

[PM call with Prime Minister Abe: 15 March 2020](#)

The Prime Minister spoke to Japanese Prime Minister Abe about the coronavirus pandemic.

The leaders updated each other on their countries' efforts to curb the spread of the virus. The Prime Minister stressed the importance the UK is placing on taking a science-led approach when deciding what measures to implement.

The Prime Minister and Prime Minister Abe agreed on the importance of international coordination to tackle the virus and its wider impact, particularly on the global economy, and they looked forward to the call between G7 leaders to discuss this.

The Prime Minister and Prime Minister Abe also discussed the UK and Japan's efforts to combat climate change ahead of COP26 in Glasgow later this year.

[Health Secretary Matt Hancock's Sunday Telegraph Op-Ed](#)

The coronavirus outbreak is the biggest public health emergency in a generation.

It calls for dramatic action, at home and abroad, of the kind not normally seen in peacetime.

Our goal is clear. The over-riding objective is to protect life. Sadly 21 people have already died in the UK, and the fact that most had underlying health conditions does not make the grief of their families any lesser, nor our compassion for their family and friends any weaker. We must all do everything in our power to tackle this virus.

We have a plan, based on the expertise of world-leading scientists. Herd immunity is not a part of it. That is a scientific concept, not a goal or a strategy. Our goal is to protect life from this virus, our strategy is to protect the most vulnerable and protect the NHS through contain, delay, research and mitigate.

We are working through our clear action plan. Like all our decisions, the plan is based on the bedrock of the science, with maximum transparency. We will do the right thing at the right time, based on the best available science.

To protect life, we must protect the vulnerable, and protect the NHS and flatten the curve.

From the moment coronavirus emerged, we have followed those goals.

We have acted to contain the spread of the virus so far. We have carried out some of the highest number of tests in Europe, our surveillance testing is among the most sophisticated in the world and the UK's plans for the rapid response to and mitigation of the spread of an epidemic are ranked number one above any other country by the Global Health Security Index.

Most importantly of all, thanks to our record levels of tracing the number of people who came into contact with the first people who caught the virus, the initial growth was slowed significantly, and the growth of the virus in the UK has been slower than many major European countries. This action has already prevented the NHS being put under greater pressure in its hardest season of the year. We have bought valuable time to prepare.

Last week we stepped into the next phase of our response. We took action to advise anyone with symptoms, however mild, to stay at home. This advice from the Chief Medical Officer will be reinforced with a national communications campaign so everyone knows what they can do: how you can play your part.

The new campaign will set out the latest clinical advice, for people to stay at home for seven days if they develop a high temperature or new continuous cough. We can all keep doing our bit by continuing to wash our hands more often, for 20 seconds or more and having plenty of tissues around to 'catch it, bin it, kill it'. Following this new advice may sound simple, but it could be lifesaving for others around us, especially the most vulnerable.

Today, we take further action, with a call to arms for a drive to build the ventilators and other equipment the NHS will need. We are better equipped thanks to the NHS than most other countries, but we will need many more. We now need any manufacturers to transform their production lines to make ventilators. We cannot make too many.

In the near future we will take further steps. SAGE has advised the next planned effective interventions will need to be instituted soon, including measures to 'shield' older and medically vulnerable people from the virus.

Everyone will need to help to ensure they get the support they need to stay at home, and to protect them from the consequences of isolation: loneliness, and a lack of support. Government, local councils, charities, friends and neighbours will need to be part of the national effort to support the shielded. We will provide expert advice and support as soon as we progress to this phase.

Next week we will publish our emergency bill, to give the Government the temporary powers we will need to help everyone get through this. The measures in it allow for the worst case scenario. I hope many of them won't be needed. But we will ask Parliament for these powers in case they are.

Our generation has never been tested like this. Our grandparents were, during

the Second World War, when our cities were bombed during the Blitz. Despite the pounding every night, the rationing, the loss of life, they pulled together in one gigantic national effort.

Today our generation is facing its own test, fighting a very real and new disease. We must fight the disease to protect life. Everyone will be asked to make sacrifices, to protect themselves and others, especially those most vulnerable to this disease.

