

Government press conference - 12 May

The [press conference](#) was chaired by the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, Alok Sharma.

The Government confirmed that the job retention (furlough) scheme will be extended until October. From August until October, the scheme will give employers greater flexibility to support employees to return to work, and employers will pay a percentage towards the salaries of furloughed staff.

It was confirmed that the UK's testing capacity is above 100,000 – although the number of daily tests is below that, with 85,293 tests carried out on Monday.

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

As of 4pm on 12 May, the total number of lab-confirmed cases was **226,463**. The daily number of lab-confirmed cases was **3,403**. The total number of Covid-19 associated deaths was **32,692**, with **627** new deaths reported on the day. The data is available to [view online](#).

National context

Regulations

The Government has [published](#) the formal amendments to the lockdown regulations, putting into law the steps announced by the Prime Minister on Sunday night.

Roadmap taskforces

Also [announced](#) were the five new ministerial-led taskforces which have been created to develop plans for how and when closed sectors can reopen safely, following publication of the UK's [roadmap to rebuild Britain](#). The taskforces will look at the following sectors: pubs and restaurants; non-essential retail; recreation and leisure; places of worship and; international aviation.

Green spaces and spending time outdoors

The Government has [updated](#) the guidance on using green spaces to bring it in line with the changes taking place from today (13 May). New information has also been [issued](#) on the range of outdoor activities now allowed, subject to social distancing rules. In addition, guidance has been [published](#) for the owners and operators of urban centres and green spaces to help social distancing.

Housing market

Following the amendments to the regulations, people who wish to move home may now do so. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has [revised](#) the guidance on home moving. The Housing Secretary has also [announced](#) a series of measures to support home building. In addition, a '[Safe Working Charter](#)' has been launched by the Government and the Home Builders Federation, enabling builders to return to work safely.

Planning

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has [issued](#) guidance for local authorities on planning matters, including temporary measures to make it easier to operate the planning system.

Public transport

The Department for Transport has [written](#) to all Combined, Local Transport and Local Highway Authorities in England, outside London, with regards to the restart of local transport.

ONS economic statistics

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has [published](#) the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) monthly estimate for March 2020 – it shows that nearly every aspect of the economy was hit, with record negative monthly growth. GDP fell by 2.0% in Quarter 1, and by 5.8% in March.

Care of the deceased

Public Health England has [updated](#) its guidance on the care of the deceased to include advice on: sharing information with others, residual risk of infection from the deceased, the use of body bags, and the use of personal protective equipment (PPE).

Procurement

The Cabinet Office has [updated](#) the procurement policy note (PPN) which sets out information and guidance for public bodies on the payment of suppliers to ensure service continuity. The amended PPN contains additional sector guidance for state funded schools.

Technology in care homes

NHSX and NHS Digital have negotiated and published on the [NHSX website](#) a range of internet connection offers from telecom companies. This is complemented by two new pieces of guidance; [choosing an internet connection](#) for your care home and [how to use digital services in your care home](#).

Hospital discharge

The Department of Health and Social Care has [published](#) three new documents for patients leaving hospital: What you need to know [about leaving hospital](#) – Easy Read leaflet, When you [leave hospital to go home](#) – Easy Read leaflet and [Leaving hospital to go to a care home](#) – Easy Read leaflet.

Business

The Government has [updated](#) the guidance on closing certain businesses and venues in England to reflect current [regulations](#).

Self-Employment Income Support Scheme

The Treasury has [announced](#) that from today (13 May) self-employed individuals, or members of partnerships whose business has been adversely affected by Covid-19, will be able to apply for a Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) grant worth 80% of their average monthly trading profits.

Trade Credit Insurance guarantee

The Treasury has [announced](#) that the Government will temporarily guarantee business-to-business transactions currently supported by Trade Credit Insurance, to ensure the majority of insurance coverage will be maintained across the market.

Garden centres

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has [issued](#) a press release outlining the measures that should be taken by garden centres as they reopen to the public from today (13 May). In addition, the Horticultural Trades Association has produced [Safe Trading Guidance](#).

Fishing

The Environment Agency has [issued](#) a press release highlighting that restrictions on angling are eased from today (13 May) following updated government [guidance on outdoor activities](#). The Angling Trust have issued additional advice which can be found on their [online hub](#).

Vehicle safety

Highways England has [issued](#) advice to drivers who may be using their vehicle for the first time in several weeks to check tyres, engine oil, water, lights and fuel.

Genome study

The Department of Health and Social Care has [announced](#) that genetic susceptibility to Covid-19 is to be tested in a nationwide study.

Armed Forces charities

The Defence Minister, Johnny Mercer, has [announced](#) an additional £6 million of funding for charities supporting the defence community during the pandemic. It is open to apply for and will be distributed in the form of grants administered by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust, backed by the Ministry of Defence.

Local context

Recovery

Hampshire County Council continues to consider the steps needed for recovery. Based on government guidance and regulations, plans are being carefully developed to safely re-open services at the right point in time. Following government announcements – the County Council has reopened household waste recycling centres (HWRCs) this week and the country park carparks, from today. While most officers will continue with their current working arrangements, the County Council's Corporate Accommodation Group has started a process of reviewing office accommodation to consider what steps will be necessary to ensure the offices are safe and ready for when a phased return begins.

Fostercare Fortnight

This Fostercare Fortnight (11 - 24 May), Hampshire County Council's Foster Care Team is highlighting the need for more foster carers within the county. It is taking its outreach, information and engagement activities online and posting appeals on social media. The lockdown has given many people an opportunity to reflect on their lives post Covid-19, and the Fostering Hampshire Children Team has been receiving enquiries from people interested in fostering in the future. The [press release](#) on the County Council's website provides more information on fostering and includes contact information for the Foster Care Team.

Local Solutions Grant

Hampshire County Council are inviting the voluntary and community sector to attend an online launch event for the 2020/21 Local Solutions Grant. The grants aim to enable local community and voluntary organisations to support vulnerable people to maintain their independence. The Launch events will be delivered through MS Teams and will provide information about the new funding opportunities and answer questions. There are several sessions available between 21 and 28 May - [book online](#).

More information, including [advice for organisations](#) looking for funding for a Covid-19 related project, is available on the [County Council's website](#).

Work starts on new primary school in Whiteley

The County Council has [announced](#) that work to build the relocated Cornerstone Church of England (Aided) Primary School in Whiteley has started (11 May). The original start date of 20 April 2020 was postponed due to the Covid-19 response. The contractor, Midas, is intending to do everything possible to minimise disruption and disturbance to residents.

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/>
- Q&A from Public Health England on coronavirus: <https://publichealthmatters.blog.gov.uk/2020/01/23/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-what-you-need-to-know/>
- 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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