

National context

Government's daily press conference

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

The Government reported the latest coronavirus figures – 425,821 people have been tested, of whom 138,078 have tested positive. 17,615 people are currently in hospital and there have been 18,738 deaths in hospitals.

It was confirmed that the Government will begin to rigorously use the test, track and trace method. The aim is to meet the goal of 100,000 tests per day by the end of this month and the additional capacity will expand which groups will be eligible for tests.

The Government announced that employers of essential workers will be able to request a test for employees from Gov.uk from today. From tomorrow, employees will be able to request tests themselves. Tests will also be available to those living in the same household as essential workers. Test results will be sent by text and there will be a helpline to provide more information. The Government confirmed that there are now 30 regional test sites and that more are being created.

It was also confirmed that the Department of Health and Social Care and the Office for National Statistics have started a [major long-term study](#), involving up to 300,000 people over the next 12 months, which will track the spread of coronavirus in the general population. The study forms part of Pillar 4 of the [testing strategy](#) - to conduct UK-wide surveillance testing. Early signs show public enthusiasm, and the Government urged anyone who received a letter to respond as soon as possible.

All British Muslims were urged to stay at home during Ramadan and the Government thanked them for making vital changes.

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

Business rates

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has [announced](#) that businesses are expected to receive almost £10 billion in business rate relief this financial year in response to coronavirus. Business rates income for most councils will be reduced by between 30% and 45%. Councils will be compensated for the lost income through a government grant.

Statutory audit deadlines

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has [written](#) to local authority chief executives informing them about extensions to the statutory audit deadlines for 2019-20. The regulations implementing these measures were laid on 7 April and are due to come into force on 30 April.

Fire and Rescue Services

The Security Minister, James Brokenshire, has [written](#) to the National Fire Chiefs Council and the Fire Services Management Committee on reducing burdens and supporting the fire sector.

Coronavirus Act 2020

The Local Government Association has [published](#) a guide on changes to local authority powers and duties resulting from the Coronavirus Act 2020.

Public spaces

The Local Government Minister, Simon Clarke, has [written](#) to local authorities urging them to continue allowing access to parks and public spaces. The letter highlights updated [Regulations](#) which state that burial grounds, cemeteries and grounds surrounding crematoria may remain open.

Natural environment

Natural England have [updated](#) their operational guidelines to help focus support on their regulatory work and on maintaining the public's access to nature in a safe and responsible way.

Adult social care recruitment

The Department of Health and Social Care has [launched](#) a new recruitment campaign, '*Care for others. Make a difference*'. Free e-learning courses and webinars for local authority and care provider staff are also being developed.

Debt

The Government has [announced](#) a package of measures to provide financial support needed by individuals, families and businesses through the economic disruption caused by coronavirus. The Treasury is outlining a revision to the UK Debt Management Office (DMO) financing remit for 2020-21, covering May to July 2020 inclusive. The DMO is also publishing details of the revised planned gilt issuance schedule for May to July 2020.

Online safety

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport has [published](#) new advice to help people, particularly children, stay safe online during the coronavirus outbreak. The guidance sets out a four-point plan and recommends reviewing security and safety settings, checking facts and guarding against disinformation, being vigilant against fraud and scams, and managing the amount of time spent online.

Driving instructors

Gareth Llewellyn, Chief Executive of the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency, has [written](#) to driving and riding instructors about coronavirus.

Business support

HMRC has [updated](#) the business support pages to include a webinar about the Self-employment Income Support Scheme and a YouTube video with a step-by-step guide on how to make a claim through the Coronavirus Retention Scheme.

Grant funding

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has [updated](#) the data on the coronavirus grant fund payments that local authorities have made to small and medium businesses.

BAME patients

[NHS England figures](#) show that of the 13,918 patients in hospital who tested positive for coronavirus up to 17 April, 16.2% were of Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) background despite these communities making up only around 13% of the total population. The statistics follow the [launch](#) of the Government's review into why BAME communities are disproportionately vulnerable.

Impact on DCMS sectors

The Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee has [launched](#) a call for evidence on the impact of coronavirus on culture, tourism, the voluntary and community sector, broadband, sport and leisure.

Delivering NHS and care services

The Health and Social Care Select Committee has [launched](#) an inquiry into the planning and delivery of essential NHS and care services during the pandemic and beyond.

Financial support for education, early years and children's social care

The Department for Education has [updated](#) the guidance on funding and financial support available for education, childcare and children's social care organisations.

Support for migrants

The Home Office has [issued](#) new guidance on the support available to people who do not currently have permission to live permanently in the UK.

Loneliness

The Culture Secretary, Oliver Dowden, has [launched](#) a new campaign to tackle loneliness and social isolation during the coronavirus outbreak and social distancing. Loneliness is to be a priority category of the £750 million charity funding package with a guaranteed £5 million boost for national loneliness organisations.

Wellbeing

Our Frontline [launched](#) yesterday (22 April), the partnership between Shout, Samaritans, Mind, Hospice UK and The Royal Foundation of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, offers one-to-one support, by call or text, from trained volunteers. It also provides resources to help frontline and key workers to look after their mental health.

Charity donations

During the holy month of Ramadan, the Charity Commission is [encouraging](#) donors to take extra precautions to ensure charitable contributions reach the intended cause. Increased online giving is expected this Ramadan, as mosques and community centres remain closed to reduce social contact. They are advising people to use gov.uk/checkcharity and the Commission's [online register](#).

Local context

Country parks

The County Council is [urging](#) people to continue to follow government social distancing guidelines during the coronavirus outbreak and to be reasonable in their use of countryside sites and country parks for daily exercise.

Resident communication

Hampshire County Council continues to maintain regular contact with residents and to update them on our response to coronavirus. Yesterday, residents who are subscribed to the newsletter *YourHampshire* received a further update about what is being done locally to support vulnerable residents, carers and young people, as well as information on libraries and VE Day.

Hampshire Chamber of Commerce

Hampshire Chamber of Commerce is organising a series of free live ‘question- time’ events, supported by EM3 LEP, to support local businesses. The next event will provide a focus on resilience and staying connected and will be followed by an event on business measures to navigate the impact of coronavirus – information is available on their [events webpage](#).

City centres

The Southern Policy Centre has [published](#) information on a current research project considering how the city centres in the central South – Bournemouth, Poole, Portsmouth, Southampton and Winchester- are changing and what they might look like post-lockdown.

Clap for key workers

The nation will come together again at 8pm this evening as part of the Clap for Our Carers campaign to recognise the efforts of frontline carers and NHS workers fighting the coronavirus pandemic. The County Council will share a [short animation](#) showcasing the range of key workers across the Authority and will also promote a mini broadcast from the Executive Lead Member for Communities, Partnerships and External Affairs, Councillor Andrew Joy.

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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