

Education Secretary's statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 19 June 2020

This transcript is for the coronavirus statement delivered on 19 June 2020: [Coronavirus press conference 19 June 2020](#).

Welcome to today's briefing from Downing Street. I'll start with an update on the progress we're making to beat the virus, before moving on to an update on schools.

The first slide shows the latest COVID alert level:

- The COVID-19 alert level across the UK has moved down from level 4 to level 3, as recommended by the Joint Biosecurity Centre.
- The Chief Medical Officers for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have reviewed the evidence and agree with this recommendation.
- In all four nations, there has been a continuing steady decrease in cases but this does not mean that the pandemic is over. The virus is still in general circulation, and localised outbreaks are likely to occur.

The second slide shows cases confirmed with a test:

- 7,433,114 tests for coronavirus have now been carried out or posted out in the UK. This includes 169,600 tests carried out or posted out yesterday.
- 301,815 people have tested positive, an increase of 1,346 cases since yesterday.
- SAGE has confirmed today that their estimate of the R rate for the UK is unchanged on last week, at 0.7-0.9. We want to keep the R number below 1.0. R is the average number of additional people infected by each infected person.

The third slide shows the latest data from hospitals:

- 494 people were admitted to hospital with coronavirus in England, Wales and Northern Ireland on 16 June, down from 534 a week earlier, and down from a peak of 3,432 on 1 April.
- 354 coronavirus patients are currently in mechanical ventilation beds in the UK, down from 392 a week ago, and down from a peak of 3,301 on 12 April.

The fourth slide shows what is happening in hospitals across the country:

- There are now 5,030 people in hospital with coronavirus in the UK, down 10% from 5,608 a week ago and down from a peak of 20,699 on 12 April.
- As the graphs show, while there is some variation, most nations and regions of the UK are broadly following a similar pattern.

The fifth slide shows the daily figures for those who have sadly lost their

lives after testing positive for coronavirus:

- Across all settings, the total number of deaths now stands at 42,461. That's an increase of 173 fatalities since yesterday.
- When measured by a 7-day rolling average, the daily number of deaths currently stands at 140, down from a peak of 943 on 14 April.

Turning to schools.

In March when we asked schools to close we did something different from virtually every other nation, we made the decision to keep schools and nurseries open not just for the children of critical workers but also to those children who are the most vulnerable in society. This was because we recognised the important role that they play in keeping those children safe.

From the start of this month, schools began to welcome back children from nursery, reception, Year 1 and Year 6 as part of a phased and cautious return. And from this week, we started to see the return of years 10 and 12.

We want as many children back in school as possible which is why, this week, we announced more flexibility for primary schools so that they have the opportunity to bring back more of their pupils if they are able to do so, in line with the protective measures that we have set out.

Today, with the overwhelming majority of primary and secondary schools, as well as colleges and nurseries, opening to more children and young people, I wanted to take the opportunity, again, to say thank you. Thank you to all of the teachers, childcare and support staff who have done and continue to do so much to welcome children back in to such a positive, supportive environment.

I think all of us who have seen our children return to school, know they are enjoying being back in the classroom and being with their friends and other children.

School is vital for every one of our children. That is why we will bring all children, in all year groups, back to school in September.

While many children have already returned to school, I do understand the anxiety that some parents continue to feel. I want to assure you the wellbeing of your child is absolute top priority of us all.

We have put robust protective measures in place, including a hierarchy of controls and protective bubbles – I must stress that it is in every child's best interest to return to school if they are eligible and able.

This measured return is part of our roadmap, it's part of how we will recover and rebuild.

But I think all of us recognise how much children have missed out, and why it is so important we support them to catch up on lost ground.

Having opened schools to more pupils and set out our intention for a full return in September, the next part of our recovery will be to roll out our

hugely ambitious catch-up plan for all our children. We must get them back to where they should be and put in place a secure foundation for longer term reform. We will not allow an entire generation to lose out on their education or accept lower expectations for them.

That's why we are launching the £1 billion Covid catch-up plan that will lift outcomes for all pupils, with targeted support for those from disadvantaged backgrounds who are most at risk of falling behind because of this disruption.

As part of this package, we'll provide a universal 'catch up premium' worth £650 million for all state school children in England to help them to make up for the lost teaching time in the next academic year.

The Education Endowment Foundation has published a guide for schools on how the money could be best spent, which will include intervention programmes, access to technology or summer schools.

