

Gender impacts of the COVID-19 crisis

We've learned many awful things over the last few months as a result of the COVID crisis, but perhaps one of the most awful is the realisation that it has taken a global health pandemic to drive home – and for many of us to really understand – what civil society and UN colleagues have been warning us all for years. And that is just how unsafe many homes are for women and girls worldwide.

The UK is of course deeply concerned about the significant gender impacts of this crisis and the surge in violence against women and girls. Galvanising action and ensuring accountability across the international community to prevent and respond to this violence has never mattered more. As Natalia described it earlier – it's a "global emergency".

So I can assure you that the UK's commitment to this agenda is unwavering. We recently provided £10m in funding to support UNFPA to address the needs of women and girls impacted by COVID-19 – including maintaining access to gender-based violence support services and sexual and reproductive health services.

And we will continue to push for these issues to be central to the COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan, including encouraging the addition of a specific objective on GBV – the importance of which this discussion has highlighted. And we join with those calling for women, including survivors, to be front and centre of COVID response efforts.

Finally, in the face of significant upheaval, the UN must continue to ensure that its programs, actions and behaviours remain grounded in respect for human rights, gender equality and the responsibility to do no harm.

This includes upholding commitments and international standards to prevent and address sexual exploitation and abuse in the delivery of international assistance, and ensuring staff are protected from abuse of authority and harassment in the internal handling of the response. We urge timely communication during the pandemic on emerging SEAH risks, hot spots and action taken to address issues of concern, including support to survivors.

Ensuring humanitarian resources reach those most in need

I'd like to begin by commending the work of the entire humanitarian community during these unprecedented times – and by offering the UK government's deep gratitude to all those who continue to undertake such critical work and

provide support in these challenging circumstances.

COVID-19 is of course the biggest public health emergency in generations, one that will require all countries to step up, work together and respond to the global health, humanitarian and economic implications, including supporting those who are the poorest and most vulnerable.

And the UK is committed to doing so. We have so far pledged just shy of \$1 billion of UK aid to end the COVID-19 pandemic as quickly as possible. We are using our aid budget and British expertise to support fragile economies, find a vaccine, and save lives around the world.

What we've heard this morning reinforces much of what we already know: people already in crisis – including refugees and displaced people – are facing greater risks from COVID 19 and will be less able to cope with its impacts. The UK is ensuring that our support goes to those who need it the most, including these communities.

And we also know that disruption to life-saving services is likely to kill more people than COVID-19 itself. As we heard from MSF earlier, if we look back to the 2015-16 Ebola outbreak, for example, preventable deaths from malaria increased by around 50% in each of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea, and more women died from childbirth complications than Ebola itself.

Our priority therefore has to be to protect life-saving humanitarian assistance and health responses in humanitarian crises, including through advocating for unhindered humanitarian access and the movement of key workers and essential goods. And it is essential that this assistance take place in line with the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence – as repeatedly recognised in key humanitarian General Assembly resolutions.

As today's discussion highlighted, sexual and reproductive health services are life-saving and people have a right to access them in all settings. The UK continues to be at the forefront of efforts to prioritise sexual and reproductive health and rights, and gender based violence services in humanitarian crises.

Cash can help meet basic needs as incomes fall and households face additional costs such as access to healthcare. Scaling-up cash assistance, where appropriate, and strengthening linkages between humanitarian cash and social protection is therefore vital to delivering a timely, efficient and effective response.

And finally, it is the UK's firm view that a strong coordinated global response is critical, matched by a comprehensive analysis of needs and focused on contexts with the greatest and most severe need. Humanitarian resources must be targeted in the most effective and efficient way to ensure those most in need get what they need most.

Parents returning to work after extended leave eligible for furlough

News story

People on paternity and maternity leave who return to work in the coming months will be eligible for the government's furlough scheme, HM Treasury announced today (9 June).



- parents on statutory maternity and paternity leave who return to work in the coming months will be eligible for furlough scheme even after 10 June cut-off date
- Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme will close to new entrants at the end of June as new flexibilities are introduced to support economy

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) has been extended until October, with new flexibilities introduced from 1 July to support the economy by allowing furloughed employees to return to work part-time.

To enable the introduction of part-time furloughing, and support those already furloughed back to work, claims from July onwards will be restricted to employers currently using the scheme and previously furloughed employees. This means people must be on the furlough scheme by 10 June.

However, the government today confirmed that parents on statutory maternity and paternity leave who return to work in the coming months after a long period of absence will be permitted to be furloughed.

This will only apply where they work for an employer who has previously furloughed employees.

Chancellor of the Exchequer Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP said:

When I announced these changes to the furlough scheme last month, I was clear that we wanted to do this in a fair way, that supports

people back to work as the country begins to re-open following coronavirus.

