

## Government press conference - 21 May

The [press conference](#) was chaired by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Matt Hancock.

The Government outlined the range of mental health support available to people and reminded health and care workers that there is a bespoke series of support available to them by texting FRONTLINE to 85258. Also announced was the provision of a further [£4.2 million to mental health charities](#).

National testing infrastructure and developments, to expand the testing capacity, were announced. Results of the antibody surveillance study - showed that around 17% of people in London, and at least 5% of people in other parts of the country, have tested positive for coronavirus antibodies. Antibody tests will be available to NHS and care staff, eligible patients and care residents as part of a new national [antibody testing programme](#) which begin to roll out next week.

The press conference slides and datasets are available to [view online](#).

As of 4pm on 21 May, the total number of lab-confirmed cases was **250,908**. The daily number of lab-confirmed cases was **2,615**. The total number of Covid-19 associated deaths was **36,042**, with **338** new deaths reported on the day. The data is available to [view online](#).

## National context

### Test and trace service

The Department of Health and Social Care has [announced](#) a new funding package of £300 million for local authorities to develop and action their plans to reduce the spread of the virus in their area.

## Vulnerable children

The Department for Education has [announced](#) nearly £10 million for projects aimed at boosting the educational outcomes of vulnerable children, and to keep them safe from harm. A £6.5 million project which will involve more than 150 schools will see social workers placed in schools to help spot the signs of abuse and neglect and work with teachers to support children at risk.

## GCSE and A Levels

Ofqual has [published analysis and key decisions](#) following their consultation on this summer's exceptional arrangements, and has updated the [information for Heads of Centres](#). A key feature of the overall arrangements this summer is the planned additional exam series in the autumn, which will provide an opportunity for students unable to receive a calculated grade, and others who would like the opportunity to improve their grade, to take an exam.

The Department for Education (DfE) has [published](#) guidance on who should be responsible for entering candidates for autumn exams. In addition, the DfE has [updated](#) the guidance on the cancellation of GCSEs, AS and A levels in 2020 to reflect the publication of Ofqual consultation documents.

## SAGE evidence

The Government Office for Science has [updated](#) the list of evidence provided to SAGE with a batch of reports on children and schools.

## Mortgages

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) has [published](#) new draft guidance for lenders which will set out the expectations for firms and the options available to their customers. This includes extending the application period for a mortgage holiday until 31 October, the current ban on repossessions of homes will be extended to the same date.

## Funding for charities

The Department of Health and Social Care has [announced](#) that as part of the £750 million package unveiled by the Chancellor in April, £22 million in cash grants will be awarded to charities providing vital services to ensure they can meet increased demand as a result of Covid-19.

## Visa extensions

The Home Office has [confirmed](#) that overseas nationals who cannot return home due to the Covid-19 pandemic will be able to extend their visa until 31 July. This will apply to anyone whose leave to remain expired after the 24 January and cannot return home.

## Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

The Chancellor has made a further [Treasury Direction](#) in relation to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to reflect the extension of the Scheme.

## Personal protective equipment (PPE) waste

The Environment Agency has [updated](#) the guidance on cleansing and storing PPE waste at a healthcare waste management facility.

## Staying safe outside the home

The Cabinet Office has [updated](#) the guidance on staying safe outside the home to include the instruction that 'you should be prepared to remove your face covering if asked to do so by police officers and staff for the purposes of identification.'

## Local Government funding

A letter from the Communities Secretary, Robert Jenrick, to the Chair of the Housing, Communities and Local Government select committee, Clive Betts, has been [published](#). The letter sets out which Covid-19 related activities undertaken by local authorities the Government is willing to fund.

## Council tax

A [report](#) by Citizens Advice, the Money Advice Trust and StepChange Debt Charity estimates that more than two million people may have fallen behind on council tax bills as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. [The LGA response](#) to the report describes councils' efforts to help residents who are facing financial hardship because of the virus, including using the Hardship Fund provided by the Government to support people claiming local council tax support.

## Public sector finances

The Office for National Statistics has [published](#) its monthly public finance release for April. The release outlines the challenges of measuring the effects of Covid-19 on public finances and it states that the full impact will not be immediately apparent.

# London's Covid-19 recovery

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has

[confirmed](#) that a new London Transition Board, co-chaired by the Communities Secretary, Robert Jenrick and the London Mayor, Sadiq Khan will co-ordinate London's recovery and the actions to reopen its economy.

## Shielding and supporting vulnerable people

NHS Digital has today [published](#) anonymous summary data on patients who have been identified on the Covid-19 Shielded Patient List. This includes regional and local data by age band and gender.