This crisis will have affected children in many different ways – and for this reason I am giving schools the discretion to tailor this funding towards their particular needs and the needs of the children they teach.

The plan also includes a new £350 million National Tutoring Programme to increase access to high-quality tuition for disadvantaged children and young people. This will not only help children in the short term but will create a positive, long-lasting legacy to drive up standards – expanding the number of high-quality tutoring providers for all schools to use.

This £1 billion package is on top of the £14.4 billion three-year funding settlement announced last year – recognising the additional work schools will need to do to help students to catch up.

Over the coming weeks we will publish further information and guidance to help schools prepare for a full return in September. We are working across Government and with the sector to ensure these plans are fully in place so that this can happen.

The pandemic has dealt an unprecedented shock to our education system, as it has to many other parts of our national life. Although we have a clear plan, there will of course be times when we have to respond quickly to changing circumstances. If this virus has taught us one thing, it is the absolute importance of being flexible and adaptable when we have to be.

The education system has shown it can do this and more.

We all want to see every child back in school and we will work together to achieve this.

Thousands of children to benefit from free meals and activities

Disadvantaged children in England will benefit from free healthy meals and enriching activities throughout the summer as part of ambitious plans set out by the Government.

Backed by £9 million, the Government's Holiday Activities and Food programme will support up to 50,000 disadvantaged children across 17 local authority areas and help them to stay healthy and active over the summer.

Ten providers were successful in their bid for the programme, who will be supporting families in need with activities and healthy meals. Activities will include a variety of online and directly delivered physical activities such as dance, Yoga, HIIT and adventure play making the most of their outdoor spaces.

Minister for Children and Families Vicky Ford said:

It is more important than ever before to make sure the needs of the most disadvantaged are at the heart of everything we do. We cannot afford for any of our children to lose out of their education as a result of Covid-19.

Just last week we announced the Covid Summer Food Fund, and a £1 billion Covid catch up fund so that no child is left behind.

On top of this, we are rolling out the £9 million Holiday Activities and Food programme in England, ensuring that thousands of children will be able to benefit from free nutritious food and enriching activities during the summer period.

John Downes, StreetGames North East Area Director and Head of Youth and Sport, said:

StreetGames campaign Fit and Fed has been developed to ensure summer programmes are delivered by trained staff to provide 4 hours of activity and a meal at School Food Standards. Last year Newcastle's Best Summer ever was a success across the city and we hope to build on that success this year. We're delighted to be working alongside Newcastle upon Tyne Council to deliver this year's holiday program which will provide much needed support to children and families who have suffered the full force of lockdown isolation.

This year we hope to engage many children and their families across the city via mixed approach that will flex as social distancing

changes. We will invest in local community organisations to provide support right to the front doors of children through activity packs, weekly activity programmes and food parcels to provide families with food over the summer holiday period. We will also be encouraging activities to take place in open spaces within the community for children and their families to reengage with each other as and when social distancing allows this to take place.

Angela Allen, CEO of Spring North, said:

Blackburn with Darwen has more than 20,000 children living in food poverty so these HAF clubs will provide a vital lifeline for families in the area. In addition to providing a hot meal and snacks, the clubs will facilitate a way for young people across the communities to reconnect in a safe environment and enjoy a range of activities that are fun and help to build their skills including teamwork, cooperation and communication.

We will also be working with a number of parents to support them with life skills activities including cooking clubs, wellbeing support and debt, welfare and employment advice.

We are looking forward to working with our partners and delivering our Get Stuck In clubs during August, providing essential support for our families across Blackburn with Darwen.

Jonathan de Sausmarez, headteacher at Romsey Community School in Hampshire, said:

I am really pleased that the need for vulnerable families to have support and care over the summer holidays has been recognised. We had a very successful programme last year and we have been able to include new venues and introduce new activities. We want to make a real difference and we are very proud to support this much needed project.

The news comes after the Government announced the Covid Summer Food Fund on Tuesday 16 June, which will support children who are eligible for free school meals with a voucher to cover the full six week summer holiday beginning next month, which schools will be able to order before the end of term.

This adds to the wide range of support this government has put in place to support families, not just at school but through the welfare system, in funding for local services, and via a new welfare assistance scheme to help those who are struggling.

The summer 2020 Holiday Activities and Food programme builds on the success of last year and is reaching disadvantaged children in more areas across

England. Each organisation will deliver at least four weeks of free activities and healthy food during July and August 2020. All the successful co-ordinators have confirmed that their programmes will adhere to relevant government public health advice and are committed to providing free food and activities for as many disadvantaged children as possible.