But for parents returning from leave, their circumstances has meant that they are still in need of support, and I'm pleased that they will be able to receive the financial assistance they and their family will need.

The CJRS, which has so far helped 1 million employers across the UK furlough almost 9 million jobs, will close to new entrants on 30 June, with the last three-week furloughs before that point commencing on 10 June.

More details of the change will be included in updated guidance, published on 12 June.

Further information

- This applies to people on adoption leave, shared parental leave, and parental bereavement leave.
- More information about the CJRS can be found in this [factsheet](#)

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Business Secretary's statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 9 June 2020

[Coronavirus press conference 9 June 2020](#)

Good afternoon and welcome to today's coronavirus briefing. I am here with Sarah Albon, Chief Executive of the Health and Safety Executive.

Today I want to update you on our continuing work to re-open our country's economy.

And I know this matters greatly to everyone.

Before I do so, I want to take you through the latest daily coronavirus data slides.

The first slide shows cases confirmed with a test. 5,870,506 tests for coronavirus have now been carried out or posted out in the UK. This includes 102,930 tests carried out or posted out yesterday. 289,140 people have tested positive, an increase of 1,387 cases since yesterday. The graph shows a steadily falling number of identified cases on a 7-day rolling average, despite the increase in testing.

The second slide shows the latest data from hospitals. 446 people were admitted to hospital with coronavirus in England, Wales and Northern Ireland on 6 June, down from 624 a week earlier, and down from a peak of 3,431 on 1 April. 513 coronavirus patients are currently in mechanical ventilation beds in the UK, down from 653 a week ago, and down from a peak of 3,301 on 12 April.

The third slide shows what is happening in hospitals across the country. There are now 6,348 people in hospital with coronavirus in the UK, down 17% from 7,622 a week ago and down from a peak of 20,698 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 fourth 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 40,883. That's an increase of 286 fatalities since yesterday. When measured by a 7-day rolling average, the daily number of deaths currently stands at 216, down from a peak of 943 on 14 April.

The fifth slide shows the deaths where coronavirus was confirmed or suspected reported by the Office for National Statistics. These figures take slightly longer to compile than the daily figures as they are drawn from death certificates. They include not just deaths confirmed with a positive test for COVID-19, but also those confirmed by a doctor without a test, and those where COVID-19 was suspected but not confirmed.

The first chart shows that up to 29 May, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) reported a total of 50,107 deaths in the UK where COVID-19 was mentioned on the death certificate. This compares to the figure of 38,593 deaths confirmed with a positive test previously reported by the Department of Health and Social Care over the same period.

The second chart shows deaths by place of occurrence. Since the start of the outbreak, 62% of registered COVID-19 deaths have occurred in hospitals and 31% have occurred in care homes.

At the start of this crisis, we took the necessary step of closing vast numbers of shops – all but those we regarded as essential – to try and stop the spread of coronavirus and protect the public.

That was the right decision, even though there is no escaping the hardships it will have caused for businesses and their staff.

To support those workers, and businesses, we put in place an unprecedented package of support including, small business grants, loans, the job retention scheme, and the self-employed scheme.

Now, thanks to the efforts of the British public in following social distancing rules, we have succeeded in reducing the number of infections and getting the R rate under control.

That is why we can carefully begin to open parts of the economy which were required to be closed, in a phased and careful manner.

On 1 June we allowed car showrooms and outdoor markets to open.

Thanks to the on-going enormous efforts of people across the country, we continue to meet the Five Tests set out in the Prime Minister's roadmap.

And the R-rate continues to stay below 1.

So I can confirm today that retail outlets which have been required to be closed, will be able to open their doors again from Monday 15 June so long as they comply with the COVID-secure guidelines we published on 25 May.

This is the latest step in the careful restarting of our economy and will enable high streets up and down the country to spring back to life.

Of course, many shops have remained open throughout the pandemic ensuring that we are able to buy the essentials we need.

And I would like to thank those workers at supermarkets, pharmacies, post offices and other essential retailers for their dedication during this period.

Many of these businesses rapidly adapted to introduce social distancing early on.

Including special opening hours for vulnerable people, perspex screens at checkouts, floor markings to guide shoppers and limiting the number of customers allowed inside a store at one time.

In the new normal, we have all got used to shopping with social distancing.

Now is the right time to apply these principles more widely, to more shops, as we continue our cautious re-opening of the economy.

To support this, on 25 May, my department published updated COVID-secure Safer Working guidance for people who work in or run shops or branches in the retail sector.

This has given retail businesses enough time to make sure their premises are COVID-secure, and this will allow workers to return safely back to stores, and welcome back shoppers on Monday.

