

# Planning Inspectorate Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update 16 April 2020

In light of the latest government advice it is necessary for us to continue to avoid non-essential travel and maintain social distancing. This means that physical events, planned to take place during the lockdown period, will need to be postponed. We are therefore reviewing cases on a rolling basis, deciding the most appropriate action to take in each case. This is to ensure the safety of our staff and all parties involved in a case.

At the same time, we are working hard on finding ways to minimise any delay caused by exploring alternative options of progressing casework safely and fairly. A great deal of work is going on behind the scenes to process cases. This also includes trialling holding events using telephone or video conferencing where it is accessible to all parties. [We previously explained the principles for this](#)

We expect to be holding our first digital pilot case either at the end of this month or early next month, and we are currently in the process of firming up details with the parties concerned. We will provide an update on this as soon as practically possible.

Where we are postponing events or identifying some as early pilots, we are advising parties accordingly. We will also continue to review the situation as and when Government advice changes and expect to publish further updates on an ongoing basis.

We have also started a trial of 'virtual site visits' with a small group of inspectors. If a case is deemed suitable for inclusion as part of this pilot, we will be contacting the main parties for their views. If this confirms that the proposed written representations appeal can be properly decided on the basis of digital images, a physical visit will not take place and the case will be decided purely on the basis of the written evidence received. This will include inviting the submission of further specific information. We will review this approach in a few weeks' time before considering whether to extend the pilot.

Four advisory visits to local planning authorities in connection with intended local plan submissions have also been undertaken remotely via video call. Similarly, six telephone conference calls on inquiries to take place later this summer have also already taken place during the lock down. This is an important contribution to maintaining progress of casework wherever possible whilst ensuring it is achieved safely and fairly, which is the Planning Inspectorate's overriding aim during this period.

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# National action plan to further support adult social care sector

- New action plan to reduce outbreaks in care homes, support care staff and providers and maintain independence of those receiving care
- Plans to boost access to PPE, ramp up testing for care sector and recruit more staff
- Unifying new 'care' brand for care workers with NHS-style identity, to ensure recognition and access to benefits during crisis and in response to ask from sector

Better access to testing, millions of additional PPE items, expansions to the workforce and a new brand to further recognise the sector's contribution to society are at the heart of a new action plan to support the social care sector through the coronavirus outbreak.

The Government has committed to ensuring that all care workers who need a test receive one, and all symptomatic residents in a care home will be tested to prevent outbreaks. Over 4,000 social care workers have already been referred for testing so far.

Everyone going into a care home from hospital will be tested with immediate effect. Currently the first five residents with symptoms are tested to provide confirmation of whether there is an outbreak.

The way PPE is being delivered to care homes is being rapidly overhauled, with homes supported to order PPE quickly, including through direct dispatches via Royal Mail, a 24/7 hotline and a new pilot website.

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care Matt Hancock said:

We should all be proud of our incredible care sector who are fighting this battle against this virus on the frontline.

Our care staff come to work day-after-day supporting our most vulnerable in these incredibly challenging times.

Today we are introducing a new CARE brand that can be worn with pride, and it will signal to everyone that they belong to a strong, united and respected family.

Over 1.5 million frontline care workers will now be able to unite under one banner to help create an NHS-style single identity to better celebrate and recognise the care sector.

This will be based on the existing CARE badge, which was launched as a unifying symbol of pride for the social care sector by Care England and the National Care Forum.

This will make it simpler for care-givers to access benefits such as priority shopping hours, in the same way as NHS staff and will recognise the integral role social care workers are playing in responding to this outbreak and supporting vulnerable people. The action plan also outlines plans to expand the social care workforce by tens of thousands through a new recruitment campaign that will highlight the vital role of care staff, backed by a new online learning platform to rapidly upskill new staff.

Social care providers across England have already received an emergency drop of 7 million PPE items, so that every CQC registered care provider received at least 300 face masks to meet immediate needs.

In the coming weeks, a dedicated supply chain will be in place for social care, which will mean social care providers can make orders and have them dispatched directly to them – in line with the NHS and Local Resilience Forums.

Care providers unable to get PPE from their usual suppliers will be supported by a 24/7 hotline and a dedicated, in-house team at the National Supply Disruption Response (NSDR), who can rapidly pack and deliver PPE to providers.

We are also working with e-commerce experts to pilot a website which will allow care homes to order PPE online, using NHS Supply chains and shipped directly via Royal Mail.

Minister for Care Helen Whately said:

The care workforce is playing an essential role in the fight against Covid-19, and they deserve the same recognition and support as NHS staff.

This virus has brought many challenges to the sector and today we are setting out how we will ensure care staff have all they need to do their jobs safely.

We are keen to get as many people on the care frontline as possible which is why we're launching a campaign to attract people to the sector to support the national effort. I urge former social workers, occupational therapists and nurses to return to the sector to join the fight to protect our most vulnerable.