## Local authority priority delivery slot referral service

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) has been working with a small number of councils to pilot a referral scheme which aims to provide supermarket slots to non-shielded vulnerable people. DEFRA are now looking to roll the scheme out to all local authorities from next week.

## Local context

### Trial of rapid Covid-19 test

The Department of Health and Social Care has [announced](#) that the trial of a new Covid-19 test which returns results in 20 minutes has been launched in Hampshire. The test, which does not need to be sent to a laboratory to be processed will be trialled in several A&E departments, GP testing hubs and care homes across the county. Up to 4,000 people will be tested over a six-week period before the test is rolled out nationally, if proven to be effective. The trial is supported by the County Council's Director of Public Health, Simon Bryant, and he will ensure that it links into other testing arrangements across the wider Hampshire area.

### Refugee resettlement in Hampshire

Due to the restrictions on movements both overseas and in the UK, it is [not currently possible](#) to undertake any new refugee resettlement activity. Hampshire County Council is working to support the families it has already resettled

through the Covid-19 pandemic with social distancing and accessing healthcare. The County Council continues to work with partners at [The Rural Refugee Network](#) to source additional properties, so when resettlement activity restarts it can offer further families

homes as soon as possible. Additionally, the County Council is supporting a number of [community sponsorship](#) applications, these will support families fleeing conflict as they are resettled in Hampshire once restrictions are lifted.

## Country parks

To enable residents to enjoy the countryside and look after their mental and physical health, Hampshire's country park car parks remain open to local visitors this bank holiday weekend and half-term holiday. All [country parks](#) (excluding Staunton Farm and Manor Farm attractions) are operating normal opening hours and normal parking rates. Toilets are open but cafés, shops, visitor centres and play areas remain closed until further notice and in line with current government guidance.

## Hampshire Music Service

[Hampshire Music Service's](#) county ensembles – which bring Hampshire's most able young musicians together to develop talent – continue to practice virtually throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. Forthcoming virtual events are listed [online](#). Watch their recent Friday evening recitals online:

- The County Youth Orchestra cellists performing "The Swan" – view on [Facebook](#)
- A recital of pieces by the County Jazz Centre- view on [YouTube](#)

## Emotional wellbeing of children and young people

[Hampshire and Isle of Wight Educational Psychology](#) is running a confidential [telephone support line](#) for parents, carers and education support staff who may have concerns about the emotional wellbeing of children and young people in their care. The following telephone numbers are being promoted:

- North (Basingstoke): 01252 814 835
- South (Havant): 02392 441 497
- East (Rushmoor): 01252 814 729
- West (Winchester): 01962 876 239
- Isle of Wight: 02392 441 497

## Online child abuse

The Head of Hampshire Constabulary's Internet Child Abuse Team has [encouraged](#) parents and carers to continue having conversations with their children about their online

safety. Last month, Hampshire Constabulary executed 18 warrants following reports of online abuse, arresting 15 people.

## Domestic abuse support

Hampshire County Council is [reminding](#) residents that if they, or someone they know, is experiencing domestic abuse, or is struggling to manage their behaviour, support is available from [Hampshire Domestic Abuse Service](#). The advice line – **03300 165 112** – is open 9.30am – 5.30pm Monday – Thursday and 9.30am – 5pm Friday. For those who cannot access a telephone, due to isolating with someone who is hurting them, it is possible to contact a worker on [Facebook](#) via messenger 9.30am – 11.30am, 3pm – 5pm, 6pm – 8pm Monday – Friday. In an emergency, always dial 999, if you are unable to speak enter 55.

## Mental health and wellbeing – bereavement

As part of the ongoing Mental Health and Wellbeing Communications Plan, this week there was a focus on the universal message of helping others to align with the Mental Health Awareness Week (18-24 May) theme of kindness. [Social media posts](#) will now focus on the theme of bereavement and supporting someone who is grieving. The campaign signposts residents to the bereavement charity, [Cruse](#).

## Additional links

- Hampshire County Council webpages on coronavirus (including links to press releases): <https://www.hants.gov.uk/socialcareandhealth/coronavirus>
- Latest information on coronavirus: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>
- NHS information on coronavirus: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>
- Guidance for local government:  
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-local-government>
- County Councils Network (CCN) coronavirus information pages:  
<https://www.countycouncilsnetwork.org.uk/coronavirus-information-for-local-authorities/>
- Local Government Association (LGA) councillor guidance:  
<https://www.local.gov.uk/covid-19-outbreak-councillor-guidance>

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