With our clear action plan, listening to the advice of the best science, and taking the action we all must, I am sure we will rise to this challenge.

[HIV drug PrEP to be available across England](#)

Local authorities will receive £16 million in 2020 to 2021 to deliver the preventative HIV treatment PrEP.

The funding from the Department of Health and Social Care will ensure anyone who is at a high risk of contracting HIV will receive PrEP from their local sexual health clinic to reduce their risk of getting the virus.

When taken daily, PrEP is highly effective at preventing HIV transmission from sex or injection drug use. Studies have shown that PrEP reduces the risk of getting HIV from sex by about 99% when taken daily.

PrEP is currently available in England through the 3-year [PrEP impact trial](#), which has recruited over 20,000 participants.

The new £16 million funding will also enable people on the trial to continue to use PrEP when the trial ends.

An estimated 103,800 people were living with HIV in the UK in 2018, with 7,500 of those unaware of their infection.

Figures show that HIV transmissions in gay and bisexual men have fallen by 71.4% since 2014.

In January 2019 the government committed to [reaching zero HIV transmissions by 2030](#). This depends on continuing prevention efforts such as making PrEP available to everyone who needs it.

HIV testing in a wide range of settings, increased condom use and the availability of antiretroviral therapy (ART) have all contributed to the drop in transmissions.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

I remember when HIV was a death sentence – and still today, it has a devastating impact on so many lives across the country.

While it is encouraging to see HIV transmissions continue to fall across the UK, I am determined to do more, and end HIV transmission.

So we are rolling out PrEP and making it available across the country – with evidence showing it almost completely eradicates the chances of getting HIV. This will benefit tens of thousands of people's lives, and drive us towards our ambition of zero HIV transmissions in this decade.

Health Minister Jo Churchill said:

Getting tested for HIV has never been easier, and with powerful preventative measures such as PrEP available we are well on our way to achieving eliminating transmissions in England for good.

HIV transmissions are down, but it is very important that we continue to protect those still at risk of contracting HIV.

Rolling out PrEP will help prevent further transmissions. This is a crucial part of our work to tackle the condition and the stigma around it by making vital treatment more accessible and making national awareness better.

Professor Noel Gill, Head of STIs and HIV at Public Health England, said:

The combination of condom use, expanded HIV testing, prompt treatment and PrEP is working in the UK, leading to steep declines in HIV transmission, especially in gay men.

The goal of eliminating HIV transmission by 2030 depends on making PrEP readily available to all at higher risk of acquiring HIV.

When taken consistently, PrEP is highly effective at protecting against HIV.

Cllr Ian Hudspeth, Chairman of the Local Government Association's Community Wellbeing Board, said:

PrEP is a game-changer in preventing new HIV infections and a vital weapon in our prevention armoury. We are pleased the Government has heard councils' call and provided this much-needed funding, ahead of the roll-out of this potentially life-saving drug.

Over recent years, we have seen an encouraging decline in the

number of people diagnosed with HIV. This fall was achieved thanks to the hard work and commitment of local government sexual health commissioners, providers and the activists.

The full roll-out of PrEP can help us achieve our shared ambition of eliminating HIV in this country by the end of the decade.

Ian Green, Chief Executive at Terrence Higgins Trust, said:

This is a historic day in the context of the HIV epidemic. It's a real moment to stop and celebrate a hard-fought victory for PrEP access in England. Today comes at the end of years of fighting, campaigning and lobbying to ensure proper access to this game-changer for HIV prevention. We know PrEP is highly effective at stopping HIV and now it can be properly utilised to make good on the Government's commitment to ending HIV transmissions by 2030.

There is still also a lot of work to do to ensure PrEP isn't just seen as something for gay and bisexual men and that its clear benefits reach other groups affected by HIV, including women, trans people and BAME communities. As the country's leading HIV and sexual health charity, we're fully committed to playing our role to ensure no-one is left behind when it comes to PrEP – because we're not making real progress if it's not felt by everyone.