The plan also gives guidance to help minimise the spread of infection within all care settings. This includes advice on safe discharge from the NHS, including testing prior to discharge and when isolation is recommended.

This follows the announcement by the Health and Social Care Secretary yesterday that all care home residents and social care staff with COVID-19 symptoms will be tested as capacity increases.

Dedicated testing has already begun for frontline staff, including social

care workers and in addition to over 20,000 tests for NHS workers and their families.

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) are working in partnership with ADASS and local providers to lead the coordination of regional testing and have already offered testing to 11000 care facilities. All registered care providers will be contacted in the coming days so employers can identify staff eligible for testing in line with PHE guidance and refer them to their local testing centre.

Chief Executive of Care England Professor Martin Green OBE said:

The social care action plan gives us a framework on which we should build the future of social care, as well as showing the important role social care is playing to support people in this current health emergency.

To attract 20,000 people into social care over the next three months to relieve pressures in the care workforce, in the next few weeks we will re-launch our national recruitment campaign to run across broadcast, digital, and social media. The campaign will highlight the vital role that the social care workforce is playing right now, during this pandemic, along with the longer-term opportunity of working in care. A new online platform will be developed to streamline the recruitment process for candidates and employers.

Previously registered social workers in England, occupational therapists and nurses are being invited to return to the sector to support the frontline effort. Over 7,000 retired nurses have responded to a call to return to employment – some of whom will be deployed to care settings.

The government has invited former social workers who have left the profession in the last two years to return to employment – with the aim that 8,000 social workers could be supported to return to work if they wish to. Over a thousand individuals have already expressed an interest in returning to social care during the outbreak.

Last month, the government announced £2.9 billion of funding to strengthen care for the vulnerable as part of the government's commitment to ensure NHS and social care system, and other public services, have all the resources they need during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Joint Chief Social Worker for Adults, Mark Harvey and Fran Leddra said:

The social care workforce supports our families, friends and neighbours in the millions every day. They provide care and support to sustain in some of the most important elements of our lives – relationships, companionship, inclusion, meaning and aspiration. They enable people to not only get the best care possible but to also continue to contribute to and be a part of society. Our social

care staff are there to make moments such as end of life as respectful and caring as possible, as this becomes more of a reality.

We have both worked in social care all our lives and everyday find ourselves in awe of the dedication and commitment that care workers, social workers, and occupational therapists amongst many others have always shown and now in responding to COVID-19 and the new challenges that it has brought.

We are delighted that the new CARE brand will provide much-deserved recognition to the social care workforce, and continue to be grateful to those returning or joining the workforce at this time.

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## [Army experts boost NATO fight against COVID-19 disinformation](#)

NATO defence ministers today met over video conference where they discussed how the Alliance can continue to protect its almost one-billion citizens, as it has done for over 70 years, during the COVID-19 crisis.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace reaffirmed the UK's support for NATO's role in the international response to the crisis and committed to examining all requests for assistance from Allies.

One current priority is combatting the spread of harmful, false and misleading narratives through disinformation. To bolster this effort, the British Army will be deploying two experts in countering disinformation for the formation of NATO's Covid-19 Communications Hub. They will advise and support NATO in ensuring its citizens have the right information to protect themselves and its democracies are protected from malicious disinformation operations used by adversaries.

### **Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:**

NATO can play a key role in the international fight against COVID-19, and Allied solidarity is more important than ever to ensure both the security and the health of our almost one-billion citizens.

In discussions with fellow defence ministers, Mr Wallace also underlined the importance of NATO continuing its core work of defence and deterrence against enduring threats and any that might emerge as a result of the crisis.

The UK continues to play a leading role in that work. In Estonia, there are 800 troops deployed as the framework nation of the enhanced Forward Presence initiative which provides reassurance to NATO Allies. In Lithuania, the Royal Air Force is contributing to the NATO Baltic Air Policing mission, protecting the airspace of our Allies.

The UK will continue to work with its Allies in NATO, partner countries and beyond, to galvanise a stronger global effort; to coordinate public health measures; to increase the resilience of the most vulnerable health systems; and to restore business confidence and protect jobs.

In an example of NATO Allies working together, last week 250,000 items of PPE, including 50,000 N-95 face masks; 100,000 surgical masks; and 100,000 protective suits, were delivered from Turkey to RAF Brize Norton in Oxfordshire. NATO's Rapid Air Mobility process, which makes it possible for Allies to move essential items by air between each other as quickly as possible, helped to facilitate the delivery. Mr Wallace expressed gratitude to Turkey for the delivery and to Germany, which has also sent 60 ventilators to the UK in a further show of solidarity.

