

Foreign Secretary's statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 9 April 2020

Good afternoon, welcome to today's Downing Street press conference. I'm joined by Chris Whitty, Chief Medical Officer and Sir Patrick Vallance, the Chief Scientific Adviser.

Can I start with an update on the Prime Minister. He is still in intensive care but he continues to make positive steps forward and he's in good spirits.

I can also report from the Government's ongoing monitoring and testing programme that, as of today:

243,421 people have now been tested for the virus.

65,077 have tested positive and the number of people admitted to hospital with coronavirus symptoms now stands at 16,784.

Of those who have contracted the virus, 7,978 have sadly died and our thoughts and prayers are with their families and friends.

The whole country has been practicing a stringent form of social distancing for 3 weeks now. Precisely because we're doing everything we can to minimise the bleak numbers that I just read out and, for that, I want to say a massive thank you to everyone who has gone the extra mile during this very challenging period.

Thank you to all of those who are looking after us in our time of need.

The NHS workers on the front line who have treated the sick, saved lives and tended for those who, sadly, could not be saved.

For the doctors and nurses who have died of Coronavirus whilst caring for others, we will never forget their sacrifice, we will never forget their devotion to helping others.

And I also want to say a big thank you to the carers, the charity workers, all those who are looking after, or even just keeping an eye on, those in their local neighbourhood. You are the lifeline to so many people in our communities.

Thank you to the workers who keep the country running, the supermarket workers, the delivery drivers, the technicians, the cleaners, the public servants who just kept going, determined to keep providing the daily services we all rely on.

I think you've certainly made us all think long and hard about who the "key workers" are in our lives.

Thank you to the volunteers who have stepped up across the country, whose big-hearted sense of responsibility defines British community spirit at its very best.

And a massive thank you to every single person who has stayed home to stop this terrible virus from spreading, you have helped protect the NHS, and you have helped to save lives.

Now, as we look forward to the long bank-holiday Easter weekend, I know some people are going to start wondering is it time to ease up on the rules.

So I've got to say thank you for your sacrifice.

But, also, we're not done yet.

We must keep going.

Let me just explain a little bit about why that is so important.

Today, I chaired a COBR meeting with senior Ministers, officials and representatives from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, as well as the Mayor of London, so that we could take stock and assess where we are right across the United Kingdom. And at this stage, the Government is continuing to gather all of the relevant data to obtain the fullest picture possible of the effect of the social distancing measures we have put in place.

Now, while the early signs suggest that they are having the impact we need to see, it's too early to say that conclusively.

SAGE will meet next week to discuss the latest evidence, and we will keep the measures we have put in place under review. And as we've said on many occasions now, we will be guided by the science at all times. So we don't expect to be able to say more on this until the end of next week.

Let me just be, again, very clear about this.

The measures will have to stay in place, until we've got the evidence that clearly shows we have moved beyond the peak.

I know these restrictions take their toll, day in day out. On people's livelihoods, on people's quality of life, on people's mental health. And I appreciate that it's often the little things that hurt the most.

With the Easter Bank Holiday coming up, I would normally spend it with my two boys, 7 and 5 year old boys, with their grandparents doing an Easter egg hunt. And I know there is going to be lots of people who would normally be planning a family get together or just getting out in the sunshine with friends and loved ones.

Unfortunately, right now, we just can't do those sorts of things. And I am really sorry about that.

But take a moment to think of the progress we've already made, Following the

guidance, staying home, denying this virus what it needs, to spread more easily and to kill more people.

It's been almost three weeks, and we're starting to see the impact of the sacrifices we've all made. But the deaths are still rising, and we haven't yet reached the peak of the virus. So it's still too early to lift the measures that we've put in place. We must stick to the plan. And we must continue to be guided by the science.

Our top priority, our immediate priority, remains to slow the spread of the virus and to save as many lives as possible. That's why we have to ask you to continue to ask you all to keep complying with the guidance. As we've said consistently from the outset, it is vital we take the right decisions at the right time.

And the most important thing right now is that people continue to follow the government's guidance until we've got the evidence that the virus is firmly under control. So that means please do stay at home, to protect our NHS and to save lives. After all the efforts that everyone's made, after all the sacrifices so many people have made, let's not ruin it now.

Let's not undo the gains we've made. Let's not waste the sacrifices so many people have made. We mustn't give the coronavirus a second chance to kill more people and hurt our country. I know it's tough going. But this is a team effort, and we'll only defeat this virus for good if we all stay the course.

So please stay home this bank holiday weekend.

For everyone's sake.