

Foreign Secretary's statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 7 April 2020

Good afternoon.

Welcome to today's Downing Street Press Conference.

I'm joined by Chief Scientific Adviser Sir Patrick Vallance and our Chief Medical Officer Professor Chris Whitty.

Before we get on to the detail, can I first give an update on the condition of the Prime Minister. I know a lot of people will be concerned about that.

I can tell you he is receiving the very best care from the excellent medical team at St Thomas' hospital.

He remained stable overnight, he's receiving standard oxygen treatment and breathing without any assistance. He has not required mechanical ventilation or non-invasive respiratory support.

He remains in good spirits and, in keeping with usual clinical practice, his progress continues to be monitored closely in critical care.

We will give further updates on the Prime Minister's condition, when there are any material developments.

And I know that there's been a groundswell of messages of support from people here at home, from leaders around the world and I know that everyone will want to join with me in wishing the Prime Minister a very swift recovery.

As you will know, the Prime Minister asked me to deputise for him whilst he recovers.

In line with the Prime Minister's instructions, this morning I chaired the meeting of senior ministers tackling coronavirus and this afternoon I chaired an update for members of the Cabinet.

And I think it's probably worth just remembering that, as will be the case for so many people up and down the country, who knows someone at work at work who has fallen ill with coronavirus, it comes as a shock to all of us.

He's not just the Prime Minister, and for all of us in Cabinet he's not just our boss, he's also a colleague and he's also our friend.

So, all of our thoughts and prayers are with the Prime Minister at this time, with Carrie and with his whole family.

And I'm confident he'll pull through because if there's one thing I know about this Prime Minister, he's a fighter and he'll be back at the helm leading us through this crisis in short order.

And for us in the Cabinet, we know exactly what he wants from us and what he expects from us right now.

And following the Cabinet discussion today, I can reassure the Prime Minister, and we can reassure the public, that his team will not blink, and we will not flinch from the task at hand at this crucial moment.

We will keep all of our focus and all of our resolve, with calm determination on delivering the Government's plan to defeat the coronavirus. And it's with that objective and that unity of purpose, that Cabinet turned to business today.

We had reports from the four Ministerial Groups on the action we're taking across all of the strategic priority areas: including NHS capacity, procurement of ventilators and personal protective equipment, then delivery of public services including social care, on the economy and our support for both businesses and workers, and of course on the international action we're taking to reinforce our efforts on all of the home front.

As we've explained before, our action plan aims to slow the spread of the virus, so fewer people need hospital treatment at any one time, and that will help us protect the NHS's ability to cope.

At every step, we have been following the scientific advice, the medical advice, and we've been very deliberate in our actions that we've taken, so that we take the right steps at the right moment in time.

We are increasing our NHS capacity by dramatically expanding the number of beds, key staff, life-saving equipment on the front-line, so people have the care they need when they need it most.

As we've consistently said, we are instructing people to stay at home, so we can protect the NHS and so that we can save lives.

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

213,181 people have now been tested for the coronavirus.

55,242 people have tested positive.

The number of people admitted to hospital with coronavirus symptoms now stands at 18,589.

Of those who have contracted the virus, 6,159 have, I am very sorry to say, died. Every death in this pandemic is a tragedy, and our thoughts and prayers are with the loved ones grieving at what must be an incredibly difficult time.

I think these figures reinforce that the single most important thing we can all do right now, in this national effort to defeat the virus, is to keep on following the Government's advice:

To stay at home. Protect our NHS. And save lives.

ENDS.

Further information

Scottish Universities battle against Covid-19 praised by Scottish Sec

Giving a message of support to the Scottish Universities working in collaboration with others across the UK in recognition of their innovative efforts to tackle the Coronavirus, Scottish Secretary Alister Jack said:

“I’m proud to see our world leading Scottish Universities taking part in this national effort to combat the Covid-19 virus.

“Whether it’s researching vaccines, helping to understand more about how the virus works, training health professionals or donating equipment to hospitals, they are helping to make a real difference.”

The University of Glasgow and the University of Edinburgh are collaborating on a project to understand the impact of the virus on the human body. Using samples and data from 1,300 patients in the UK, the team hope to provide information to help control the outbreak and improve treatments.

One of the keys to tackling the pandemic is the successful mapping of the Covid-19 genome, the University of Glasgow is part of this national effort while Edinburgh Napier University has transferred a ventilator to the intensive care ward at the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh.