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## **Chancellor leads on G20 Finance Ministers' Action Plan to fight Covid-19 global outbreak**

Rishi Sunak held a virtual meeting with G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors to discuss the details of a coordinated fiscal, monetary and regulatory response to the pandemic.

Led by the UK and India, Finance Ministers agreed decisive action was needed to reduce the global economic damage of the virus, setting out an action plan that includes a call for the swift implementation of a \$200 billion package of global support from the World Bank Group and Regional Development Banks.

The money will be invested in health programmes, emergency fiscal support to the poorest countries and a number of other global initiatives.

They also agreed:

- to suspend debt payments from the world's poorest countries – freeing up £12bn to tackle the virus
- an enhanced IMF support package
- more joined-up efforts by international organisations fighting the pandemic
- to share best practice on containment measures

The Chancellor, Rishi Sunak, said:

The UK is at the forefront of international action in the fight against the Covid-19 outbreak and we'll continue to work with our allies to save people's lives and support the global economy.

It's right that we have suspended debt payments for the world's poorest countries and are supporting the most vulnerable health systems in the world, which in turn makes us all safer.

The Chancellor, who led development of the action plan with his Indian counterpart, also called on more G20 Finance Ministers to fund the development of vaccines, with the UK already contributing £250 million for the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations – a global organisation that conducts research to develop vaccines against infectious diseases.

In total, the UK has so far contributed £744 million in aid to the fight against coronavirus to help slow down the spread of the disease around the world and help manage the global economic damage. Countries to benefit from the UK's contribution include Yemen, where nearly 20 million people lack access to healthcare, Niger, which is one of the poorest countries in the world and Mali, which has been affected by instability and unrest since 2012.

The meeting followed Rishi Sunak's discussions with G7 counterparts yesterday, and was ahead of the G7 leaders' call on April 16th. The Chancellor will remain in close contact with key international counterparts including ministers across the G7 and G20.

Photos of the Chancellor on the G20 call can be found [on flickr](#)

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## [Security Council briefing on Syria's use of Chemical Weapons](#)

Thank you, Mr President. May I also thank Izumi Nakamitsu for her briefing on the implementation of Resolution 2118, and I also want to thank the OPCW Director General for his monthly report on the activities of the OPCW Technical Secretariat.

Now, colleagues, the Secretary-General, the High Representative and this Council have repeatedly emphasised the importance of upholding the prohibition on the use of chemical weapons and identifying those responsible for their use. I thought Nicolas it us all a good service today by setting out some of the stories so far behind how he got here.

The OPCW, as Jerry said, is the technical body responsible for upholding that

prohibition on the use of chemical weapons. The United Kingdom fully supports the OPCW as a key part of our multilateral system, and we therefore welcome the first report of the OPCW Investigation Identification Team, or IIT, into three chemical weapons attacks in Ltamenah, Syria in March 2017. I want to commend the OPCW Director General for his leadership and the IIT's members for its tireless and methodical work in producing the clear conclusions set out in its report.

We note that the IIT reached its conclusions with a high-level of confidence through an extensive investigation which relies on the totality of evidence, its consistency and corroboration by multiple sources and expert analysis. And we therefore support the IITs conclusions that units of the Syrian Air Force were responsible for all three abhorrent chemical weapons attacks against the Syrian people in Ltamenah in March 2017.

The IIT's investigation adds to the evidence produced by two separate previous UN-mandated investigations, which found that the Assad regime was responsible for using chemical weapons against its own people on at least four separate occasions. By using these terrible weapons, by retaining a chemical weapons capability inconsistent with both its initial declaration and its alleged full destruction of its chemical weapons program in 2014, and by failing to comply fully with the OPCW, Syria remains in breach of its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Security Council decisions set out in Resolution 2118.

I took note of what our Russian colleagues said. But the problem is, one cannot just assert what one wants to be true in the face of evidence, which may well be inconvenient evidence to the contrary. It remains a fact that the Syrian authorities have not answered the questions raised over their CW programme since it was declared. We hear month after month in this Council about the refusal of the Syrians to cooperate fully with the OPCW and with the outstanding questions of the declaration, just as it's a fact demonstrated by different bodies over the years that the Syrian regime has used chemical weapons against its own people. We must not let our colleagues that dust be thrown in our eyes by Syria's defenders.

Mr President, in November, this Council unanimously reaffirmed that the use of chemical weapons was a threat to international peace and security. We expressed our strong conviction that those responsible for their use should be held accountable. In the face of clear evidence of the repeated use of chemical weapons, it is essential that we act accordingly and take steps to ensure that the threat of chemical weapons in Syria is addressed and that they are not used again – indeed, that they are never used again. We therefore urge all members of the Council to consider the report in detail and to work together towards the goal of preventing impunity and upholding UN Security Council Resolution 2118. And let me just finish by echoing Mark's question to Izumi about transmission of the report to the Security Council.

Thank you very much.