This guidance was developed in close consultation with both national and independent retailers, business representative groups, trades unions, Public Health England and the Health and Safety Executive.

Shops should re-open once they are able to follow the COVID-secure guidelines, giving confidence to both their staff and customers that they are opening safely.

This means any business that is open must complete a COVID-19 specific risk assessment and take the necessary steps to manage those risks, as is their legal obligation.

As part of the guidance, we have provided a notice that businesses should visibly display in their shop window or outside their door to show their customers they have read and taken steps to follow the guidance.

If a shop reopens without putting in place responsible steps to reduce the transmission of the virus, we can take a range of actions, including issuing enforcement notices. Local authorities and the Health and Safety Executive regularly carry out checks and respond to concerns from the public regarding risks in the workplace.

But of course, there are businesses which still remain closed.

As soon as we can, we will publish further safer working guidance for restaurants, pubs and bars, as well as hairdressers, barbers, nail bars and related services.

These documents will provide practical steps to allow those businesses to re-open in a manner that is as safe as possible for workers and their customers.

I know there has been a lot of speculation about when we might be able to reopen these parts of the economy and I completely understand why we are all so keen to get them back up and running – I absolutely share your enthusiasm.

But we continue to follow the roadmap, which sets out our ambition to reopen these sectors from 4 July at the earliest.

In the meantime, we will continue to protect livelihoods and support businesses, so that they are ready to bounce back, and play their part, in the economic recovery.

And as we consider measures needed to support our economic bounce-back we will be redoubling our efforts to listen to and work with the business community.

We want to build an economy which is fairer, greener, more dynamic, more innovative and which attracts investment from all over the world.

So, starting this week, I am leading 5 new 'recovery roundtables' bringing together businesses, business representative groups and leading academics.

They will consider measures to support economic recovery and ensure we have the right skills and opportunities in place for our workforce.

These sessions will feed directly into the government's work on economic recovery and will help deliver the commitments we made to the British people only last December. These now take on an even greater sense of urgency and importance.

Because while we have a laser-like focus on the immediate public health challenge in front of us, we recognise our debt to businesses which have played such a vital role in combating coronavirus and keeping our economy moving.

And we will work, shoulder to shoulder, with our businesses as we get ready for our economic fight back.

Thank you.

Thousands of high street shops, department stores and shopping centres to reopen safely in England

Press release

Shops in England selling non-essential goods will be able to reopen from Monday 15 June, the Business Secretary confirmed today, thanks to continuing progress in meeting our 5 tests.



- All non-essential retail shops to reopen in England from Monday 15 June, provided they follow government guidelines to keep staff and customers as safe as possible
- the government issued detailed COVID-19 secure guidance for retailers and other sectors in May, following extensive consultation with businesses, trade unions and devolved administrations
- businesses should display a downloadable notice to inform customers and staff they have followed COVID-secure guidance

High street retailers and department stores, including book shops, electronics retailers, tailors, auction houses, photography studios, indoor markets, and shops selling clothes, shoes and toys, will be allowed to open their doors again provided they follow the COVID-19 secure guidelines set out by the government in May.

Retailers will need to take certain steps to protect customers and staff, including limiting the number of customers allowed inside at one time, placing protective coverings on large items such as sofas which may be

touched by passing shoppers, and frequently checking and cleaning objects and surfaces.

Employers should also display a [notice](#) visibly in their shop windows or outside their store to show their employees, customers and other visitors that they have followed this guidance.

Business Secretary Alok Sharma said:

Shops, department stores and shopping centres that have been closed since March will be able to reopen from Monday 15 June, provided they put in place the necessary steps to keep their workers and customers safe. This is the latest step in the careful restarting of the economy and will enable high streets up and down the country to spring back to life.

I would like to thank workers at supermarkets, pharmacies, post offices and other essential retailers who have introduced social distancing to keep the public and their staff safe. Now is the time to apply these principles to even more shops to allow workers safely back into stores and welcome back shoppers, as we look to get the economy going again.

At today's press conference the Business Secretary confirmed the UK continues to meet the 5 tests set out in the Prime Minister's roadmap, meaning it is safe to continue gradually reopening parts of the economy.

Notes to editors

- read the government [guidance on the regulations governing which businesses can, and cannot, remain open](#)
- businesses should only reopen once they have completed a risk assessment, in consultation with trade union representatives or workers, and are confident they are managing the risks. They must have taken the necessary steps to become COVID-19 secure in line with current Health and Safety legislation
- hairdressers, nail bars and beauty salons, and the hospitality sector remain closed, because the risk of transmission in these environments is higher where long periods of person to person contact is required
- There are 8 workplace guidance documents now available under [Working safely during coronavirus \(COVID-19\) guidance](#)

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