

Prime Minister's statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 15 January 2021

Good afternoon.

As you know, this country is engaged in the biggest and fastest vaccination programme in our history, and the chances are that you know someone personally who has already received a vaccine.

But it would be fatal if this sense of progress were now to breed any kind of complacency because the pressures on our NHS are extraordinary.

On Tuesday we saw 4,134 new admissions to hospital on a single day, the highest at any point in this pandemic.

There are now more than 37,000 Covid patients in hospital across the UK and, in spite of all the efforts of our doctors and nurses and our medical staff, we are now seeing cancer treatments sadly postponed, ambulances queuing, and intensive care units spilling over into adjacent wards.

And with 55,761 positive cases since yesterday and, very sadly, 1,280 deaths, this is not the time for the slightest relaxation of our national resolve and our individual efforts.

So please stay at home, please protect the NHS and save lives.

And please remember that this disease can be passed on not just by standing too near someone in a supermarket queue, but also by handling something touched by an infected person.

And remember also that 1 in 3 people with Covid have no symptoms, and that is why that original message of hands, face and space, washing your hands, is as important now as it has ever been.

And it is precisely because we have the hope of that vaccine and the risk of new strains coming from overseas that we must take additional steps now to stop those strains from entering the country.

So, yesterday we announced that we are banning flights from South America and Portugal.

And, to protect us against the risk of as yet unidentified new strains, we will also temporarily close all travel corridors from 0400 on Monday.

Following conversations with the devolved administrations, we will act together so that this applies across the whole of UK

This means that if you come to this country, you must have proof of a

negative Covid test that you have taken in the 72 hours before leaving and you must have filled in your Passenger Locator Form, and your airline will ask for proof of both before you take off.

You may also be checked when you land and face substantial fines for refusing to comply

And, upon arrival, you must then quarantine for ten days – not leaving your home for any reason at all, or take another test on day 5 and wait for proof of another negative result.

And we will be stepping up our enforcement – both at the border and in-country.

And it is vital to take these extra measures now when day by day, hour by hour, we are making such strides in protecting the population.

We have now vaccinated over 3.2 million people across the UK, doubling the numbers of last week.

That's 2.8 million in England, 225,000 in Scotland, 126,000 in Wales and 115,000 in Northern Ireland.

Yesterday alone, we vaccinated around a quarter of a million people in England, and that is still far more than any other country in Europe.

And with almost 45 per cent of our over 80s now vaccinated and almost 40 per cent of care home residents, we are steadily protecting those most at risk.

And I pay particular tribute to the vaccination efforts going on in Cocker mouth, in Cumbria, Yateley and Cheltenham, where they have vaccinated around 90 per cent of their over-80s in their communities. And I'll also pay tribute to North West Lincolnshire, to Sunderland and Morecambe Bay, where vaccination teams have protected over 80 per cent of their care home residents.

And it's thanks to that amazing constellation of the vaccination teams: doctors and nurses

armed forces, local authorities, pharmacies and volunteers that we are steadily building up that immunity, that protection for the vulnerable, for the NHS and for us all.

So, when the call comes, please do get a jab and, in the meantime, stay at home, protect the NHS and save lives.

Consultation launched on 2021 exam replacement

Students who were due to sit exams this summer will receive grades determined by teachers, as part of proposals published today (Friday 15 January) to maximise fairness and help young people progress to the next stage of their education or training.

Following the cancellation of this year's summer exams, the Department for Education and Ofqual have launched [a consultation](#) seeking views on how to award grades in a way that reflects students' performance accurately, recognising the disruption they have faced this year.

Grades will be based on teacher assessment, with teachers supported in making decisions with guidance and training from exam boards.

The consultation will consider the range of evidence teachers use to award a grade, which could include coursework, other forms of assessment and papers provided by exam boards, to support consistency and fairness across schools and colleges.

The proposals ensure students are given the opportunity to demonstrate the standard at which they can perform and incentivise them to continue learning throughout the rest of the academic year.

The consultation will also seek views on results being issued to students earlier than usual to allow enough time for appeals to be processed ahead of the start of the new term.

