

Call for businesses to help make NHS ventilators

- Only go outside for food, health reasons or work (but only if you cannot work from home)
- If you go out, stay 2 metres (6ft) away from other people at all times
- Wash your hands as soon as you get home

Do not meet others, even friends or family.

You can spread the virus even if you don't have symptoms.

G7 Leaders' Statement on COVID-19

We, the Leaders of the Group of Seven, acknowledge that the COVID-19 pandemic is a human tragedy and a global health crisis, which also poses major risks for the world economy. We are committed to doing whatever is necessary to ensure a strong global response through closer cooperation and enhanced coordination of our efforts. While current challenges may require national emergency measures, we remain committed to the stability of the global economy. We express our conviction that current challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic need a strongly coordinated international approach, based on science and evidence, consistent with our democratic values, and utilizing the strengths of private enterprise.

We are committed to marshalling the full power of our governments to:

- Coordinate on necessary public health measures to protect people at risk from COVID-19
- Restore confidence, growth, and protect jobs
- Support global trade and investment
- Encourage science, research, and technology cooperation

By acting together, we will work to resolve the health and economic risks caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and set the stage for a strong recovery of strong, sustainable economic growth and prosperity.

Accelerate Our Response to COVID-19

We will work hard to protect the health and safety of everyone in our countries. Stepping up the response to the outbreak remains our foremost priority. We will coordinate our efforts to delay the spread of the virus, including through appropriate border management measures.

We will enhance our efforts to strengthen health systems in our countries and globally. We fully support the World Health Organization in its global mandate to lead on disease outbreaks and emergencies with health consequences, leaving no geographical vacuum, and encourage all countries, international organizations, and the private sector to assist global efforts such as the Global Preparedness and Response Plan.

We stress the value of real-time information sharing to ensure access to the best and latest intelligence, improving prevention strategies and mitigation measures.

We will pool epidemiologic and other data to better understand and fight the virus.

We will increase coordinated research efforts, including through voluntary support for the global alliance Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness and Innovation. We will support the launch of joint research projects funded by both public and private resources, and the sharing of facilities, towards rapid development, manufacture and distribution of treatments and a vaccine, adhering to the principles of efficacy, safety, and accessibility.

We will make efforts to increase the availability of medical equipment where it is most needed.

We will coordinate with online platforms to maximize public access to the latest correct and relevant official information, in recognition that millions of citizens receive information and news via social media.

To implement these objectives, and adapt measures if necessary, will require efforts across all parts of our governments, and we ask our health ministers to continue to coordinate on a weekly basis.

Forcefully Address the Economic Impact of the Outbreak

We resolve to coordinate measures and do whatever it takes, using all policy tools, to achieve strong growth in the G7 economies, and to safeguard against downside risks.

To this end, we are mobilizing the full range of instruments, including monetary and fiscal measures, as well as targeted actions, to support immediately and as much as necessary the workers, companies, and sectors most affected. This is particularly important for small and medium businesses and working families.

We also ask our central banks to continue to coordinate to provide the necessary monetary measures in order to support economic and financial stability, and to promote recovery and growth.

We ask our finance ministers to coordinate on a weekly basis on the implementation of those measures and to develop further timely and effective actions.

We reinforce the importance of coordination among international organizations

even in the face of challenges to business continuity. We call on the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank Group and other International Organizations to further support countries worldwide as part of a coordinated global response, focused on this specific challenge. We also ask our finance ministers to work closely with International Organizations to design and implement swiftly the international financial assistance that is appropriate to help countries, including emerging and developing economies, face the health and economic shock of COVID-19.

We will address disturbances to international supply chains and continue our work to facilitate international trade.

Restore and Expand Growth

We will continue to work together with resolve to implement these measures to respond to this global emergency. In facing the economic challenge, we are determined not only to restore the level of growth anticipated before the COVID-19 pandemic but also to build the foundation for stronger future growth. We will continue to coordinate through the G7 Presidency including at the G7 Leaders' Summit and call upon the G20 to support and amplify these efforts.

Controlling the spread of COVID-19: Health Secretary's statement to Parliament

I want to thank you Mr Speaker, for allowing me to make a statement at this time.

Mr Speaker, the coronavirus pandemic is the most serious public health emergency that our nation has faced for a generation.

Our goal is to protect life.

Our actions have meant that the spread of the virus has been slowed in the UK.

And I pay tribute to the officials at Public Health England and the NHS for their exemplary approach to contact tracing and their work so far.

However, the disease is now accelerating and 53 people have sadly now died.

Our hearts go out to their families.

Our policy is to fight this virus with everything we've got.

