

PM address to the nation on coronavirus: 23 March 2020

Good Evening,

The coronavirus is the biggest threat this country has faced for decades – and this country is not alone.

All over the world we are seeing the devastating impact of this invisible killer.

And so tonight I want to update you on the latest steps we are taking to fight the disease and what you can do to help.

And I want to begin by reminding you why the UK has been taking the approach that we have.

Without a huge national effort to halt the growth of this virus, there will come a moment when no health service in the world could possibly cope; because there won't be enough ventilators, enough intensive care beds, enough doctors and nurses.

And as we have seen elsewhere, in other countries that also have fantastic health care systems, that is the moment of real danger.

To put it simply, if too many people become seriously unwell at one time, the NHS will be unable to handle it – meaning more people are likely to die, not just from Coronavirus but from other illnesses as well.

So it's vital to slow the spread of the disease.

Because that is the way we reduce the number of people needing hospital treatment at any one time, so we can protect the NHS's ability to cope – and save more lives.

And that's why we have been asking people to stay at home during this pandemic.

And though huge numbers are complying – and I thank you all – the time has now come for us all to do more.

From this evening I must give the British people a very simple instruction – you must stay at home.

Because the critical thing we must do is stop the disease spreading between households.

That is why people will only be allowed to leave their home for the following very limited purposes:

- shopping for basic necessities, as infrequently as possible
- one form of exercise a day – for example a run, walk, or cycle – alone or with members of your household;
- any medical need, to provide care or to help a vulnerable person; and
- travelling to and from work, but only where this is absolutely necessary and cannot be done from home.

That's all – these are the only reasons you should leave your home.

You should not be meeting friends. If your friends ask you to meet, you should say No.

You should not be meeting family members who do not live in your home.

You should not be going shopping except for essentials like food and medicine – and you should do this as little as you can. And use food delivery services where you can.

If you don't follow the rules the police will have the powers to enforce them, including through fines and dispersing gatherings.

To ensure compliance with the Government's instruction to stay at home, we will immediately:

- close all shops selling non-essential goods, including clothing and electronic stores and other premises including libraries, playgrounds and outdoor gyms, and places of worship;
- we will stop all gatherings of more than two people in public – excluding people you live with;
- and we'll stop all social events, including weddings, baptisms and other ceremonies, but excluding funerals.

Parks will remain open for exercise but gatherings will be dispersed.

No Prime Minister wants to enact measures like this.

I know the damage that this disruption is doing and will do to people's lives, to their businesses and to their jobs.

And that's why we have produced a huge and unprecedented programme of support both for workers and for business.

And I can assure you that we will keep these restrictions under constant review. We will look again in three weeks, and relax them if the evidence shows we are able to.

But at present there are just no easy options. The way ahead is hard, and it is still true that many lives will sadly be lost.

And yet it is also true that there is a clear way through.

Day by day we are strengthening our amazing NHS with 7500 former clinicians now coming back to the service.

With the time you buy – by simply staying at home – we are increasing our stocks of equipment.

We are accelerating our search for treatments.

We are pioneering work on a vaccine.

And we are buying millions of testing kits that will enable us to turn the tide on this invisible killer.

I want to thank everyone who is working flat out to beat the virus.

Everyone from the supermarket staff to the transport workers to the carers to the nurses and doctors on the frontline.

But in this fight we can be in no doubt that each and every one of us is directly enlisted.

Each and every one of us is now obliged to join together.

To halt the spread of this disease.

To protect our NHS and to save many many thousands of lives.

And I know that as they have in the past so many times.

The people of this country will rise to that challenge.

And we will come through it stronger than ever.

We will beat the coronavirus and we will beat it together.

And therefore I urge you at this moment of national emergency to stay at home, protect our NHS and save lives.

Thank you.

Claimants are asked to apply online as jobcentres limit access

With a rise in new claims, and with demand for support over the phone increasing, the Department for Work and Pensions is taking unprecedented action to make sure people can get the support they need, including moving 10,000 existing staff to focus on processing new claims.

