

National context

Government's daily press conference

The press conference was chaired by the Secretary of State for Transport, Grant Shapps.

The Government reported the latest coronavirus figures – 444,222 people have been tested, of whom have 143,464 tested positive. 17,049 people are currently in hospital and there have been 19,506 deaths in hospitals.

The Government announced a new package of measures to ensure the transport sector boosts national efforts to fight coronavirus. A trilateral agreement has been reached with the French and Irish governments which commits to keeping freight routes open to bring in food, medicines and other essential goods. The Government is also safeguarding freight routes between the UK and other European countries.

Steps have been taken to protect ferry routes and to secure services around the UK, including links to the Isle of Wight.

It was announced that the Government has launched a Transport Support Unit, dedicated to fighting the pandemic. This utilises the spare capacity currently available due to a reduced transport service meaning there are volunteers and 9,000 vehicles available to support the fight against the virus.

The Government has given the green light to the possible use of drones to deliver medical supplies, following a trial in Southampton and Portsmouth last year. Fast tracked trials are to begin next week at St Mary's Hospital on the Isle of Wight.

Following major repatriation efforts, the Government confirmed that there are no British holidaymakers remaining on cruise ships anywhere in the world.

The Government paid tribute to the critical transport workers who have kept vital services running.

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

NHS Volunteer Responders

The NHS and Royal Voluntary Service has announced that vulnerable people and their families are now able to [directly call](#) on the army of NHS Volunteer Responders. Vulnerable people will be able to request help with collecting shopping, medication or other essential supplies and use a 'check in and chat' phone call service to help combat isolation and loneliness.

Technology for schools

The Department for Education has [announced](#) that expert technical support to access Google and Microsoft's education platforms, along with free training on how to use the resources most effectively, will be available for schools immediately. Additionally, the Department has written to local authorities and other organisations overseeing schools outlining the process for ordering devices for those who need them.

Support for vulnerable children

The Department for Education has [announced](#) that vulnerable children most at risk of neglect, violence or exploitation will benefit from a £12 million funding package to keep them safe during the coronavirus outbreak.

Summer exams

Ofqual has [launched](#) a consultation on the exceptional arrangements set out for awarding vocational and technical qualifications, and general qualifications (other than GCSEs, AS and A levels).

Education cluster and hub models

The Department for Education has [published](#) guidance for education providers on using cluster and hub models during the coronavirus pandemic. Cluster and hub models are the grouping of schools and settings in order to offer continued provision for the children of critical workers and vulnerable children.

Childcare funding

The Department for Education has [announced](#) that councils will be able to move free entitlements funding in exceptional circumstances, to ensure sufficient childcare places are available for vulnerable children and those of critical workers.

Apprenticeships

The Department for Education has [updated](#) the guidance on providing apprenticeships to include information on furloughed apprentices, end-point assessment, functional skills apprentices and qualification certification.

Libraries

Arts Council England has [announced](#) £151,000 of funding for library services to supplement their budgets for e-books and e-audio material. Each library service will receive £1,000 to improve areas of high demand.

Care homes

Public Health England has [published](#) guidance for those working in care homes providing information on how to work safely during this period of sustained transmission. A [video](#) about putting on and removing personal protective equipment (PPE) has also been released.

Homelessness

Dame Louise Casey, who is spearheading the Government's response on rough sleeping, has [written](#) to local authority homelessness managers and rough sleeping coordinators to thank them for supporting 5,400 rough sleepers off the streets in the past month.

Digital innovations

The Department of Health and Social Care, NHSX and the Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government have [announced](#) 18 digital solutions are being awarded up to £25,000 under the TechForce19 challenge. The funding for each project will be used to develop new ways to support vulnerable people who need to stay at home or need other help in the community for extended periods of time.

Competition and markets

The Competition and Markets Authority has [published](#) an update from its COVID-19 Taskforce, set up to monitor and respond to consumer and competition problems arising from the pandemic. The Taskforce continues to collect evidence, including about unjustifiable price rises during the pandemic.

