

COVID – 19: we'll beat this challenge together

By Alister Jack, Secretary of State for Scotland:

This week, the Prime Minister set out just what a huge challenge we are facing as we tackle coronavirus. This is a global pandemic, and COVID-19 will continue to spread across the world and across the UK over the next few months. It is the worst public health crisis we have faced in a generation, more dangerous than 'normal' flu.

I know that sounds, frankly, terrifying. People are scared. I am worried too. Not for myself, but for my elderly friends, family members, and constituents, and for those who have underlying health problems. As the Prime Minister was so honest about on Thursday, the stark fact is that many of us will lose precious loved ones before their time. Scotland's first fatality this week is a sobering reminder of that.

But the UK Government has a clear plan, based on the science, that we are working through to ensure that we protect ourselves, each other and the NHS. On Thursday we moved to the next phase in that plan, going from containment to doing what we can to delay the spread, to alleviate pressure on our health services. At all times we are continuing to follow the best medical and scientific advice.

The government is doing everything it can, but we all have an individual responsibility to play our part in our efforts to delay the spread of the virus in our communities.

The current medical advice is that if you have symptoms (a high temperature or a new, continuous cough) you should self-isolate for seven days. Over 70s should not go on cruises, and we advise against school trips abroad. And, crucially, it is still vital that people wash their hands, regularly and properly, with water and soap for 20 seconds. We all need to take these sensible precautions, and make sure others are doing so too.

The UK Government is working closely with the Scottish Government on this public health emergency, as people in Scotland rightly expect. The First Minister is attending the regular COBR meetings chaired by the Prime Minister, and Health Secretary Matt Hancock and myself met the Scottish Health Secretary late on Thursday night to discuss the situation and ensure we are doing all we can. In his Budget on Wednesday, the Chancellor outlined a package of measures to support the UK's coronavirus action plan. That will include extra funding for the Scottish Government.

Other countries have closed schools, but we have decided against this for now. The scientific advice is clear that the potential benefit is smaller than the measures we are introducing now and it would mean many frontline workers including doctors and nurses having to stay home to look after their

children. But we are, of course, keeping this under review. It is important to stress that every decision we are making in this country will be made at the right time to limit the spread of this disease as best.

The Scottish Government has recommended a ban on gatherings of more 500 people. We are working closely with our scientific and medical advisors our own plans to end mass gatherings from this week. We are concerned about the burden such large events put on our public services, which would take them away from their efforts in dealing with Coronavirus.

We do face difficult weeks and months ahead, we need to be frank about that. But we Scots are resilient, we take responsibility for our own actions, and we look out for others. Make sure you play your part in tackling the crisis – follow the expert medical and scientific advice, and look out for those friends and neighbours who might need help. Together, we will get through this.

Pat Butler reappointed as Governor of the British Film Institute

Pat Butler is Chairman of Aldermore Bank Plc and a board member of Hikma Pharmaceuticals plc, a FTSE 100 pharmaceutical company, and The Ardonagh Group , a major UK insurance broker. He is also a Trustee of The Resolution Foundation, and economic and social think and, and ResMedia, the owner of Prospect, a current affairs magazine. He has been a board member of BFI since 2013 and has chaired its Finance Committee throughout that time.

This role is not remunerated. This reappointment has been made in accordance with the [Cabinet Office's Governance Code on Public Appointments](#) , the process is regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments. The Government's Governance Code requires that any significant political activity undertaken by an appointee in the last five years is declared. This is defined as holding office, public speaking, making a recordable donation or candidature for election. Mr Butler has not declared any activity.

Face-to-face health assessments for benefits suspended amid coronavirus

outbreak

Face-to-face assessments for all sickness and disability benefits will be suspended for the next 3 months, the government announced today (16 March 2020).

The temporary move, effective on Tuesday 17 March 2020, is being taken as a precautionary measure to protect vulnerable people from unnecessary risk of exposure to coronavirus as the country's response ramps up in the 'delay' phase. We will ensure those who are entitled to a benefit continue to receive support, and that new claimants are able to access the safety net.

It affects claimants of Personal Independence Payment (PIP), those on Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and some on Universal Credit, and recipients of Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit.

The suspension of face-to-face assessments also covers new claims to those benefits.

Work and Pensions Secretary Thérèse Coffey said:

As we move into the next phase of our response to coronavirus, it is right we take steps to protect those with health problems.

Temporarily suspending face-to-face assessments for sickness and disability benefits will allow us to ensure we continue to provide a safety net for those in need, while removing unnecessary risk of exposure to this disease.

Anyone who has a face-to-face assessment appointment scheduled from Tuesday 17 March onwards does not need to attend and will be contacted to discuss next steps and alternative arrangements, which could involve either telephone or paper-based assessments. We expect this measure will be in effect for the next 3 months but we will be regularly reviewing the position in line with Public Health advice.

No further action is required by any claimant as a result of this change. They will be contacted with advice on next steps.

