

Government press conference - Monday 27 April

The press conference was chaired by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Matt Hancock.

The Government announced that the families of health and care workers on the frontline in England will benefit from a new [life assurance scheme](#) during the pandemic. Bereaved family members will receive a £60,000 lump sum. Within social care, the scheme will cover employees of publicly funded care homes, home care, directly employed carers including personal assistants and frontline child and family social workers. The Government highlighted that that of the 21,092 people who have died of coronavirus in UK hospitals, 82 were NHS staff and 16 worked in social care.

The Government confirmed that some NHS services which had been paused due to the coronavirus outbreak will be restored from Tuesday 28 April, including cancer care and mental health services.

The Chief Medical Officer, Chris Whitty and Stephen Powis, the Medical Director for England warned that while there has been a gradual decline in the number of new deaths each day, the death toll may continue to rise further as the UK is not consistently past the peak yet.

For the first time, a member of the public asked a question during the conference.

As of 9am on 27 April, 569,768 people have been tested, of whom 157,149 have tested positive. As of 5pm on 26 April, of those hospitalised in the UK who tested positive for coronavirus, 21,092 have died.

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

National context

Workplace skills

The Department for Education has [launched](#) a new [online learning platform](#) which gives people access to free, high-quality digital and numeracy courses. The courses cover a range of levels, from everyday maths and tools for using email and social media to more advanced training on subjects such as coding and digital marketing.

Domestic abuse

The Minister for rough sleeping and housing, Luke Hall, has written to all local authority leaders to thank them for their work in responding to the pandemic. The Government urges all local authorities to ensure that domestic abuse services are well supported and equipped, and to provide crisis funding if required. The letter also sets out that the additional £1.6 funding for local government should be used to protect vulnerable people, including victims of domestic abuse.

The Home Office has [announced](#) £3.1 million will go to specialist services for children who have both been directly and indirectly affected by domestic abuse. This can include one-to-one and group counselling sessions to improve the mental health of children affected and early intervention schemes.

Essential moves

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has [issued](#) non-statutory guidance to support social landlords with allocations and transfers during the coronavirus outbreak. The guidance asks social landlords to support the most vulnerable to move home, such as those fleeing domestic abuse.

Student finance

The Student Loans Company (SLC) is [encouraging](#) students to apply for student finance as soon as possible to ensure their finances are in place for the new academic year. SLC is ensuring the application service remains open to students as part of its response to the pandemic.

Bounce Back Loans

The Chancellor has [announced](#) that small businesses will be able to access a new fast track finance scheme providing loans with a 100% government-backed guarantee for lenders. The Bounce Back Loans scheme will provide loans between £2,000 and £50,000 which will be interest free for the first 12 months.

Coronavirus Statutory Sick Pay

The Government has [uploaded](#) a webinar about the Coronavirus Statutory Sick Pay rebate scheme to the business help and support webpage.

Local authority grants

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has [updated](#) the data on local authority payments to small and medium businesses as of 27 April.

VAT payments

HMRC has [updated](#) the guidance on the temporary changes to the VAT payments due between 20 March - 30 June to include information about which can be deferred.

Chancellor's statement

The Chancellor yesterday (27 April) [updated](#) the House of Commons on the Government's economic response to coronavirus.

Forestry Commission

The Forestry Commission has [issued](#) an e-alert which provides an update on how they are working to support the sector throughout the pandemic and also includes information on grant and payment deadlines.

Farm payments

The Government has [confirmed](#) the window to submit applications for the Basic Payment Scheme and make a claim for Countryside Stewardship, Environmental Stewardship and woodland legacy revenue payments will be extended by one month - until 15 June. The guidance for farmers, landowners and rural businesses has also been [updated](#).

Fertility treatment

The Department of Health and Social Care has [announced](#) that the current 10-year storage limit for eggs, sperm, embryos and gametes will be extended by two years to enable sufficient time for fertility treatment to resume. To support wider changes to the health service in responding to the pandemic, fertility treatment was temporarily paused earlier this month.

