

Government press conference - 19 May

The [press conference](#) was chaired by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, George Eustice.

The Government reiterated the new COVID Alert Level System and highlighted that due to the hard work of the British people, the country is in a position to begin moving carefully to Level three. The Government outlined what ‘Staying Alert’ means in practise: staying at home as much as possible and working from home if possible; limiting contact with other people and where contact is made with other people, keeping your distance; washing your hands regularly and; staying at home and self-isolating if you or a household member show symptoms of the virus.

The Government confirmed that they have launched the new [Pick for Britain](#) website which aims to support furloughed workers and students in particular, to find seasonal fruit or vegetable harvesting jobs. It was stated that this year, due to the significantly reduced numbers of seasonal migrant workers, farmers will need to rely on British workers to help with the harvest.

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

As of 6pm on 19 May, the total number of lab-confirmed cases was **248,818**. The daily number of lab-confirmed cases was **2,412**. The total number of Covid-19 associated deaths was **35,341**, with **545** new deaths reported on the day. The data is available to [view online](#).

National context

Safeguarding in schools

The Department for Education has [updated](#) the guidance for schools and education providers on safeguarding. This provides direction on what schools and colleges should plan for as more children return from the week commencing 1 June. The guidance includes: updating the child protection policy, designated safeguarding lead arrangements, protecting vulnerable children and mental health.

Local authority grant payments

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has [published](#) the updated figures for local authority grant payments to small and medium businesses as of 17 May.

Rough sleeping

Public Health England has [published](#) operational advice for local authority public health commissioners and drug and alcohol treatment providers who are responding to the health needs of people using drugs, alcohol and tobacco while in emergency accommodation.

Domestic abuse

The Home Office has [issued](#) guidance for the forthcoming £2 million fund for domestic abuse charities affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Education and Skills Fund Agency (EFSA)

The EFSA has [published](#) the latest information and actions for academies, schools, colleges, local authorities and further education providers.

Covid-19 symptom data - project OASIS

The Government has [announced](#) that Strategic Command's innovation hub, jHub, has been commissioned to securely gather and share Covid-19 symptom data with NHSX. This data will be used to inform the NHS response to the virus by giving a clearer understanding of which areas it is spreading and how quickly.

Future Fund

The Government's £500 million Future Fund has opened for applications today (20 May), with businesses able to apply for a convertible loan of between £125,000 and £5 million. The loans are intended to support continued growth and innovation in a diverse range of sectors.

Fast Start Competition

The Business Secretary, Alok Sharma, has [announced](#) that the Government is doubling investment in the Fast Start Competition with an additional £20 million. The Fast Start competition aims to fast-track the development of innovations emerging from the Covid-19 crisis.

Apprenticeships

The Department for Education has [updated](#) the guidance for apprentices, employers, training providers and assessment organisations in response to the pandemic. The updates include new information on training and assessing apprentices, calculating wages for furloughed apprentices, off-the-job training, and redundant apprentices.

Deaths registered

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has [published](#) the latest figures on community deaths. They show that the number of death registrations was impacted by the early May Bank Holiday; the number of registered deaths decreased from 2,950 deaths on Friday 1 May to 88 deaths on Friday 8 May. The number of deaths in care homes (from all causes) for Week 19 decreased from 6,409 to 4,248; however, deaths involving Covid-19 as a percentage of all deaths in care homes continued to rise to 39.2%, compared with 37.8% in Week 18.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

A [letter](#) from the Department of Health and Social Care has been circulated to councils providing information and guidance on PPE for personal assistants who are employed through a personal budget.

Local context

Hampshire schools

As the coverage of the debate around the phased re-opening of schools and early years settings from 1 June continues, Hampshire County Council has reiterated to local media that Hampshire schools have been open for vulnerable children and the children of keyworkers throughout the Covid-19 crisis. The Prime Minister has set out his ambition for schools to further partially re-open to specific year groups on 1 June 2020. The final decision to do this will be made by the Government and will be based upon an analysis of scientific advice, nearer to the date. All schools have been asked to prepare for opening certain year groups and have been sent detailed guidance by the Department for Education. In Hampshire, headteachers and their staff are currently analysing the advice and are planning to make sure they can open safely. If the Government confirms that schools should re-open on a phased basis, and continue support for vulnerable children and the children of key workers, each school will inform its parents and carers of the arrangements they are able to put in place, having conducted the necessary risk assessments.

Hampshire County Council's Music Service

The Music Service is [encouraging](#) pupils to continue practising their musical instruments from home. The Music Service's teachers normally work face to face with pupils but are currently supporting all schools across the county with a wide range of music provision and resources that can be accessed remotely from home. Parents and pupils are encouraged to visit their school website where all curriculum and instrumental resources and online lessons can be accessed through the Hampshire Music Service Virtual Learning Zone.

Fostering Hampshire Children

During FosterCare Fortnight (11-24 May), Hampshire County Council is highlighting the need for more foster carers by taking its outreach, information and engagement activities online and posting appeals on social media. This evening (20 May) between 19:00- 20:30, the [Foster Care Team](#) will lead the first [virtual information session](#) on [Microsoft Teams](#) during which they will discuss the different types of foster care, the assessment process and will also answer questions from interested residents.

Mental Health Awareness Week

During Mental Health Awareness Week, the County Council will be promoting key messages to residents along the national theme of being kind to others. The first of our three messages to go out this week [signposts residents](#) to the [Hampshire CVS Network](#) for information on volunteering opportunities, as evidence shows helping other people can boost your own mental wellbeing. Messages will be promoted on social media platforms throughout the week, including on bereavement and urgent support for self-harm and suicide.

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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