The government has been clear that while cancelling exams was a last resort, it remains committed to ensuring that students receive a grade that reflects their hard work throughout the year and supports them to progress through their careers.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Fairness to young people has been and will continue to be fundamental to every decision we take on these issues, and I'm determined that despite all the challenges posed by this pandemic, they will not prevent students getting on with and making a success of their lives.

These proposals should give young people confidence that despite exams being cancelled, they will still receive a grade that reflects their ability. This is quite rightly an issue of great public interest and concern and it's important that those working in education alongside students, parents and employers are able to

have their say.

Interim Chief Regulator Simon Lebus said:

We know that everyone wants clarity on the way ahead quickly. Above all, we need to support students to carry on with their education for the remainder of the academic year. Students and learners will carry with them for the rest of their lives the grades they are given on the basis of these arrangements, so we must make sure they are as fair as they can be in these difficult circumstances.

The consultation asks whether externally set papers should be mandatory or optional for schools and colleges. Where they are used, they would form only one part of a teacher's wider assessment of a student.

Students should be assessed on what they have learnt, rather than against content they have not had a chance to study. There are proposals to give teachers flexibility to choose the papers they use for assessment based on the areas of the curriculum their students have covered.

Teachers' assessments would be subject to quality assurance checks by exam boards.

A range of options for private candidates to be assessed and make sure they receive a grade are also part of considerations.

[Similar alternative arrangements are proposed](#) for students taking vocational and technical qualifications, such as BTECs and Cambridge Technicals, to ensure students are treated fairly and are equally able to progress. For qualifications where a practical demonstration of skills is needed, assessments would continue to be able to take place.

The consultation builds on of months of joint contingency planning between the Department and Ofqual and sets out the government's position in making sure young people receive a grade that reflects their ability and lets them progress.

During this period of national lockdown strengthened remote education expectations are in place, with schools expected to provide a set number of hours of high-quality remote education for pupils. Schools, colleges and young people are supported by deliveries of laptops and tablets for those who need them most, with the Government now providing 1.3 million devices, and work to make sure families have the mobile and internet data they need to access key education sites.

Vocational qualifications with written exams scheduled in February and March, will not go ahead as planned, alternative arrangements will be put in place.

Lord Chancellor demands immediate improvements at Rainsbrook

- Action Plan published directing urgent changes
- Increased monitoring to ensure improvements are swiftly and fully implemented
- Senior leadership bolstered and required to spend more time on the frontline

The Action Plan he has set out stipulates a swathe of measures MTC must take to improve conditions for children there and increased oversight by the Youth Custody Service. He has also demanded an end to a culture where senior staff are not visible to children and frontline staff – and don't sufficiently understand what's happening on the ground.

Many of these, including temporarily limiting the population of the centre, have already begun. The Youth Custody Service immediately halted the placement of all boys into Rainsbrook in December, with girls only placed there when no appropriate alternatives are available. This will remain the case until MTC guarantees all new arrivals will be appropriately supported.

Any children in the reverse cohorting unit – used to prevent children that have spent time out of the centre from spreading coronavirus to others upon their return – will be offered an increased programme of activity to ensure they have sufficient meaningful social interaction and time outside their room.

The Youth Custody Service has also increased its monitoring of the centre, with an experienced Youth Custody Service manager appointed to provide additional support and oversight. Extra Youth Custody Service staff will also be on-site for at least the first quarter of 2021 to ensure improvements are being implemented fully.

Barnardo's has also significantly increased its presence on site, at the request of the Youth Custody Service, to provide independent assurances and give children an additional outlet to raise concerns.

Lord Chancellor Robert Buckland QC MP said:

What happened at Rainsbrook was simply unacceptable; it is MTC's duty to ensure all the young people at the centre are properly cared for and they have failed to do that.

This Action Plan will drive MTC to make the vital, urgent

improvements needed to turn things around and I am demanding they do that urgently.

Responding to Ofsted's concerns about a lack of leadership, MTC has appointed a new Managing Director for Rainsbrook. Ian Mullholland has been recruited to drive improvement and has a wealth of experience overseeing change at a number of public sector services, including prisons.

The Action Plan also sets out measures to increase the visibility of senior management and ensure they are more approachable for both children and staff. The Duty Director will be required to carry out daily tours of the centre and senior leadership will now be based directly on residential units.

A new Head of Education is reviewing the curriculum to increase both the hours and quality of the education that the children receive.

