

Health and Social Care Secretary's statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 26 May 2020

[Coronavirus press conference 26 May 2020](#)

Good afternoon and welcome to Downing Street for the daily coronavirus briefing.

I'm joined by Professor John Newton, our test and trace coordinator.

Before I provide an update on the work we are doing to combat coronavirus, I'd like to update you on the latest figures.

In total, 3,681,295 tests have been carried out in the UK, including 109,979 tests yesterday;

265,227 people have tested positive, that's an increase of 2,004 cases since yesterday.

Sadly, of those who tested positive for coronavirus, across all settings, 37,048 people have now died. Yesterday, across the UK, 134 deaths were reported.

But for the first time since 18 March, I am very encouraged to confirm that yesterday there were no deaths from coronavirus recorded in Northern Ireland.

I want to pay tribute to Robin Swann, my opposite number, and all of those across the NHS and public health in Northern Ireland, and the people of Northern Ireland who have shown such resolve to be able to bend the curve down and thank them for all the work they have done.

While the news might not be this positive every day, I look forward to continuing to work with them to keep the virus under control in Northern Ireland.

Today's figures from the ONS show across the UK as a whole, the lowest number of deaths from coronavirus for six weeks.

This is a national endeavour. And whatever the headwinds, as a country we can't let up on this.

We are past the peak. We're flattening the curve. We protected the NHS and the number of deaths is falling. We must keep our resolve.

I just want to say a massive thank you to everybody, over the Bank Holiday weekend, who stuck to the social distancing rules.

And to especially my colleagues in the NHS and in social care who are doing

so much.

Even though we are through the peak, there are still 8,802 people in hospital with coronavirus in the UK.

And there are still 98 NHS colleagues in hospital with coronavirus, including some of whom who are seriously ill.

So we must maintain our focus. And there are two areas I'd like to provide an update on today. PPE, and treatments. Both incredibly important for the future of tackling this disease – PPE and treatments.

PPE

First, we have been working hard to build our supplies of personal protective equipment.

I know how important this is, especially to colleagues on the frontline.

We all heard in the early weeks of this crisis, the calls from the frontline for more, and better PPE.

And we all saw the global scramble to acquire it.

I have been completely open about the scale and the difficulties of this challenge – building a new supply chain from scratch and of course the operational challenge of delivery.

General Sir Nick Carter, Chief of the Defence Staff, said it himself – this is the single greatest logistical challenge he had faced in 40 years of service.

And in response, thanks to the Armed forces and so many others, including so many in the NHS, we have seen a mammoth effort.

We have ramped up domestic production. And I can announce that we have now signed contracts to manufacture 2 billion items of PPE here in the UK.

I set a national challenge here. And I'm absolutely delighted that Lord Deighton has stepped up and is helping us to deliver it.

Around the world, we have signed deals with over 100 new suppliers, including agreeing contracts for a further 3.7 billion gloves.

Whilst we continue to improve the logistics, and work hard to get everyone the PPE they need, these new supplies mean we are not simply keeping up with demand – but are able to begin to replenish our stockpiles.

There is a lot further to go on PPE, as on so many things, but we have made significant progress, and I'd like to thank everyone involved.

And PPE is of course so important as it's about protecting the people who protect us. We will do that for as long as this virus remains on our shores.

Research and development

Next, I wanted to update you on some of the remarkable R&D into treatments that is taking place all across the UK.

One of Britain's greatest strengths is our life sciences and research. And we are leading the world in the clinical trials being done here.

As I said at this podium last week, the very nature of scientific enquiry means that not every project will bear fruit.

But I am determined that we will explore every possible avenue.

The RECOVERY trial is the world's largest trial of potential coronavirus treatments.

And because our NHS is a universal system, which we are all part of, we have some of the best data and can do some of the best research.

Today I can announce that we are beginning a new trial, for selected NHS patients, of an anti-viral drug, called remdesivir.

There have already been some promising early results on coronavirus patients, with early data suggesting it can shorten recovery time by about around four days.

As you can understand, we will be prioritising the use of this treatment where it will provide the greatest benefit. This is probably the biggest step forward in the treatment of coronavirus since the crisis began.

These are very early steps. But we are determined to support the science, and back projects that show promise.

I'd like to thank the NHS, the MHRA, the devolved administrations because this is UK-wide, and Gilead the pharmaceutical company, for their work in making this happen.

After all, it is worth remembering that in the battle against this virus, we are all on the same side.

So we will keep working across the world to develop the vaccines and the treatments – and indeed the vaccines – that will help us turn a corner.

But until a treatment or a vaccine comes good, there is no simple way to defeat this virus.

So we must not lose our resolve.

So please – stay alert, control the virus and save lives.

The importance of vaccines – why the Global Vaccine Summit 2020 matters: 26 May 2020

World news story

Ambassador Julian Braithwaite hosted a virtual briefing ahead of the Global Vaccine Summit on 4 June.



UK's Permanent Representative in Geneva, Julian Braithwaite hosted a virtual briefing today for Geneva based Missions.

The UK's Permanent Representative in Geneva, Julian Braithwaite hosted a virtual briefing today for Geneva based Missions for ahead of the Global Vaccine Summit on 4 June. He was joined by Seth Berkley (Gavi CEO), Sir Andrew Witty (WHO Vaccine Envoy), Rachel Glennerster (DFID Chief Economist) and Richard Clarke (DFID Director General).

