

National context

Government's daily press conference

The press conference was chaired by the First Secretary of State, Dominic Raab.

The latest coronavirus figures were reported – 411,192 people have been tested, of whom 133,495 have tested positive. There have been 18,100 deaths in hospitals.

The Government confirmed that while the UK is making progress, the social distancing measures must remain in place for longer in order to avoid a second peak and potentially a second lockdown.

Tribute was paid to the Armed Forces and the role they have played in helping to set up the Nightingale hospitals and praised the “calm reassurance” they have provided.

Chief of Defence Staff, General Sir Nick Carter, provided an update on the Armed Forces and Defence and the work they have carried out in the fight against coronavirus.

The slides and datasets to accompany today’s coronavirus press conference are available to [view online](#).

House of commons

Yesterday (21 April), MPs [approved](#) a motion that will allow them to participate in questions, urgent questions and ministerial statements via video link. The new, virtual, House of Commons opened today with remote Welsh Questions followed by Prime Minister’s Questions with First Secretary of State, Dominic Raab, deputising for the Prime Minister and Sir Keir Starmer making his debut as the Leader of the Opposition.

Office for National Statistics (ONS) figures

The ONS has [published](#) provisional figures on the number of deaths registered in England and Wales, including deaths involving coronavirus, by age, sex and region. In response to the ONS figures, the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) [issued](#) a statement outlining the work they are undertaking with ONS to provide a more detailed and timely picture of the impact on adult social care. They noted that the number of deaths in care homes relating to coronavirus between 11 April and 15 April could be double that reported by the ONS.

Free School Meal voucher scheme

The Government has [announced](#) that another major supermarket has signed up to the national voucher scheme. Aldi joins a range of supermarkets including Sainsbury’s, Tesco, Asda, Morrisons, Waitrose and M&S where vouchers can be redeemed. More information on the free school meals voucher scheme is available in the [guidance](#).

Summer exams

Ofqual has [updated](#) information for schools, students and parents on how qualifications will be graded and awarded in summer 2020.

Children's mental health

Public Health England has [updated](#) guidance on supporting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing during the coronavirus pandemic. Guidance for [looking after your own mental health and wellbeing](#) is also available.

Bereavement

The Government has [published](#) a bereavement support leaflet to help those who have lost a loved one. The leaflet shares information to help the bereaved make important decisions during the national emergency, sets out what to expect next and signposts the extra help and support that is available.

National charity, At a Loss, has [released](#) a website directory of local and national bereavement support adapted to current restrictions.

Ramadan

For the start of the month-long Muslim festival of Ramadan, which begins this week, Public Health England has [posted](#) a blog which includes advice on fasting and reinforces existing social distancing advice, faith guidance and public health messaging.

Enhanced legal aid support

The Ministry of Justice has [announced](#) changes to provide enhanced legal aid support to vulnerable people. The Legal Aid Agency will also be given the power to backdate payments for legal help for inquests.

Cyber security

The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC), a part of GCHQ, has [launched](#) the cross-governmental 'Cyber Aware' campaign, which offers advice for people to protect passwords, accounts and devices. NCSC has also issued new advice for [individuals](#) and [organisations](#) hosting online video conferences.

Environment Agency

The Environment Agency has [issued](#) new temporary regulatory position statements. These aim to minimise risks to the environment and human health where, for reasons beyond control, compliance with certain regulatory requirements is not possible due to coronavirus.

Banking services

The Economic Secretary, John Glen, has [written](#) to thank front line staff working to provide essential banking services.

Fire services

James Brokenshire and Steven Greenhalgh have [written](#) to the Fire Brigades Union jointly as Ministers responsible for fire policy to acknowledge the actions of firefighters and staff. They outline the support being given by the Government, as well as ongoing work to ensure fire services have the resources they need during coronavirus.

Support for education settings

The Secretary of State for Education, Gavin Williamson, has made a [written statement](#) on the steps the Government is taking to support the education system, children and young people to manage the consequences of coronavirus.

Pension tax

A written statement [confirms](#) the Government intends to temporarily suspend tax rules that would otherwise apply significant tax charges to pension income. The proposed tax changes for recently

retired public sector workers returning to support the response to coronavirus will initially apply in respect of payments made in the period from 1 March to 1 June 2020.

Local context

Pharmacies

The County Council, HIOW Partnership of CCGs and Community Pharmacy South Central have written to pharmacies across Hampshire setting out a new operating procedure and guidance for volunteers to enable vulnerable people to continue to receive medication. The solutions proposed address the pressures reported by pharmacies relating to queues, voluntary collections and social distancing - and enable a consistent approach across the system.

Citizens Advice

Citizens Advice has [published information](#) for residents experiencing issues with topping up pre-paid electricity meters. Between 1 March and 14 April, Citizens Advice across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight supported 9,484 clients with 26,507 issues relating to employment, benefits, housing and finance. More information about the support on offer is available via their [national website](#), and captured in this [short video](#). Local Response Centres are encouraged to refer residents to Citizens Advice where appropriate.

Ramadan

Hampshire County Council is [urging](#) residents observing the holy holiday of Ramadan to continue adhering to the Government's direction to stay at home and help prevent the spread of Coronavirus.

People from all faiths are encouraged to stay connected, congregate and pray together via video chat apps, and by checking in with local places of worship to find services online.

Highways

Hampshire County Council has [announced](#) that the Highways teams will increase the amount of routine highway maintenance carried out during the coronavirus pandemic. The County Council had been prioritising emergency and safety related highway works to ensure the safety of staff and residents, and to ensure careful use of materials while supply was significantly disrupted. All highways maintenance work on Hampshire's roads is carried out in line with the Construction Leadership Council's Site Operation Procedures, which is based on Public Health England guidance.

Fly tipping

Within Hampshire there has been a mix of fly tipping activity since social distancing measures were introduced. The data on fly tipped waste tonnages for the initial three-week period does not support media reports suggesting that fly-tipping has dramatically increased. The data shows that fly tipping is the same as or slightly less than the same period last year.

Household Waste Recycling Centres

Hampshire County Council is continuing to work with its waste contractor, Veolia, and neighbouring authorities on plans as to how Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) could re-open safely, in the event that Government guidelines on non-essential journeys during the Coronavirus pandemic are amended. A [press release](#) with further detail has been issued.

Business adaptation

The Executive Member for Economy, Transport and Environment, Councillor Rob Humby, has [thanked](#) the many Hampshire businesses who have adapted their services and production lines to support efforts to fight the coronavirus outbreak.

Solent LEP

Solent LEP continue to offer the latest information and support available from themselves, local partners and the Government on their [Coronavirus Support Hub](#). They are also running a series of webinars for businesses on topics including, furlough and business support - further information is available on the [online calendar](#).

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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