

Dear Constituent

There is some good news to pass on. It looks as if the virus spread has peaked in our area. Hospital admissions are down, and the Royal Berks Hospital has plenty of capacity in both normal beds and Intensive Care beds should there be any relapse in progress. The first aim of policy to ensure the NHS can cope is so far working.

This also means the NHS has capacity for the other killers and serious conditions that people contract. Patients should not be deterred by the priority to the virus. There are additional hospital facilities in the private sector that the local NHS is using for cancer and other conditions. The NHS wishes to provide a good service to anyone who is seriously ill.

I have continued to pass on contacts who can supply protective clothing to our public services, where there are shortages. West Berkshire and the Royal Berks Hospital report no problems, and Wokingham Social services is managing with help from national and regional stocks. The government is well aware of the need for more and is working with the national and overseas suppliers on schedules and deliveries.

More testing is becoming available. There are local test centres at Whiteknights in Reading and at the Community Hospital in Thatcham for NHS and care staff. The aim nationally is to extend the range of people eligible for tests as the supply increases.

I am urging a managed return to work for more people. Working practices will need to be adapted, but business shows every willingness to do so. There will be social distancing, more home working, more use of remote technology, more screens, more protective clothing and more automation. I am very conscious of the economic damage being done, and keen to promote more safer working as the obvious way to improve things.

I spoke in the debate on the economy yesterday using the video link from home as MPs were encouraged to do. It demonstrates there are ways to adapt and to do our jobs in these difficult times.