The purpose of the briefing was to discuss the UK-hosted Global Vaccine Summit 2020 – the next major global health moment. It marks the end of an 18-month drive to secure investment for the Global Vaccine Alliance (Gavi). Since its inception in 2000, Gavi has supported vaccinations in 68 of the world's poorest countries.

The Summit will see UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson host Heads of State and global health leaders in a virtual format, with the aim of uniting the international community behind Gavi's mission and raising further funds to reach the \$7.4 billion target.

The event was in the calendar long before COVID-19, but the ongoing pandemic has meant that Gavi's work is more relevant than ever. During today's briefing, the speakers explained that Gavi's work in the world's poorest countries will be critical to:

- Sustaining immunisation coverage on vaccine preventable diseases.
- Bolstering the resilience of primary health care systems to tackle COVID-19.

- Ensuring the distribution of a COVID-19 if and when it is available.

The UK announced last month that it will commit the equivalent of £330 million a year over the next five years to Gavi. The speakers agreed that it was encouraging to see other countries coming forward with their respective pledges and called for active participation in the Summit next week.

More information on the Global Vaccine Summit 2020 is available here:
<https://www.gavi.org/investing-gavi/resource-mobilisation-process/gavis-3rd-donor-pledging-conference-june-2020>

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[Charity Commission appoints Nick Baker as new Chief Operating Officer](#)

The Charity Commission has appointed Nick Baker to the regulator's new role of Chief Operating Officer.

Nick will join the Commission from Staffordshire Police Force, where he is Deputy Chief Constable.

In this role, which he has held since 2014, Nick has been responsible for overseeing people services, technology, corporate services, business services, legal functions, corporate communications, professional standards and force transformation, amongst other functions. He has held a number of other senior leadership roles within the police, including as National Police Chiefs lead for Digital Forensics and Technical Surveillance Units, and was also Temporary Chief Constable of the Force between November 2019 and March 2020.

The Chief Operating Officer is a new post the regulator has introduced to strengthen the organisation and drive forward internal improvements that will ensure continued progress against its ambitious strategy.

In his capacity as Chief Operating Officer Nick will lead key corporate functions, including HR, finance, governance, risk and assurance, and will be based in Liverpool, the Commission's main office.

Helen Stephenson CBE, Chief Executive of the Charity Commission said:

I am thrilled to welcome Nick to my senior team. His experience of both policing in the public interest and leading the support

functions of the Force stand him in good stead to lead this new function at the Commission. Nick's impressive technical knowledge and skills will equip us well to move forward confidently in delivering on our strategy. His commitment to helping ensure those who need our services get the best from us stood out, and I am confident Nick will support us in becoming a stronger organisation that can really maximise the benefit of charities to society.

Nick Baker said:

Charity relies on good people coming together to make a difference and improve peoples' lives. I am excited to support this by helping underpin the Commission's work in the public interest. The Commission has a very clear vision – I am looking forward to working with my new teams and helping to put its ambitious plans into action.

Nick is expected to take up his new role in August.

Nick Baker: Curriculum Vitae (CV)

2014 – present: Deputy Chief Constable, Staffordshire Police Force

November 2019 – March 2020: Acting Chief Constable, Staffordshire Police Force

2013 – 2014: Assistant Chief Constable with responsibility for Investigative Services, Professional Standards and Anti-Corruption

2010 – 2012: Detective Chief Superintendent, Head of Investigative Services

Earlier career: Nick worked in various policing roles, predominantly as a detective and within specialist units, also spending time on secondment with the Home Office.

Ends.

Notes to editors:

The Charity Commission's purpose is to ensure charity can thrive and inspire trust so that people can improve lives and strengthen society. It is the independent, non-ministerial government department that registers and regulates charities in England and Wales.

[Readout of PM call with Chancellor Merkel: 8 May 2020](#)

News story

Readout of the Prime Minister's call with Chancellor Merkel.



The Prime Minister spoke with Chancellor Merkel of Germany to mark the 75th anniversary of VE Day.

They spoke of the freedom which was won on VE Day, and the deep friendship which our countries have built in the 75 years since.

They also discussed the response to the coronavirus pandemic, and the importance of continuing to work together. They looked forward to meeting again in person once the pandemic is over.

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[PM call with the Emir of Qatar: 15 May 2020](#)

Press release

Prime Minister Boris Johnson spoke to the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad al-Thani.



The Prime Minister spoke to the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad al-Thani, today to discuss the global response to coronavirus and our shared economic interests.

He expressed the UK's gratitude to Qatar for keeping Hamad International Airport operational as a transit hub, which has helped to facilitate the return of tens of thousands of British citizens from around the world.

They discussed the importance of the UK and Qatar's cooperation in security, trade and investment, and confirmed their shared ambition to further boost these ties.

Both leaders agreed on the need to step up the international response to coronavirus. The Prime Minister extended an invitation to Sheikh Tamim to attend the Global Vaccine Summit the UK is hosting virtually on 4 June, in partnership with Gavi, to raise vital funds to vaccinate millions of children worldwide against deadly diseases.

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