Testing

The Department for Health and Social Care and Public Health England have [written](#) to the care sector to provide further information on testing for social care staff and residents.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

HMRC has [published](#) new guidance for companies who are exporting PPE during the pandemic. It should be read in conjunction with the Department of Health and Social Care [guidance](#) that sets out the exporting restrictions on PPE products.

Public Health England has [issued](#) new guidance for workers delivering homecare (domiciliary care) which provides information on the use of PPE. Guidance on [Working Safely in Care Homes](#) has also been updated.

County Councils Network (CCN)

The CCN is [urging](#) the Government to provide clarity on how much individual authorities will receive from the latest £1.6bn of emergency funding. The call follows CCN analysis of the COVID-19 cost pressure estimates member councils provided the Government– which show coronavirus is adding almost £1 billion to care costs in counties.

Highway maintenance and construction

Minister for Transport, Baroness Vere, has [written](#) to the highway construction and maintenance sector. The letter refers to the professionalism of highways and construction workers who have suffered abuse from a small minority of the public and thanks them for all their work during pandemic.

Attendance in education and early years settings

The Department for Education has [updated](#) the data set by adding a summary of returns to 24 April.

Office for National Statistics (ONS) data

The ONS has [published](#) a new release on the provisional counts of the number of deaths registered in England and Wales, including deaths involving the coronavirus, by age, sex and region for the week ending 17 April. Included in the data for the first time is the number of deaths reported to the Care Quality Commission from residential facilities.

Household waste and recycling centres

The Local Government Secretary has today (28 April) [asked](#) councils to plan for the organised reopening of their household waste and recycling centres. It is understood that updated guidance will be published shortly to support local government to open sites safely during the coronavirus pandemic.

Local context

Key worker testing

Key worker testing at the Tipner site in Portsmouth is now only available through booked appointments using the self-referral [online portal](#) or via employer referral.

Home schooling

Hampshire schools have been working creatively to support their students' education during this period. Home learning packs have been developed and delivered and timetables of lessons are being retained and run. Full press release is [published online](#).

Virtual writing challenge

Hampshire Library Service, in partnership with local children's author, Ali Sparkes, is launching *Scribe Tribe Snacks* - daily writing challenge videos for 9 to 14-year olds.

Scribe Tribe Snacks will run between 4 and 8 May - each morning Ali Sparkes will post a video with a challenge that relates to an element of writing and Ali will then be online in the afternoon to provide feedback. At the end of the week, three finalists will win signed copies of Ali Sparkes' story, *Night Forever*, and one winner will receive a free place on the actual Scribe Tribe (a week of writing workshops) which will take place at Winchester Discovery Centre later this year.

Online safety

The County Council is [urging](#) parents and carers to remain vigilant about online safety during lock down, highlighting the [Government's latest guidance](#) which sets out a four point plan of action that should be undertaken by parents and carers.

Online safety [guidance, advice and resources](#) are also available from the County Council for parents, carers, young people and professionals within schools. It includes resources about relevant online issues. Other helpful sources of advice are [Parentzone](#), the [NSPCC](#) and the [UK Safer Internet Centre](#), as well as the [Digital Parenting Magazine](#).

Hampshire Highways

Hampshire Highways teams are increasing the amount of routine highway maintenance carried out as the supply-chains reopen at national and local level. Together, with new processes and procedures in place to protect the workforce and residents, the teams will be taking advantage of the quieter roads to carry out more routine maintenance and repairs. During this time, the teams will also be looking at a small number of suitable sites for a temporary reallocation of road space in favour of cyclists and pedestrians on a strictly experimental basis.

Thank you NHS and care workers

Hampshire Highways have worked overnight to create road lining messages thanking NHS and Care workers on roads outside hospitals and care homes all over Hampshire. Weather permitting, they hope to complete several more by this Thursday evening ready for the next *Clap for Our Carers* event.

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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