Transport links to the Isle of Wight

The Department for Transport has [confirmed](#) that transport links to the mainland for people living on the Isle of Wight and the Isles of Scilly have been safeguarded with an emergency package of up to £10.5 million. This follows the temporary suspension of competition law to allow ferry operators in the Isle of Wight to work together to continue to run essential services despite reduced usage.

Testing

The Government has [added](#) guidance for essential workers and employers about arranging a test, including a link to the self-referral service. This follows yesterday's (23 April) [announcement](#) that all essential workers and members of their households who are showing symptoms of coronavirus are able to get tested.

Public Health England has [published](#) guidance for taking swab samples including a video.

British nationals abroad

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) has [published](#) information and advice for British nationals who are stranded abroad during the pandemic. It includes advice on how to look after wellbeing and mental health, as well as information on how the FCO may be able to help.

Support for the high street

The Government has announced that high street shops and other companies under strain will be protected from aggressive rent collection and asked to pay what they can during the coronavirus pandemic.

Local context

Supporting vulnerable residents

The County Council and its partners continue to engage with supermarkets to ensure the prioritisation of delivery and 'click and collect' slots for vulnerable residents – and to make the coordination of collections by volunteers easier. Alongside this, work with local food producers and retailers is being undertaken to support and expand alternative options for home food delivery, particularly for those in need who are unable to access delivery slots. A list of local suppliers across the county offering home delivery has been compiled by Hampshire Fare and is available [here](#). This is also being signposted via the County Council's [Connect to Support](#) directory, which includes details of a wide range of support services.

Action Hampshire

Action Hampshire is producing a weekly newsletter which aims to provide the voluntary and community sector with information and support during the coronavirus pandemic, including information on funding available. [Sign up](#) to *Important things you need to know right now* or [read the latest edition online](#).

Testing for essential workers

Following the Government's [announcement](#) that all essential workers and members of their households who are showing symptoms of coronavirus will be able to get tested, Hampshire County Council is disseminating information on testing to all staff. All Hampshire County Council staff, including contractors who support essential service provision, are defined as essential (or key) workers and will be able to book a test if they meet the criteria. Members of essential workers' households who meet the criteria will also be eligible for testing. While all staff may access testing, the County Council is particularly urging staff working directly, or coming into frequent contact with vulnerable children and/or adults in social care settings to get tested.

Keyworkers not directly employed by Hampshire County Council are also eligible for testing and CQC and Ofsted are contacting regulated services to notify them of the requirements and the process. The County Council is looking at which of our key provider services may benefit from having access to testing and will be proactively communicating with these services and facilitating this, where possible.

The drive-through testing centre for essential workers in the wider Hampshire area has opened at Tipner Lorry Park, Portsmouth. Other local sites are also likely to open over the coming weeks, as set out in the national plan.

Schools

Schools, early years educators and nurseries in Hampshire remain open to look after children of key workers and vulnerable children. The number of children in education settings fluctuates daily. However, yesterday (23 March) 4,806 children attended schools, which equates to 2.7% of the student population. As expected, the number of children attending schools has risen after the Easter holidays, during which attendance rates reduced to around 1.2% in the first week.

The County Council's catering service, HC3S is continuing to work alongside schools, to ensure that vulnerable and key worker children receive nutritious meals during the coronavirus pandemic. HC3S provided around 23,000 meals per week over the Easter period, out of which approximately 20,000 were Free School Meals.

Mental wellbeing helpline

A new free helpline has been [launched](#) by Solent Mind to support people living in Hampshire, Southampton and the Isle of Wight facing poor mental health and emotional difficulties during the coronavirus pandemic. The helpline is not a counselling or therapy service, but wellbeing experts will be able to listen and offer information, signposting and bitesize support.

The helpline is available on - 023 8017 9049 - and is open Monday to Friday, 10am to 4pm.

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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