The Ministry of Justice will carefully monitor progress against the Action Plan and can apply contractual levers including financial penalties if needed.

Cambridge Vacuum Engineering benefits from clean energy projects

About the transaction: Cambridge Vacuum Engineering (CVE)

Region	Cambridge
Sector	Engineering, Clean Energy
Export location	Multiple
UKEF support	Bond Support Scheme

Cambridge engineering firm, CVE, is part of a consortium of organisations that have won an [InnovateUK](#) grant to dramatically reduce the installation costs of the world's largest offshore wind farm in the North Sea. When completed, the Dogger Bank wind farms will generate enough energy to power over 4.5 million homes every year – around 5% of the UK's electricity needs.

CVE has adapted its latest high-tech welding technology to reduce the fabrication time and cost of the wind turbine foundations by up to 25%. This new technology could represent a significant contribution to Dogger Bank's achievement of being the first wind farm in the world to be able to generate electricity without the need for any subsidies.

Pictured (above and top): CVE's Ebflow local vacuum electron beam welding system.

In addition to this, CVE are involved in two other renewable energy projects, which are focusing on the new generation of small modular reactors (SMRs) that the UK government are currently promoting as part of the recently announced [Green Energy Strategy](#). CVE obtained these grants with support from UKEF.

The development of this technology required a great deal of investment by CVE, locking up valuable cash and putting pressure on its successful exporting business. Together with UKEF, they managed to secure a trade loan facility with their bank under our [Bond Support Scheme](#). This allowed CVE to finance several export contracts and unlock the capital that they needed to supply both the offshore wind and nuclear projects.

David Evans, Finance and Accounting Director at CVE, said:

Even though our export order book has been full of orders from China, USA, and India, the economic disruption that has been caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has made it difficult to get all of the finance needed from our bank.

UKEF's guarantee will allow us to deliver contracts with clients around the world and deliver on the Dogger Bank project.

Jo Archer, UKEF Export Finance Manager for the region, added:

The UK is world-renowned for the quality of its manufactured goods and is rapidly becoming a centre for green technology.

UKEF is one of the world-leading ECAs for supporting clean, sustainable projects. Through supporting companies like CVE, it is playing its part in helping the UK achieve its clean energy goals and help the world transition away from fossil fuels.

This support for CVE is part of UKEF's ongoing support for renewables projects around the world, with £2 billion of direct lending support dedicated to clean growth projects.

Putting the right finance and insurance in place can give you the exporting edge, helping you to win contracts, fulfil orders and get paid.

[Tell us about your business](#)

Scottish Secretary thanks Covid testing staff in Dumfries

News story

Scottish Secretary, Alister Jack, thanks frontline testing staff in Dumfries for their heroic efforts



Scottish Secretary Alister Jack has today [Friday 15 January] visited a new UK Government testing site in Dumfries to thank frontline testing staff and learn more about a UK-wide drive to improve accessibility of testing for local communities.

The new testing site at Brooms Road carpark in Dumfries (DG1 2LB) is the UK Government's [twenty fifth walk-through centre in Scotland](#). It joins a network of six drive through sites and around 20 mobile units across Scotland, plus the Glasgow Lighthouse Lab which to date has processed more than five million tests.

In Scotland, the UK Government is providing all Covid testing and test processing outside of the NHS. Around two thirds of all daily tests are provided by the UK Government, in support of Scotland's health services.

Following his visit, Mr Jack said:

The UK Government is doing everything it can to support people in all parts of the UK through the pandemic.

Testing will continue to play an important role in how we manage the virus alongside the roll out of vaccines. This new walk-through site in the centre of Dumfries will make it easier for people in Dumfries and Galloway to access a test, helping them to protect themselves, their local community and the NHS.

I was very pleased to see for myself how testing is being rolled out across Scotland, and to thank the frontline staff who have been working tirelessly since the summer to provide this vital service.

Hope is on the horizon with vaccines, with the great news that the Queen of the South Arena is to be turned into a mass vaccination centre. By continuing to pull together we will get through this.

Tests must be booked in advance at [NHS Inform](#) or by calling 0800 028 2816. People should only book at test if they have coronavirus symptoms (a high temperature, a new and continuous cough, or a loss or change to their sense of smell or taste).

Published 15 January 2021