DWP continues to accept new claims for all benefits. Anyone already receiving PIP, ESA, Universal Credit or Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit, will continue to receive their current payments as normal while alternative arrangements are put in place to review or reassess their claim.

Suspending face-to-face health assessments is a precautionary measure which reflects the Prime Minister's decision to trigger the 'delay' phase. It is important to note that this change does not affect or change any existing public health advice.

Read the current [NHS guidelines on coronavirus, including advice on those who should stay at home](#).

The department will continue to work with its providers through this period and pay them in accordance with its contracts.

Media enquiries for this press release – 020 3267 5144

Follow DWP on:

[Lord Risby reappointed as Board Member of the Horserace Betting Levy Board.](#)

Before entering Parliament Lord Risby worked in the City, becoming a vice-president at Merrill Lynch. Standing down after eight years as a Conservative MP, for Bury St Edmunds and then West Suffolk, Lord Risby entered the House of Lords in 2010. He had also been Vice-Chairman of the Conservative Party from 2005-2010. He is currently the British Trade Envoy to Algeria and to Lebanon, and is Chairman of the British Ukrainian Society. He is President of the Association for Decentralised Energy and Deputy Chairman of the Small Business Bureau Ltd.

This role is remunerated at £19,665. This reappointment has been made in accordance with the [Cabinet Office's Governance Code on Public Appointments](#), the process is regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments. The Government's Governance Code requires that any significant political activity undertaken by an appointee in the last five years is declared. This is defined as holding office, public speaking, making a recordable donation or candidature for election. Lord Risby has declared that he has undertaken political activity for the Conservative Party.

[Update on complying with a restriction](#)

[English] – [[Cymraeg](#)]

In [March 2019](#), we told you that to comply with restrictions we would only accept consents that state 'consent is given to registration of the disposition' from April 2020. We said consents that 'consent to the disposition only' would not be accepted from that date. [Section 3.1.1 of our practice guide 19](#) was updated, and we issued several reminders about this change.

Following feedback about the full implications of our decision from some customers and stakeholders, we have looked at this again.

We still think the right form of consent is to registration. In addition, the best form of consent will:

- be addressed to the registrar
- specifically identify the dispositions
- identify the restriction

We have decided we will not send a request for information (requisition) from April if consents are to the disposition. In these situations we will interpret consents to registrable dispositions as including consent to their registration. We will keep this under review.

We are aware some customers have already taken steps to introduce the right form of wording as a result of our advice. We thank those customers and encourage all customers to do the same.

We want to align our process and requirements more closely with yours, to make it easier and more consistent for both of us. To help achieve this we are considering how our processes might provide a standard approach to providing consents.

We will share more information about this as soon as we can.

[[English](#)] – [Cymraeg]

Ni fyddwn yn anfon cais am wybodaeth (ymholiad) o Ebrill os yw cydsyniadau i'r gwarediad yn unig.

Ym [Mawrth 2019](#), dywedwyd wrthyfch mai dim ond cydsyniadau sy'n datgan y 'rhoddir cydsyniad i gofrestru'r gwarediad' y byddem yn eu derbyn o Ebrill 2020 er mwyn cydymffurfio â chyfyngiadau. Dywedwyd na fyddai cydsyniadau sy'n 'cydsynio i'r gwarediad yn unig' yn cael eu derbyn o'r dyddiad hwnnw. Diweddarwyd [adran 3.1.1 o'n cyfarwyddyd ymarfer 19](#), a chyhoeddwyd sawl nodyn atgoffa am y newid hwn.

Yn dilyn adborth am oblygiadau llawn ein penderfyniad gan rai cwsmeriaid a budd-ddeiliaid, rydym wedi edrych ar hyn eto.

Rydym yn dal i feddwl mai'r math cywir o gydsynio yw i gofrestriad. Yn ogystal, bydd y math gorau o gydsynio:

- yn cael ei gyfeirio at y cofrestrydd
- yn nodi'r gwarediadau'n benodol
- yn nodi'r cyfyngiad

Rydym wedi penderfynu na fyddwn yn anfon cais am wybodaeth (ymholiad) o Ebrill os yw cydsyniadau i'r gwarediad. Yn y sefyllfaoedd hyn, byddwn yn dehongli cydsyniadau i warediadau cofrestredig fel rhai sy'n cynnwys cydsynio i'w cofrestru. Byddwn yn adolygu hyn.

Rydym yn ymwybodol bod rhai cwsmeriaid eisoes wedi cymryd camau i gyflwyno'r ffurf gywir o eiriad o ganlyniad i'n cyngor. Rydym yn diolch i'r cwsmeriaid hynny ac yn annog pob cwsmer i wneud yr un peth.

Rydym am wneud ein proses a'n gofynion yn gydnaws â'ch rhai chi, i'w gwneud yn haws ac yn fwy cyson i'r ddau ohonom. Er mwyn helpu i gyflawni hyn, rydym yn ystyried sut y gallai ein prosesau ddarparu dull safonol o roi cydsyniad.

Byddwn yn rhannu rhagor o wybodaeth am hyn cyn gynted ag y gallwn.