In line with recent Government guidance and to best serve those who need support, the Work and Pensions Secretary has taken the decision to limit

access to jobcentres from tomorrow, with members of the public not admitted into jobcentres unless they are directed to do so with a booked appointment.

Only the most vulnerable claimants who cannot access DWP services by other channels will be invited to attend, with the public urged to use online services.

In addition, the Secretary of State has also today announced that [reviews and reassessments](#) for disability benefits are being suspended for the next three months. The suspension will be kept under regular review and extended if necessary.

These stronger measures come in response to the changing situation and mean more staff are being deployed to process new claims and make payments, with remote support a top priority for the department.

Around 10,000 existing staff will be moved to process new claims, with 1000 already in place. In addition, the Department is expecting to recruiting 1500 extra people to aid the effort.

The changes are part of the Government's effort to stop the spread of the virus, supporting people to stay at home, protect the NHS and save lives. The measures follow Government guidance last week that people were not expected to attend face to face jobcentre appointments, and the suspension of face-to-face assessments for all sickness and disability benefits for the next 3 months.

In the meantime, all services can be accessed online and over phone with the Work and Pensions Secretary Therese Coffey is urging people to use online services first, helping keep phone lines free for those who really need them.

Secretary of State for Work and Pensions Therese Coffey said:

"Our jobcentres are fully committed to supporting people facing challenges during these extraordinary times. To help people most effectively and efficiently, we need people to claim online. If you cannot get online, phone us for help and we will only see people face to face in our jobcentres if invited."

Those looking to put in a claim for Universal Credit or Employment and Support Allowance should apply online. For more information visit [Understanding Universal Credit](#)

Media enquiries for this press release – 020 3267 5144

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Coronavirus update – benefit reviews and reassessments suspended

This temporary measure, effective from tomorrow, is being taken to reassure vulnerable people about the continuity of their benefits during the coronavirus outbreak and to ensure the Department's resources are focused on enabling access to financial support for new claimants. This follows on from a previous announcement to suspend all face-to-face assessments in order to safeguard potentially vulnerable claimants.

Work and Pensions Secretary of State Thérèse Coffey said:

“As this country ramps up its efforts to support people through coronavirus, we will do whatever it takes to protect claimants and our staff.

“We are automatically extending all awards and reassessments for health and disability benefits to provide that reassurance to those in receipt of them.”

What this means for claimants:

- There will be no new reviews or reassessments across all benefits for three months – this includes Universal Credit (UC), Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), Personal Independence Payment (PIP), Disability Living Allowance, Attendance Allowance and the Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit.
- As previously announced, face-to-face assessments for all sickness and disability benefits have been suspended for the next 3 months including for any new claims.
- For PIP, if an assessment has already taken place this will continue to be processed. If an assessment has been scheduled, claimants will be contacted by the assessment provider to discuss how this will be taken forward.
- For ESA and UC, claimants whose cases have been referred to the provider will be contacted to take this forward.

Additional information for claimants:

- The suspension will be kept under regular review and extended if necessary.
- If people experience a change in their needs they are still encouraged to contact the Department to ensure they are receiving the correct level of support.
- Where awards are due to expire, we will be extending end-dates so that claimants continue to receive financial support at their current rate during this period.

On Thursday (19 March) it was also announced people receiving benefits do not have to attend jobcentre appointments for at least 3 months. People will

continue to receive their benefits as normal, but all requirements to attend the jobcentre appointments in person are suspended.

People can still make applications for benefits online if they are eligible. Jobcentres remain open, and will continue to support people who are not able to use phones and online, including homeless people.

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Traffic Commissioners require electronic communication during COVID-19 outbreak

The Traffic Commissioners for Great Britain are currently faced with the difficult task of providing ongoing support and service to the transport industry, during a time of unprecedented disruption. Our roads need to be kept safe for essential deliveries, but the regulators are reviewing their processes and making essential adaptations as the COVID-19 situation develops.

