vulnerable travellers.

British High Commissioner visits COVID-19 Emergency Operations Centre (EOC)

British High Commissioner Dr Christian Turner CMG visited the COVID-19 National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) in Islamabad to see at first-hand how Pakistan is responding to the crisis.

The centre is the key surveillance and data management centre for the global pandemic in Pakistan, providing data on how the virus is affecting the country and so strengthening the fight against the disease.

The High Commissioner was accompanied by the head of the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) office in Pakistan Annabel Gerry.

They were received by the Director of the NEOC, Dr Rana Safdar, who briefed them on how COVID19 Surveillance is working throughout Pakistan. The centre and surveillance networks have been supported by UK Aid through the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI), to monitor polio in Pakistan, before

being used for COVID-19 response.

Dr Christian Turner said:

Hugely impressed with National Emergency Operations Centre putting world class data, surveillance and epidemiology at the heart of COVID19 response.

I'm proud that the UK supports this centre, which was set up to help fight polio. Now it has repurposed to become the biggest data centre in the country for all COVID-19-related information, as Pakistan responds to this global pandemic.

The dedicated people behind this centre underline the best of UK-Pakistan friendship and shared problem-solving, even in these most challenging of times

The data collated at the centre is published daily on the COVID-19 dashboard by the [Government of Pakistan](#) The centre was originally the National Emergency Operations Centre for surveillance of polio cases, but is now also being used to track cases and collate data on COVID-19 in Pakistan.

Notes to editors:

- The UK is the one of the largest donors to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI), which supports polio immunisation and surveillance, including the National Emergency Operations Centre. UK support to Pakistan through the initiative amounts to approximately £12m per year.
- The UK is one of the main donors to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) globally. The UK has recently committed £400m for the next 3 year programme of work.

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Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick on COVID-19 response: 18 April 2020

Good afternoon,

Welcome to the coronavirus press conference from Downing Street.

I'm joined by Steve Powis, national medical director of NHS England.

Steve will provide an update on the latest data on coronavirus shortly.

But, first, let me update you on the steps we are taking to defeat it, and the decisions we have taken today.

Our fight against this virus is happening all across the country, in every home, in every community.

Today's data shows that:

460,437 tests for coronavirus have now been carried out across Great Britain, including 21,389 tests carried out yesterday

114,217 people have tested positive, that's an increase of 5,526 cases since yesterday

17,759 people are currently in hospital with coronavirus in Great Britain, down from 18,711 yesterday

And sadly, of those hospitalised with the virus, 15,464 have now died. That's an increase of 888 fatalities since yesterday.

These are heart-breaking losses for every family affected.

Every part of our government, from Whitehall to your local town hall is working together in this national effort.

And nowhere is that clearer than on the front lines in our communities.

And today as Community Secretary I want to provide an update.

Councils are delivering essential supplies to clinically vulnerable people – those we have asked to shield themselves, paying out financial relief to businesses to enable their local economies to weather the storm as much as is possible, ensuring our bins continue to be collected, ensuring that schools remain open for the children of key workers and vulnerable families are kept in regular contact, and they are helping rough sleepers off the streets to protect them from the virus.

This effort, alongside the endeavours of all our public servants, is making a difference in this fight.

But I know it is our responsibility in government to make sure that those front-line workers have the resources they need to keep up this essential work.

At the beginning of this emergency I told local councils that we would give them the resources they need to do the job. And I meant it.

And that is why today I am providing an additional £1.6 billion of new funding to support councils with the pressures they face as they respond to COVID-19.

This funding takes the total amount given to councils to help them through the pandemic to over £3.2 billion.

We are backing councils to ensure vital services such as adult social care, children's services, support for vulnerable people and waste collection continue despite the increased pressures.

We are also helping councils with inevitable cashflow challenges by deferring £2.6 billion in business rates payments to central government and paying them £850 million in social care grants up front this month.

Working with councils and charities, we've made huge progress in protecting the vulnerable during this national emergency.

Our plans to shield the most clinically vulnerable people have progressed well.