The 10 co-ordinators receiving a share of the £9 million across 17 local authorities are:

- StreetGames (Newcastle, North East region)
- Gateshead Council (Gateshead – North East region)
- Edsential (Cheshire West and Chester, Halton, Wirral – North West region)
- Spring North (Blackburn with Darwen – North West)
- Leeds Community Foundation (Leeds and Bradford – Yorkshire & the Humber region)
- Voluntary Action Sheffield (Sheffield – Yorkshire & the Humber region)
- Suffolk County Council (Suffolk – East of England region)
- Mayor's Fund for London (Lambeth and Southwark – London)
- Tower Hamlets Local Authority (Tower Hamlets – London)
- The Romsey School (Hampshire, Southampton, Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight – South East region)

Plans to ease guidance for over 2 million shielding

- Advisory guidance to be eased for 2.2 million clinically extremely vulnerable people across England, as virus infection rates continue to fall
- From Monday 6 July, those shielding from coronavirus can gather in groups of up to 6 people outdoors and form a 'support bubble' with another household
- Government shielding support package will remain in place until the end of July when people will no longer be advised to shield

Hailing the resilience of those who have been shielding, the Health and Social Care Secretary confirmed from Monday 6 July they will be able to spend time outdoors in a group of up to 6 people including those outside of their household, while maintaining social distancing.

Those who are shielding and live alone or are single parents with children will also be able to create a 'support bubble' with one other household of any size, following the same rules already in place for the wider population.

This comes as the latest scientific evidence shows the chances of encountering the virus in the community continue to decline, but the

government is committed to continuing with the unprecedented package of support until the end of July to give those shielding time to adjust to these changes.

From Saturday 1 August, the guidance will then be relaxed so clinically extremely vulnerable people will no longer be advised to shield, but support will remain available from NHS volunteers and local councils. People will retain their priority for supermarket delivery slots, and still be able to access help with shopping, medication, phone calls and transport to medical appointments.

While this group of clinically extremely vulnerable people should continue to follow strict social distancing measures, they will be able to participate in more activities such as visiting shops and places of worship.

From 1 August, those who need to work and cannot do so from home will be able to return to work as long as their workplace is COVID secure, adhering to the guidance available.

Deputy Chief Medical Officer, Dr Jenny Harries, said:

Shielding was introduced to safeguard those who, at the start of the epidemic in the UK, were thought to be most clinically vulnerable in our communities. We know how difficult this period has been and the impact shielding has had on many people's mental health.

The prevalence of the virus in the community is now lower and chances of getting infected are reduced, so we believe it is the right time to relax some of the advice so people can start to regain a degree of normality once more in their daily lives.

People should continue to follow social distancing guidance when outside their homes, as well as frequently washing their hands, to minimise the risk of becoming infected. We will continue to monitor the evidence closely and adjust the advice accordingly if there are any changes in the rates of infection that could impact on this group.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

I want to thank all those who have been shielding for so many weeks for their commitment to the shielding programme. I know this has been incredibly tough. Shielding has involved not leaving your house for months, not seeing people you care about, not being able to wander to the park for some fresh air, or even pop to the shops for something you need. This sacrifice has been for a purpose, and I want to thank every single one of you.

We knew it was a difficult ask, but these measures have been vital

in saving lives. Now, with infection rates continuing to fall in our communities, our medical experts have advised that we can now ease some of these measures, while keeping people safe.

The government has worked closely with clinicians, GPs, charities, the voluntary sector and patient groups to consult on these changes and will continue to do so to provide support and advice to those they represent.

Following this review of the shielding measures, the government will be writing to all individuals on the Shielded Patient List with updated information on shielding advice and the ongoing support that will be available to them.

Communities Secretary, Robert Jenrick, said:

The resilience and fortitude shown by those that have needed to shield has been inspiring. It's good news that we are now in a position to start easing some of the restrictions, which I know will be welcomed by many.

I also want to reassure everyone that we will continue to deliver the unprecedented package of support including food and medicine deliveries until the end of July. You will be sent information that will explain what support is available after that, you will not be on your own.

I want to thank councils, health and care professionals, the food industry, key workers and volunteers for their staggering effort to deliver a programme on a scale not seen since the Second World War. Your combined efforts have supported millions of people during this difficult time.

