

National context

Government's daily press conference

The press conference was chaired by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Dominic Raab.

The Government reported the latest coronavirus figures – 252,958 tests concluded, 51,608 tests returned positive, 17,911 people admitted to hospital and 5,373 deaths.

The “step-by-step action plan” was highlighted which aims to slow the spread of virus to ensure fewer people need hospital treatment. Actions taken so far were outlined.

It was confirmed that as a precautionary measure and on the advice of his doctor, the Prime Minister was admitted to hospital last night, where he remains for the treatment of persistent coronavirus symptoms. It was clarified that the Prime Minister remains in charge of the Government.

Postponement of by-elections

[Regulations](#) have been laid today (6 April) that postpone until 6 May 2021 local by-elections and other polls, either scheduled or which would otherwise arise before that date. The regulations come into force tomorrow (07 April). The Government can legislate to bring forward the postponement date if there is a relaxation of the social distancing rules.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

The Government has updated the [guidance for employers](#) and businesses on coronavirus to include a section on the use of face masks in the community. Public Health England does not currently advise the use of face masks outside of care settings.

Public Health England has added a set of frequently asked [questions on wearing PPE](#) to the guidance on infection prevention and control.

Deploying NHS volunteers more widely

The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Robert Jenrick, has sent a letter to councils to announce that 750,000 NHS volunteers are available to support local efforts to help vulnerable people. The letter states that the NHS Volunteer scheme received an overwhelming response and therefore the volunteers can be deployed more widely.

Management of exposed healthcare workers

Public Health England has issued [guidance](#) on healthcare workers who have been exposed to COVID-19, staff return to work criteria, and patient exposures.

Children's social care services

The Department for Education has published [guidance on children's social care](#) for local authorities, those who have corporate parenting responsibilities, and local safeguarding partnerships who work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in their area.

Testing programmes

The Department of Health and Social Care has published the new [testing strategy](#) which outlines how the Government intends to scale up the UK's testing programmes to deliver on the target of being able to provide a test to anyone who needs one. The strategy was announced by the Secretary of State in the Government's press conference on Thursday 2 April.

Mental health support

[Mental Health Challenge](#), which is a network of local authorities who have come together to champion mental health, has created a new [webpage](#) with coronavirus focussed resources for local councils and elected members.

The centre for Mental Health, the Association of Mental Health providers and the NHS Confederation Mental Health Network have published a [briefing](#) which outlines how statutory services are working alongside the voluntary and community sector to provide services for people with mental health difficulties during the outbreak.

Fire and Rescue Services 'Grey Book' employees

Following the National Employers, National Fire Chiefs Council and the Fire Brigades Union reaching an agreement on 26 March relating to 'Grey Book' employees providing additional support to partner agencies during the pandemic - a [further tripartite statement](#) has been published.

Coronavirus Status Checker

The Government is encouraging people with coronavirus symptoms to use the new [Coronavirus Status Checker](#) which will help the NHS coordinate its response and build up additional data.

Modern slavery

The Home Office has published new [guidance on the support](#) for victims of modern slavery. The guidance recognises that modern slavery victims may be especially isolated and hidden from view during the coronavirus outbreak. Individuals supported through the modern slavery victim care contract will be allowed to stay in government-funded safe accommodation for the next three months.

Government communication

The Government has partnered with leading UK video games companies to feature the 'Stay at Home, Save Lives' instruction in some of the most popular games.

British travellers

It was [announced](#) that ten further airlines have joined the scheme to keep commercial routes open to enable more British travellers to return to the UK. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has extended their [advice](#) against travelling overseas for an indefinite period.

Benefits

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has temporarily paused the recovery of benefit overpayments for three months. DWP has also announced that to deal with the unprecedented demand, 10,000 existing staff are being moved to front line roles and more staff are being recruited.

Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

HMRC has updated the Job Retention Scheme [employer guidance](#) and [guidance for employees](#) to reflect some of the main queries that have been received from stakeholders.

Green spaces

The Government has updated the [guidance on access to green spaces](#) to include advice on walking dogs in public areas. This is in addition to the [advice for people with animals](#).

Telecommunications infrastructure

The telecommunications industry was [announced](#) as a critical sector in new regulations. Work to repair and maintain the telecommunications network, both fixed and mobile, will be allowed to continue and gatherings of more than two people are permitted where this is essential for work purposes.

Parking

The Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government has published [guidance](#) which describes the terms of use around the Government's free council car parking scheme for NHS workers, social care workers and NHS Volunteer Responders.

Local context

Support for vulnerable residents

The County Council's [coronavirus webpage](#), which signposts help to Hampshire residents most in need, has been updated to include information on support for those in financial difficulty. Information has also been added on the various ways to get involved to support the county's response to coronavirus. Residents are asked to contact their local [Council for Voluntary Service](#) (CVS) in the first instance.

County Council offices closed to the public

Residents are being reminded that Hampshire County Council's offices are closed to the public in order to protect staff. Posters are displayed at key sites and further reminders will be published online. Residents are asked to only contact the County Council online or by telephone.

Solent Local Enterprise Partnership

The Solent LEP have launched the [Rural Business Resilience Fund](#) for Isle of Wight based businesses, with grants available for capital expenditure of up to £2,500. The Fund is focused on small and medium-sized businesses which support the Island's rural economy and are looking to develop alternative ways of working during the coronavirus pandemic.

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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For any queries, please contact coronavirus.memberqueries@hants.gov.uk

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