Three weeks ago I reported at this press conference that the first government organised boxes of supplies had been delivered by wholesalers to those at highest risk across the country. Today 250,000 have been delivered. The packages include cereal, fruit, tinned goods, teabags, biscuits, toiletries and other essentials.

And this coming week we expect to be delivering 300,000 boxes – all from a standing start just a few weeks ago.

And our call centre is making up to 130,000 calls a day to those who are shielded, to see if they need this service, to see if they still need it or want to move to a priority delivery slot at their local supermarket.

In addition to this, councils are organising their own calls, often led by volunteers, including our 750,000 NHS volunteers, to check in and chat with the shielded.

And they have organised their own efforts to support those who may not have one of the clinical conditions to be shielded but are nonetheless vulnerable or isolated. And there are truly extraordinary efforts underway in this regard, in every village, parish, town, ward, estate and city, the length and breadth of the country.

We have all been humbled by the gestures, large and small, by people across the country to show support for those working so hard to protect the NHS and

to save lives. None more so than Captain Tom Moore, who has raised an astonishing £23 million this week for NHS charities.

I can't think of a more worthy person to be the guest of honour at the opening of the new Nightingale hospital in Harrogate next week – also, fittingly, the county of his birth, Yorkshire.

I am sure everyone will join me in thanking Captain Tom for his truly heroic effort.

I have also been proud of the effort of councils to help vulnerable people in their areas, including securing safe accommodation for rough sleepers.

And our plan to protect rough sleepers has resulted in over 90% being offered safe accommodation.

I want to thank all those who have made this possible, including local councils, charities and other organisations and those continuing to help the small number of people still regrettably on our streets today.

Of course, this is not the end of rough sleeping. And there is a great deal of work to be done and my departments and I will be at the heart of that.

I want to also say something about support for our high streets and local businesses by local councils.

I'm delighted that so many cafes, restaurants and other businesses have taken up the opportunity to switch to offering delivery, takeaway and click and collect services. This expands the supply of food available to people alongside the supermarkets, as well as allowing businesses that would otherwise have closed to remain open and keep paying staff.

This simple freedom has been taken up by enterprising people the length across the UK. The same enterprising people whose ingenuity, sometimes assisted by government in modest ways like this, will help us to rebuild our economy.

Councils have worked hard to pay out over £1 billion worth of business grants from government.

But it's vital that we all ensure that all eligible businesses get the support that it needs, and I urge councils who have been slower in making progress to their accelerate efforts in the days to come.

Let me address two other topics that I know are of concern to people.

Firstly, there have been examples of some parks around the country closing.

This cannot be right.

While the virus does not discriminate, we know that the lockdown is much harder for people who don't have a lot of living space, who don't have a garden, and who don't have anywhere for their children to run around.

People need parks.

That's why I have made it clear to councils that all parks must remain open.

For the health of the nation, people should be able to safely enjoy fresh air and green space.

And, for the health of the nation, people must abide by social distancing rules and not congregate in groups in parks.

Secondly, there have been some reports of mourners being turned away at funerals.

The tragedy of the death of Ismail Mohamed Abdulwahab, a 13 year old boy from Brixton, was compounded by the fact that his family were unable to attend his funeral.

That is not right and it shouldn't have happened.

For clarity – funerals can go ahead with close family present.

Social distancing measures must be respected, but families must have the opportunity to say a respectful goodbye to those that they love.

We will be publishing more guidance on this shortly. And I'm also asking councils to keep open or indeed reopen cemeteries and graveyards. Not for people to congregate in. That must not happen. But for people to make that private visit. To seek solace in a word at the grave of someone you have loved. Or to privately lay flowers. There have been times in my life when I have needed to do that. I'm certain there are people who need to do it today.

These are small steps. But small mercies can make a big difference.

And local councils, at their best, can help to make life, even in times like this, more liveable and more humane.

They represent and can harness the networks of familiarity and loyalty upon which a society is based.

The sense that we belong together. And that we will stand by each other in a real emergency.

Those relationships can only be built from below, by people, to people, in communities.

To all the unsung heroes of local councils. For all you are doing for us all.

Thank you.