The rates of the virus are now low enough to allow for our advice to be carefully and safely eased, as on average less than 1 in 1,700 in our communities are estimated to have the virus, down from 1 in 500 4 weeks ago.

Those identified as clinically extremely vulnerable should continue to remain at home as much as possible, taking particular care to minimise contact with others outside their household and practise good, frequent handwashing.

We recognise that individuals unable to work from home may feel uncertain about returning to work. Mindful of this, the government is asking employers to ease the transition for their clinically extremely vulnerable employees, ensuring that robust measures are put in place for those currently shielding to return to work when they are able to do so.

For anyone concerned about returning to work once the guidance has eased, we recommend they speak with their employer to understand their specific policies in relation to COVID-19. We advise they discuss their situation, agree a plan for returning to work and adjustments that may be needed before

they return.

The NHS will maintain the Shielded Patient List to ensure that we continue to provide the best advice to those identified as clinically extremely vulnerable. Should the level of the disease in the community rise in the future, it may be necessary to advise that more restrictive measures should be taken in order for those at highest risk to keep themselves safe.

The updated guidance for those classed as clinically extremely vulnerable will be published on 6 July and 1 August as these measures come into force. The dates allow for a gradual return to normality for people who have been shielding strictly and for careful monitoring of the epidemiology of disease during wider easing policies, with 2 to 3 weeks being required to observe clear changes in hospitalisation or intensive care use if population rates were to rise.

There are around 2.2 million people in England with underlying severe health conditions who have been advised to stay at home and avoid non-essential face-to-face contact. These are people of all ages – with specific medical conditions identified by senior UK clinicians – who are at greater risk of severe illness from coronavirus. (See the [full list of conditions](#).)

There are a number of ways that those who are identified as clinically extremely vulnerable can access food and other essentials:

- Make use of the supermarket priority delivery slots that are available for this group. When a clinically extremely vulnerable person registers online as needing support with food, their data is shared with supermarkets. This means if they make an online order with a supermarket (as both a new or existing customer), they will be eligible for a priority slot
- If a person meets the criteria to get support from the NHS Volunteer Responders programme, they can call 0808 196 3646 to be linked with a volunteer who can do a food shop for them. A carer or family member can also do this on their behalf
- If they need urgent help and have no other means of support, they can contact their local council to find out what support services are available in their area
- Use the many commercial options now available for accessing food, including telephone ordering, food box delivery, prepared meal delivery and other non-supermarket food delivery providers. Local authorities and charities are able to provide a list of commercial food access options

Support will continue to be available through the NHS Volunteer Responder Scheme beyond the end of July. NHS Volunteer Responders can support with:

- collecting shopping, medication (if your friends and family cannot collect them for you) or other essential supplies
- a regular, friendly phone call which can be provided by different volunteers each time or by someone who is also shielding and will stay in contact for several weeks
- transport to medical appointments

In addition to the unprecedented economic support package, for anyone facing financial hardship the government has made £63 million available to local councils in England to help those who are struggling to afford food and other essentials.

If someone who is shielding does not need the free government food box anymore, including because they have started to get online supermarket deliveries, they should re-register through the GOV.UK website as no longer needing a food delivery. Alternatively, they can inform their delivery driver at the door that they no longer require these food parcels.

We will ensure that councils continue to be funded for their role in supporting people to shield as long as guidance necessitates this.

To date, support for those shielding includes:

- over 3 million free boxes of essential food have now been delivered by wholesalers to those at highest risk across England, with around 300,000 boxes being distributed every week
- Seven major supermarkets signed up to providing priority delivery slot access to those shielding
- up to 200,000 calls a day have been made to the shielded to confirm their support needs, and councils are helping to support them in other ways – including organising regular calls from volunteers to those isolated
- over 1 million free medicine deliveries provided by community pharmacies in April and May to those who have been advised to shield
- support from over 500,000 NHS volunteers including telephone calls to shielding individuals and others who are at risk of loneliness as a consequence of self-isolation

People in the clinically extremely vulnerable group should continue to access the NHS services they need during this time. This may be delivered in a different way or in a different place than they are used to, for example via an online consultation, but if they do need to go to hospital or attend another health facility for planned care, extra planning and protection will be put in place.

An NHS Medicine Delivery Service is available from community pharmacies and dispensing doctors. It ensures the delivery of medicines to shielded patients where family, friends or volunteers cannot collect them.