Last week, my RHF the Chancellor confirmed a £30 billion package of financial firepower, including a £5 billion contingency fund to ensure that the NHS and social care system have the resources they need.

We will give the NHS whatever it needs. We will do whatever it takes.

We will get through this by working through our action plan to contain, delay, research and mitigate the virus.

And that plan has 2 overriding aims.

To protect the NHS by building it up and flattening the curve. And to protect life by safeguarding those who are most vulnerable.

We will do the right thing at the right time, based on the best scientific advice.

Earlier I attended a COBR meeting chaired by the Prime Minister to decide on the next steps in our plan.

I can report to the House that we have agreed a very significant step in the actions we're taking, from within that plan, to control the spread of the disease.

These actions will change the ordinary lives of everyone in this country.

We appreciate that they are very significant and I understand that people will be concerned.

But we have come to the view that they are necessary to save lives and to stop this disease.

First, based on the updated scientific advice, we are today advising that if you or anyone in your home has a high temperature or a new and continuous cough, then you should stay at home for 14 days.

If at all possible, you should not go out even to buy food and essentials.

Instead you should ask others for assistance with your daily necessities.

The exception to this is for exercise. Even then, you should keep at a safe distance from others.

If it's not possible to receive deliveries at home, then you should do what you can to limit your social contact when you leave the house to get supplies.

Even if you or anyone in your household don't have symptoms, there is more that we have to ask of you.

Today we are advising people against all unnecessary social contact with others and all unnecessary travel.

We need people to start working from home if they possibly can.

We should steer clear of pubs, clubs, cinemas and restaurants.

We should only use the NHS when we really need to.

This advice is directed at everyone, but it's especially important for the over 70s, for pregnant women and for those with some health conditions.

It's especially true of London, which the evidence suggests is several weeks ahead of the rest of the country.

These measures will be disruptive, but they will save lives.

In a few days' time – by this coming weekend – we will need to go even further to ensure that those with the most serious health conditions are largely shielded from social contact for around 12 weeks.

We want to ensure that this period of maximum shielding coincides with the peak of maximum transmission.

And while the risks of transmission at mass gatherings such as sporting events are relatively low, from tomorrow we will be withdrawing our support for mass gatherings.

This will free up critical workers we need to deal with the emergency and ensure a consistent approach to social contact.

Second, we are increasing our testing capabilities yet further.

The UK has tested more people than almost any other major economy outside of China, South Korea and Italy.

We have already increased the number of tests to 5,000 a day and this is now on its way to 10,000 and then radically further.

Third, we are boosting the NHS.

Ventilation is mission critical to treating this disease and we have been buying up ventilation equipment since the start of the crisis.

But we need more.

And today the Prime Minister hosted a call with the nation's advanced manufacturers, asking them to join a national effort to produce the ventilators we need.

We've set up a dedicated team to do this, and we are hugely encouraged by the scale of the response so far.

Later today the NHS itself will set out the very significant steps it is taking to prepare.

Fourth, Mr Speaker, on Thursday we will introduce the Coronavirus Emergency Bill.

This Bill will give us the powers to keep essential services running at a time when large parts of the workforce may be off sick.

Some of these measures will be very significant and a departure from the way we do things in peacetime.

These are strictly temporary and proportionate to the threat we face, and I hope that many will not have to be used at all.

They will only be activated on the basis of scientific advice and will only be in place for as long as is clinically necessary.

Finally, of course we are ramping up our communications effort so that people know what steps they need to take to protect themselves, others and the NHS.

Mr Speaker, tackling coronavirus is a national effort, and everyone has a part to play.

The more people follow the public health advice, the less need to bring in draconian actions that I am keen to avoid.

And of course, do not forget the simple things we can all do.

Washing your hands. Following the public health advice if you have symptoms. Looking out for the most vulnerable in the community.

Mr Speaker, the measures I have just outlined are unprecedented in peacetime.

We will fight this virus with everything we've got.

We are in a war against an invisible killer and we have got to do everything we can to stop it.

And I commend this statement to the House.

Robert Jenrick reaffirms support for councils in their coronavirus response

- Local Government Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP has today addressed over 300 council leaders in England
- Jenrick reaffirmed government's commitment to giving councils the support they need to contribute to the national effort
- He also confirmed a series of practical measures which will give councils greater flexibility to respond to coronavirus

The government stands ready to do whatever is necessary to support councils in their response to coronavirus, the Local Government Secretary confirmed to

council leaders today (16 March 2020).

Local Government Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP addressed over 300 council leaders and sector bodies in a call on the government's response to coronavirus.

He reaffirmed the government's commitment to supporting councils to focus their efforts on the priority area of social care, providing vital support for vulnerable people and supporting their local economies.

