

[Shortage occupation lists \(SOLs\): commissioning letter from the Home Secretary and letter of response from the MAC](#)

[unable to retrieve full-text content]The Home Secretary has asked the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) to review the shortage occupation lists (SOLs).

[Spain travel advice: Foreign Office statement, 18 March 2020](#)

An FC0 spokesperson said:

“The Spanish government have confirmed that all hotels will close in Spain from Tuesday 24 March.

“We therefore advise British travellers in Spain to contact their tour operator or airline as soon as possible, to arrange their return journey home before this date.”

Further details can be found on the [FC0 Travel Advice pages](#).

[Testing for coronavirus \(COVID-19\) will increase to 25,000 a day](#)

Officials are working to increase the number of tests that can be conducted by Public Health England and the NHS to 25,000 a day.

The increased capacity is expected to be ready within 4 weeks, with highest-priority cases being tested first.

The announcement follows a meeting at Downing Street last night (Tuesday 17 March), where the Prime Minister and Health Secretary promised industry leaders that they would be given whatever support they need to help

government increase testing capabilities across the country.

The Prime Minister also called on companies to work with the government to rapidly develop a test to establish whether people have developed immunity. This will help get NHS and other critical public sector staff back to work as fast as they can.

The increased testing will also include developing a point-of-care swab test outside of hospitals, so people with suspected symptoms can quickly find out if they have coronavirus.

The UK has one of the most sophisticated public health systems in the world and was one of the first countries outside China to have assured testing capability for the novel coronavirus.

Over 50,000 tests for coronavirus have already been completed. It is anticipated that, with increased capacity to 25,000 daily, testing levels in the UK could soon exceed that in China.

Last week, the NHS and PHE increased testing to 5,000 a day and that number continues to increase. By next week it is hoped that testing will increase to 10,000 per day.

Since the end of February, there has been a robust surveillance programme in place. PHE is testing a sample of the population to help us understand the level of virus circulating in the community.

This robust surveillance determines what proportion of the population is affected – and is used by modellers to estimate where we are in the pandemic and to assess the impact of the measures that have been taken.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

Public safety is my top priority, and radically ramping up testing for coronavirus is a key part of our plan to protect lives. We are already among the best in the world for coronavirus testing and today we are launching a national effort to increase our testing capability even further.

Our aim is to protect life, protect the most vulnerable, and relieve pressure on our NHS – so it is right that we prioritise testing for those most at risk of severe illness. We will always do the right thing at the right time, based on the best scientific advice, and will do whatever it takes to protect life.

Professor Sharon Peacock, Director of the National Infection Service at PHE, said:

This is a timely boost to the UK's testing capacity, which is a vital element in the battle against the COVID-19 pandemic. By

working together with industry we can increase the country's testing ability – allowing us to better map the spread of infection in the community and to protect our healthcare workers on the frontline of our response.

UK calls on Russia to end unlawful control of Crimea on sixth anniversary of annexation

- UK Foreign Secretary condemns Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea as UK stands at forefront of international action.
- UK supports Crimean human right defenders and UN Human Rights monitors to expose Russia's human rights violations.

On the sixth anniversary of Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea, the Foreign Secretary has reiterated the UK's condemnation of Russia's actions and has again called for Russia to release all Ukrainian political prisoners, withdraw its military forces and end its unlawful control of the peninsula. The UK is also developing its own sanctions policy, having worked closely with partners on EU sanctions against Russia for the past six years, ensuring it will continue to play a leading role in international sanctions now that it has left the EU.

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said:

The UK will never recognise Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea. We stand with the international community in our unwavering support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

We will continue to be a force for good in the world by supporting human rights defenders and monitors to expose Russia's regime of human rights violations in Crimea.

The human rights situation in Crimea has deteriorated in the last six years. Muslim Crimean Tatars and followers of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine are persecuted for their religious beliefs. And those who reject Russia's unlawful control of Crimea face harassment, arbitrary detention, torture and enforced disappearances, with about 90 political prisoners currently imprisoned on sham charges.

The UK is working to improve the human rights situation for civilians living in Crimea. We support human rights defenders and the Crimean Prosecutor's Office to record abuses and seek justice for victims and we've spent £800,000

since 2018 to support the work of UN human rights monitors in Crimea and eastern Ukraine.

Further information

Courts during coronavirus pandemic: Robert Buckland statement

The rule of law is vital to a functioning democracy and even at times like these, it is essential that our independent courts are able to administer justice. Despite an unprecedented public health emergency, the Prime Minister and I are clear that our courts across England and Wales have a critical role to play and should go on sitting.

We will continue to deliver justice to victims of crime, and as best as possible, keep our courts open. However, as I have agreed with the Lord Chief Justice, we need to adjust working practices to ensure our court system continues to function, even with a reduced capacity to hear some cases at this time. We must also take appropriate steps to comply with [public health guidance](#) and to minimise the risk of COVID-19 to court staff and users.

With staff absences and courts already impacted, we have to prioritise which types of hearing take precedence. We also need to avoid the disruption that can result from juries being unable to see out the trials they are required to participate in.

I have discussed with the Lord Chief Justice his plans to continue to list those future court cases due to be heard from the summer and beyond as normal. And for those trials already underway, they should all proceed as planned with all participants expected to attend court and discharge their duties. Consistent with wider government advice, we make an exception only for those who are unwell or showing symptoms consistent with COVID-19 or self-isolating as a household. In all other types of court hearings steps are being taken to enable as many hearings as possible to be conducted with some or all of the participants attending by telephone, video-link or online.

For the minority of Crown Court cases that have been listed for trial shortly, but which have not yet commenced and which are also expected to last for more than three days, I have been in close discussion with the Lord Chief Justice in relation to his decision that these cases should now be postponed.

I recognise the impact that this will have on those witnesses and victims who will have to wait longer to see justice delivered in their cases. We will also make arrangements to extend custody time limits for defendants held on remand in these cases.

However I believe on balance this move is preferable to proceeding as normal when there is a growing likelihood that juries selected to hear such cases may not be well enough to attend, leading the trial to be aborted and the whole process further delayed.

These changes will be temporary and we estimate that three quarters of Crown Court trials will be able to continue despite this restriction. Those cases that have a trial date delayed will be heard at the earliest available opportunity. I am also committed to working with the senior judiciary to address any backlog that develops this year so delays overall do not increase, and I welcome the plans that I have heard from all those involved in our justice system to make sure that we can increase capacity in the system to ensure justice is as swift as possible.

We will keep the situation under review and continue to listen to feedback from lawyers, court staff and users about how COVID-19 is affecting them and their availability. The judiciary and I will issue future statements after considering the most current advice from Public Health England and then explain how this impacts those who are often under a legal obligation to attend court. I am particularly grateful to all the staff, legal professionals, judicial office holders including magistrates, that have worked to keep our courts running so far, and I know their commitment to the administration of justice will help this continue.

Our Crown and Magistrates courts provide a vital public service and until instructed otherwise, we expect all lawyers, magistrates, jurors, witnesses, defendants and court staff to continue to attend court as required, so the interests of justice can be served.