From 6 July, in line with the wider guidance for single people in the general population, those shielding may form a 'support bubble' with one other household. This means single adults or single parents who are shielding can create a 'support bubble' with any household, and households with a shielded person in it can also form a 'support bubble' with any single person (or single adult with children).

Anyone not already in contact with mental health services seeking urgent help for their mental health can visit the [NHS.UK 'Where to get urgent help for mental health' webpage](#), which lists a range of options that can be accessed,

including local 24/7 NHS urgent mental health telephone helplines.

Our civil servants have risen to the occasion of the pandemic

Last week, there was a significant moment in our fight against this terrible virus, as the alert level was lowered by our chief medical officers.

As they have said, this does not mean the pandemic is over – far from it. But it is a welcome sign and shows that the collective sacrifice you, the British people, have made and are continuing to make is turning the tide on this assailant.

As such, this milestone lends itself to reflection – and I want to take the opportunity to pay tribute to the fine work of my Department in supporting those in need through these arduous times, something that has been overlooked by many who have criticised the Government's, and in particular Civil Servants', response to Coronavirus.

Because it's all too easy to fall into the trap of being constantly critical, throwing stones from the outside and casting aspersions on Civil Servants who cannot publicly answer you back.

So let's examine DWP's response to the current pandemic. No welfare system in the world is designed to cope with such a seismic public health emergency, requiring the government to introduce extensive restrictions in order to protect life.

A rapid response on a huge scale was required and the team delivered. We continue to do so.

A crisis contingency plan – drawn up in anticipation of an almost unimaginable scenario such as this – was swiftly enacted. Systems

were streamlined. Staff were redeployed. Ways of working were overhauled. IT was dispatched. All within the space of a few days. And thanks to dedicated civil servants working day and night to make it possible.

So effective were the changes that, despite unprecedented volumes, we were able to improve the service we were offering; moving to a 'don't call us, we'll call you' model if we needed further information to process a claim. We even increased the number of claims we paid in full and on time – setting a new record rate.

Thousands of my civil servants switched seamlessly from their day jobs to entirely unfamiliar roles in order to make this happen. Overwhelmingly, they did so without fuss, but with the same solemn sense of duty that led them into public service in the first place.

Their selfless, positive attitude has helped extend the welfare safety net to many families since the start of lockdown, as over 2.4 million households claimed benefits – many for the first time. Almost a million advance payments have arrived in the bank accounts of those in most urgent need within days of a request, due to this dedication.

I know these Herculean efforts are far from unique to my Department, but instead are a recognisable trait across Whitehall. Look at the extraordinary effort to get the Nightingale hospitals up and running in next to no time. Or take HMRC designing an entirely new infrastructure to implement the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme and the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme – thought up and stood up in a matter of weeks.

With the alert level moving in the right direction and lockdown carefully, gradually easing, we are starting to think about the next phase – about the invigorating challenge of getting Britain back into work. Of helping those who have lost jobs or hours to resume or revive their employment, and levelling up across the country.

Like every other country experiencing this emergency, we will look to learn from this experience. Our exceptional civil servants however have stepped up to and met the challenges of this unprecedented time head on, and I know we can all rely on them to

deliver as we rebuild and renew Britain.

Thérèse Coffey, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions

This article was published in the Daily Telegraph on 22 June 2020.

Media enquiries for this press release – 020 3267 5144

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Press release

The Solicitor General wishes to remind everyone of the requirement not to publish material which could jeopardise the defendants' right to a fair trial



At approximately 19.00 on Saturday 20th June 2020, three people were killed and at least a further three people were injured in a suspected terrorist attack in Forbury Gardens, Reading, Berkshire.

A 25 year old man was arrested shortly thereafter and remains in police custody.

The Solicitor General Rt. Hon Michael Ellis QC MP wishes to draw attention to the requirement not to publish any material that could create a substantial risk that the course of justice in these proceedings could be seriously impeded or prejudiced. This includes publishing information online. Publishing this information could amount to contempt of court and could affect the fairness of any future trial.

In particular, the Solicitor General draws attention to the requirement not to publish material that asserts or assumes the guilt of any of those who

have been arrested. That is an issue to be determined by the jury during any future proceedings. The Solicitor General also wishes to remind journalists and members of the public that it can amount to contempt of court to publish information relating to a suspect's alleged previous convictions.

Editors, publishers and social media users should take legal advice to ensure they are in a position to fully comply with the obligations to which they are subject under the Contempt of Court Act 1981.

The Attorney General's Office is monitoring the coverage of this investigation.

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