A research unit at the University of Dundee has identified 38 separate proteins in the Covid-19 virus. The team will manufacture these proteins to develop antibodies that can fight the virus.

The University of Dundee have undertaken further work such as providing two highly specialised robots to help with the creation of the UK’s first national diagnostic centre in Milton Keynes. The machines have been described as ‘gold dust’ by Downing Street officials.

They have also worked with NHS Tayside to establish a Covid-19 training hub in the Clinical Skills Centre at Ninewells Hospital. The hub has set up a range of training courses to support upskilling healthcare staff.

Commitment from all parties is necessary for sustainable peace in Mali

Many thanks, Mr President and may I begin by joining others in welcoming you to the Presidency. It is good to see your commitment to transparency already in place with the broadcast this morning of the briefing. I thought that was a very useful innovation.

I'd also like to thank, as others have, the Chinese for their Presidency. It was good to see them also being willing to be innovative and open in such challenging circumstances, so thank you very much.

I also wanted to thank Special Representative Annadif for his excellent briefing and join others in welcoming the Minister of Foreign Affairs Dramé to this discussion. It's good to see the Malian government engaging at this level with our consultations.

Mr President, the United Kingdom continues to give its full support to MINUSMA as it works in challenging and complex circumstances, helping to build the conditions for lasting peace and stability in Mali and so, by extension, the wider region. The extent of those changing circumstances were underlined again on Monday by the attacks in Bamba, in which many Malian soldiers lost their lives. On behalf of the United Kingdom, I offer you, Mr Foreign Minister, and the families of those soldiers our sincere condolences.

Mr President, the last three months have seen some long overdue steps towards implementation of the peace agreement. We join others in welcoming the deployment of the reconstituted armed forces to Kidal, Gao, Timbuktu and Menaka. The completion of the first round of the legislative elections with support from MINUSMA and the revival of the Agreement Monitoring Committee, including, critically, the commitments to increase female participation in the peace process. This is welcome progress, but it does not go far enough. We once again urge the parties to the peace agreement to redouble their efforts, continuing to accelerate its implementation. And we hope that when the Secretary-General next updates the Council, there will be more progress to report.

The United Kingdom is also concerned by a number of worrying trends outlined in the Secretary-General's report, including the spread of terrorist activity in parts of the Mopti and Segou regions, increased violence against and exploitation of women and children, as well as increased asymmetric threats against MINUSMA itself. The stark increase in human rights violations and abuses, including among signatories to the 2015 Peace Agreement, is unacceptable. It is vital that the mission reports in full on such violations and abuses where they occur and that the government investigates these cases, holding perpetrators to account.

Of course, Mr President, in addition to these concerns, the United Kingdom shares the concerns already expressed by Council colleagues about the potentially catastrophic impact of COVID-19 in the Sahel. The peak of the outbreak is likely to hit in the middle of Mali's lean season. This could significantly increase the number of those in the region at risk from food insecurity, which we already estimate to be at 13.8 million for 2020.

The UK is committed to supporting the international COVID-19 response, including through further funding, mobilising partners and providing technical assistance. Globally, the UK is spending \$665 million to help in the development of vaccines, treatments and testing, as well as to support the IMF in its help to vulnerable economies. In the Sahel, we are working closely with our humanitarian implementation partners to help them continue their work while addressing the extra pressures from COVID-19. In this regard, we welcome yesterday's announcement of a further \$6 million of support, to strengthen the Government of Mali's response by the UN.

We are also concerned of reports of COVID cases amongst MINUSMA and the MINUSMA team. COVID-19 will inevitably have implications for MINUSMA itself, whether through requests for the Governments of Mali for support in its pandemic response or due to public health restrictions impacting day-to-day operation of the mission. We would welcome reassurance from the SRSG that contingency plans are being drawn up for how the mission will mitigate these possible impacts on core mandate delivery.

In conclusion, Mr President, while we cannot ignore potentially disastrous impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, we also cannot let it derail or delay progress towards lasting peace in Mali. Intensified political, security and development efforts are required. The United Kingdom remains committed to playing our part in this, including through the deployment of 250 British troops to Mali later this year. A sustainable peace will not be won by MINUSMA alone, however; the commitment of all parties to full implementation of the Peace Agreement and addressing the underlying causes of instability in the region is the only way to assure long-term security.

Many thanks, Mr President.