He also confirmed additional military personnel will now work with Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) on their coronavirus response plans, following the initial announcement of 38 planners supporting the forums in England.

Local Government Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

As part of the national effort to keep the public safe and deliver essential public services, this government stands with local councils at this difficult time.

My absolute priority is to ensure they are well placed to respond to coronavirus and protect vital services, including social care.

Everyone needs to play their part to help the most vulnerable in society and support their local economy, and the government will do whatever is necessary to support these efforts.

During the call, he also reiterated the practical measures introduced by government which will give councils greater flexibility and allow them to further focus their resources on the response to coronavirus.

In addition to measures previously brought forward by the government, including the relaxation of restrictions on supermarket deliveries and the postponement of local, mayoral and Police and Crime Commissioner elections until May next year, the government has now confirmed:

- Routine Care Quality Commission inspections will be temporarily suspended for the duration of the COVID-19 outbreak
- Ofsted will look very favourably on any requests to defer inspections because of coronavirus
- Councils will be able to use their discretion on deadlines for Freedom of Information requests
- The deadline for local government financial audits will be extended to 30 September 2020
- It will consider bringing forward legislation to remove the requirement for annual council meetings to take place in person
- It will consider bringing forward legislation to allow council committee meetings to be held virtually for a temporary period

For the latest health advice visit: [nhs.uk/coronavirus](https://www.nhs.uk/coronavirus)

The government is working intensively with the local government sector to ensure the most vulnerable people in society are supported while protecting the local economy.

At Budget, the Chancellor set out a £12 billion package of temporary, timely and targeted measures to support public services, individuals and businesses through the economic disruption caused by COVID-19.

As part of the Budget, the government committed to providing Local Authorities with £500 million to support economically vulnerable individuals and households. We expect most of this funding to be used to provide more council tax relief, either through existing Local Council Tax Support schemes, or through complementary reliefs.

The government will also increase the Business Rates retail discount to 100% for one year and expand it to the leisure and hospitality sectors, and increase the planned rates discount for pubs to £5,000. Taken together with existing small business rate relief (which provides full relief for businesses using a single property with a rateable value of £12,000 or less), an estimated 900,000 properties, or 45% of all properties in England, will receive 100% business rates relief in 2020 to 2021:

- Businesses that received the retail discount in 2019 to 2020 will be rebilled by their local authority as soon as possible
- Those businesses eligible for the newly expanded retail discount and/or the new pubs discount may need to apply to their local authority to receive the discount
- Any enquiries on eligibility for, or provision of, the reliefs should be directed to the relevant local authority
- Guidance for local authorities on the application of the expanded retail discount will be published by MHCLG by 20 March

The government will provide an additional £2.2 billion funding for local authorities to support small businesses that already pay little or no Business Rates because of Small Business Rate Relief (SBRR).

A new temporary Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, delivered by the British Business Bank, will launch in a matter of weeks to support businesses to access bank lending and overdrafts.

The request to the Ministry of Defence (MOD) is for additional non-uniform personnel to assist Local Resilience Forums to support local authority elements of COVID-19 response plans, including social care. This is in addition to the 38 already involved in helping Local Resilience Forums with local planning.

Up to 70 MOD planners and Liaison Officers have been activated to support public services, local authorities and emergency services in preparing their response to the coronavirus outbreak.

Permanent £5 billion boost to UKEF lending capacity

Through its direct lending scheme, UK Export Finance (UKEF), provides overseas buyers of UK goods and services with financing support in the form of long-term, fixed-rate lending.

£2 billion of direct lending has been allocated to support clean growth projects as global economies shift away from fossil fuels to renewable and low carbon solutions. This measure will help finance such projects overseas and ensure UK exporters are well placed to supply to this fast evolving area.

UKEF recently provided [£230 million of project finance guarantees for one of Asia's largest offshore wind farms in Taiwan](#) and a [£47 million facility for two solar plants in Spain](#), securing export opportunities for the UK renewable sector.

UKEF also unveiled half a million pounds of local support for businesses based in Scotland and the North of England. Export finance will be used to support clean growth exports as companies transition away from fossil fuels.

UKEF's Chief Executive Officer, Louis Taylor, said:

Enhancing direct lending and other world-leading support available from UK Export Finance will encourage overseas companies to source from the UK and help exporters across the country succeed abroad. This is a huge increase to our capacity to support UK exports.

UKEF has also been allocated £1 billion of direct lending capacity within its £8 billion overall facility for defence and security projects and improved its buyer credit guarantee scheme to make the product more competitive for fixed-rate financing.

The one-off £2 billion direct lending increase announced in the 2018 autumn budget has now been made permanently available to make UKEF's total permanent lending facility £8 billion.