The recent Government guidance on remote working means that the processing and despatching of paper documents is not a sustainable way of working, so operators are being urged to use electronic communications such as email and online portals, wherever possible.

To help reduce potential delays, most correspondence you receive from the Office of the Traffic Commissioner (OTC) will now be delivered via email, therefore keeping your email address up to date is vital.

Please contact the OTC electronically wherever possible by:

Please sign up to our [news alert service](#) for regular updates as the situation develops.

Extra protection for businesses with ban on evictions for commercial tenants who miss rent payments

- Commercial tenants unable to pay rent because of coronavirus will be protected from eviction
- Measures support ongoing conversations between landlords and tenants about voluntary arrangements
- Latest measure builds on the unprecedented package of support for businesses already announced

Commercial tenants who cannot pay their rent because of coronavirus will be protected from eviction, the government has announced.

Many landlords and tenants are already having conversations and reaching voluntary arrangements about rental payments due shortly but the Government recognises businesses struggling with their cashflow due to coronavirus remain worried about eviction.

These measures, included in the emergency Coronavirus Bill currently going through Parliament, will mean no business will be forced out of their premises if they miss a payment in the next three months.

This builds on the unprecedented package of support announced for businesses who are affected by coronavirus.

As commercial tenants will still be liable for the rent after this period, the Government is also actively monitoring the impact on commercial landlords' cash flow and continues to be in dialogue with them.

Communities Secretary, Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP, said:

We are protecting both people and their businesses by providing the urgent support they need.

We know many commercial landlords are already setting a great example by working closely with tenants and offering rent deferrals or holidays.

However, these new measures will provide reassurance to businesses struggling with cashflows and ensure no commercial tenant is evicted if they cannot pay their rent because of coronavirus over the next three months.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak MP, said:

We are taking unprecedented action and doing so at unprecedented speed, because we know that businesses and their employees need help now.

That is why we are taking steps to change the law so that no company can be forced out of its premises due to loss of income. Alongside our support for workers and £330 billion of business loans and guarantees, this will help make a real difference to firms across the country trying to protect jobs.

Business Secretary, Alok Sharma MP said:

This measure will provide companies with an essential safeguard in these highly unusual times as they deal with the impact of coronavirus.

This is part of the unprecedented package of support we have put in place to protect jobs and livelihoods right across the country.

Mike Cherry, Federation of Small Businesses National Chairman, said:

Small businesses will wholeheartedly welcome the decision to ban evictions for commercial tenants for three months.

This will give piece of mind to millions of small businesses who are desperately struggling with their cash flow.

We know sensible conversations between landlords and commercial tenants are taking place – but having this legislative backstop to prevent evictions during the worst of the crisis will provide much needed peace of mind for many small businesses.

The Coronavirus Bill also includes new measures to ensure that Business Improvement Districts (BID) are equipped to continue their vital role in managing the impact of the crisis on local economies and helping town centres and high streets recover.

To ensure no area loses its Business Improvement District at this critical time, emergency legislation will allow a delay to ballots between now and 31 December 2020 until March 2021. This will ensure that they are conducted in a safe and effective way.

Simon Quin, High Streets Task Force Executive Director, said:

These are important steps that will strengthen town centres and commercial areas as they prepare for the future.

They will encourage retention of occupancy and ensure Business

Improvement Districts can focus on support for their local areas through the emergency and into recovery. This will make places more resilient.

The amendment to the Coronavirus Bill on commercial leases will apply to England, Wales and Northern Ireland. It applied to all commercial tenants.

We will, of course, be working with the Devolved Administrations, including Scotland, across our coronavirus response.

The change will come into force when the Coronavirus Bill receives Royal Assent. It will last until 30 June, with an option for the government to extend if needed.

The new business information campaign has gone live with [updated information available](#).