ACMD advice on COVID-19 emergency legislation to enable supply of controlled drugs

- Only go outside for food, health reasons or work (but only if you cannot work from home)
- If you go out, stay 2 metres (6ft) away from other people at all times
- Wash your hands as soon as you get home

Do not meet others, even friends or family.

You can spread the virus even if you don't have symptoms.

Patients informed to exchange Emerade 300 micrograms adrenaline pens for replacement pens of a different brand

Healthcare professionals are being asked to contact patients who use Emerade 300 microgram pens following notification by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) of a recall of these pens.

The recall is due to reports of difficulty in activating the pens, meaning the dose of adrenaline may not be delivered when needed by a patient for a severe, acute allergic reaction (anaphylaxis).

This action follows a previous recall of [Emerade 150 microgram auto-injector pens on 4 March 2020](#) from patients.

Patients or carers should obtain a prescription from their doctor for alternative pens and should ensure they have two replacement pens to carry with them, before returning the Emerade 300 mcg pens to the pharmacy.

Given the current COVID-19 pandemic, the MHRA in line with NHS guidance, is urging patients who need to return auto-injector pens to minimise additional burden on healthcare professionals and heed the advice on social distancing.

- a patient or carer should make a telephone appointment with their doctor to request a prescription for replacement pens of a different brand. Unless their doctor advises otherwise, they should not visit the GP surgery in person
- request the prescription is sent to a pharmacy to avoid collecting in-person from the surgery
- if a patient and/or their household is self-isolating, ask a friend or relative to collect the replacement pens from the pharmacy. Some pharmacies offer a home delivery service.
- once the patient has the replacement auto-injector pens return Emerade 300 mcg pens to the pharmacy. Some pharmacies have drop-off boxes to facilitate distancing.

The Emerade auto-injector pens – which come in 150, 300 and 500 micrograms – are being recalled in stages when there are enough supplies of the two alternative brands – EpiPen or Jext.

Patients should continue to carry in-date Emerade 500 microgram pens and use them if needed. Patients should always carry two pens.

The available data show most of the pens will still activate, but more force may need to be applied.

As soon as there are enough replacements for all in-date Emerade 500 microgram pens, patients and prescribers will be informed so they can exchange them for another brand.

A MHRA spokesperson, said:

“Action has been taken to protect patients, following detection of a fault in one component of the Emerade adrenaline auto-injector pens.

“As a result of the fault, some pens may fail to activate and deliver adrenaline. There are now enough supplies of alternate brands to enable a full recall of Emerade 300 microgram pens.

“A patient level recall of Emerade 500 microgram pens will be undertaken as soon as there are enough alternative supplies.

“Patients should return all Emerade 300 microgram pens to their local pharmacy once they have a new prescription and have been supplied with pens of an alternative brand.

“Patients should return Emerade 300 microgram pens as soon as they can, while continuing to follow all social distancing advice.

“It is vital that patients follow existing advice to carry two pens with them at all times and to contact their doctor when a replacement is due.

“When switching to a different brand of adrenaline pen the patient must ensure they are familiar with how to use the pen as each brand is administered differently.”

At present, healthcare professionals are unlikely to be able to help with face to face training but there may be opportunities for remote consultations. Patients must take particular care to read the instructions on how to use the pen which are in the leaflet contained in the box.

The manufacturers’ websites for each brand of pen have information and training videos on how to use a specific pen. Trainer pens can be obtained from the manufacturer and patients are strongly urged to get these so they can practise with the new device.

If an Emerade pen does need to be used, it should be pressed very firmly against the thigh. If this does not result in activation, the patient should immediately use their second pen.

Exposure to high temperature may increase the risk of pen failure. Emerade pens should not be exposed to temperatures above 25°C, such as being placed near to a radiator or fire.

More detailed information for patients is available on the [MHRA website](#).

Information in relation to Coronavirus (COVID-19) when a prescription is needed for replacement pens, based on the current UK Government guidelines for social distancing:

- patients should follow the advice of their local GP practice/hospital and only attend when instructed to do so. Telephone appointments should be sought where possible. Further information can be obtained on the [government website](#)
- healthcare professionals dispensing medicines should ensure vulnerable patients can still obtain their replacement auto-injectors, considering the use of delivery services where appropriate
- although pens should be returned to a pharmacy once a replacement is obtained, this should not require someone who is self-isolating to leave their home
- at the present time, patients and carers may be unable to visit a healthcare professional to receive training in use of the new device. They must take particular care to read the instruction leaflet on how to use the pen. Patients and carers should also read the training information for their new pen on the manufacturer's website.