Deborah Gold, Chief Executive of National AIDS Trust, said:

We're delighted PrEP will finally be freely available to everyone who needs it in England. This is a milestone moment in a five-year battle National AIDS Trust, and others, has undertaken – including our 2016 court action against NHS England for failing to consider PrEP and HIV prevention as part of its obligations.

Routine commissioning of PrEP brings us one step closer to our goal of ending new HIV transmissions by 2030 but many more lie ahead. We look forward to working with partners across healthcare and in the community to ensure underserved groups such as women and trans people are able to access this pioneering medication. Only when we reach every single person who needs PrEP can we harness its full potential.

NHS England will cover the costs of the drug and local authorities will be supported with £16 million funding to deliver services. PrEP is highly effective in preventing transmission of HIV.

As well as the provision of PrEP, HIV testing in a wide range of settings, increased condom use and the early starting of antiretroviral therapy in those living with HIV have all contributed to the drop in transmissions.

By the end of October 2020 access to PrEP through the PrEP Impact Trial is set to conclude and so the rollout will make the service available by routine commissioning for the people who need it most.

Places of Worship scheme provides record levels of funding

Forty nine places of worship in England and Wales will benefit from £1.6 million of Home Office funding for security to protect against hate crime attacks – with British mosques being the biggest beneficiaries.

Also announced today (Sunday 15 March), the one-year anniversary of the Christchurch terror attack, is the launch of a new consultation for faith groups to feedback on what more can be done to protect faith groups from attacks.

Minister for Countering Extremism Baroness Williams said:

No one should be fearful about practicing their faith. Whether it is a church, a mosque, gurdwara or temple, any place of worship should be a space of reflection and safety.

The Places of Worship scheme provides that physical security. However, we can always do more, which is why we want to hear from worshipers about how we can better protect them from these terrible attacks.

The Places of Worship Protective Security Funding scheme provides funding for measures such as CCTV, fencing, gates, alarms and lighting, to places of worship and associated faith community centres that are vulnerable to hate crime.

Twenty-seven mosques, thirteen churches, five gurdwaras and four Hindu temples have received funding this year, the largest amount of funding in a single year since the scheme was set up in 2016.

Next year's scheme will double again, with £3.2 million earmarked for 2020/21.

In a new simplified system for applicants, a central contractor will install better physical security, such as locks, lighting and CCTV. All applications were assessed, and funding was provided to those who were most vulnerable to hate crime attacks.

In 2018/19 police in England and Wales recorded 103,379 hate crime offences,

an increase of 10% on the previous year. This is largely due to improvements in the police recording and more victims feeling able to come forward and report these crimes.

The consultation being launched by the Home Office this month will ask faith groups what else should be done to help them feel safe and confident while practicing their religion. The consultation, which will last for eight weeks, will enable all faith groups to share their experiences of hate crime, and provide valuable insight for the Government in keeping pace with the evolving threat.

The consultation recognises that different religious groups have different needs, and that some members of congregations, such as women or the elderly may feel more vulnerable than other groups. The results of the consultation will then be analysed and considered as part of future steps on how the government can protect religious groups.

The Jewish Community receive a separate fund – the Jewish Community Protective Security Grant – which is administered by CST.

FCO statement on Spain travel advice

FCO spokesperson:

“Due to Spain declaring a State of Emergency on 14 March, which imposes significant restrictions on movement throughout the country in response to the coronavirus outbreak, we are now advising against all but essential travel to Spain.”

NOTES TO EDITORS

- We advise against all but essential travel to the whole of mainland Spain, the Balearic Islands and the Canary Islands. British nationals with upcoming journeys planned should check with their airlines and tour operators.
- We advise those in Spain to stay in contact with their airlines and tour operators and to follow the instructions of local authorities.
- Airports remain open, and flights continue to operate albeit at reduced levels. British nationals should contact their airlines for the most up-to-date information.
- Public services and transport are operating at reduced levels.
- Public gatherings are banned, most shops, many businesses and all schools and universities are closed, and residents have been instructed to remain at home as much as possible.
- There are limited, specific exceptions to the requirement to remain at home, in particular in order to buy food or other essential items, to return home to the primary residence, to go to work if unable to work

from home and to carry out caring or similar duties.