**UK government press conference 1 April 2020**

**Jeremy Hoad**

(Usual caveats apply as this was a transcript and commentary)

(Be prepared for more evasion and the government telling us it has done the right thing at the right time despite increasing frustration and anger at government failures from both within and outside the NHS, from the media and citizens.)

**Attending**

Alok Sharma, Business Secretary

Dr Yvonne Doyle, Medical Director, Public Health England

**Figures**

152,979 people tested

29,474 positive

10,767 hospital admissions

2,353 have died

563 increase in dead since yesterday

**Sharma**

Aim to slow spread of virus to reduce the number of people requiring treatment.

We have followed the advice.

We have followed the right advice at the right time.

Thoughts and prayers with loved ones of those who have lost their lives.

(government offering "thoughts and prayers" is absolutely laughable and insulting at this time.)

Biggest threat in decades. We are not alone. Devastating impact all over the world. Thanked everyone for huge effort.

Thanks for businesses and others working to keep our economy going. We will be ready to bounce back when this crisis passes (and it will).

From today businesses will start benefiting from business rates relief and grants up to £25k. We have provided funds to council (£12bn provided to councils in England).

High Street banks working hard to support people with loans and mortgage holidays.

Just as the taxpayer stepped in to help the banks in 2008 we will repay that favour now.

New schemes. Will not be perfect from the outset. Chancellor saying more on this in coming days.

Times are tough. We have harder times ahead of us.

(amazing there was not more comment on the very big jump in the number of deaths reported today that runs completely counter to the claims made. in the last two days.)

**Doyle**

Slide

Concerning uptick in m motor vehicle travel. People must stay at home.

Slide

Slightly concerning hospital admissions. Increases seen three days in a row now.

Slide

England hospital admissions

Coronavirus most advanced in London.

Slide

This is what it's all about, saving lives. Global death comparison.

**Questions**

Peak coming earlier. Testing targets being missed. Not enough PPE or ventilators. Has govt response been too slow?

Sharma - general waffle saying desire to increase testing.

Doyle - Have met target of 10,000 tests per day. We have met that target and increasing to 25,000 a day. Spare capacity within this for testing most urgent healthcare workers. A couple of thousand healthcare workers have been tested in order of priority.

Number and proportion of NHS frontline staff tested? 2k out of 500,000?

Doyle - Tests just increasing at the moment. We have 5 drive through centres. Intention to get from thousands too hundreds of thousands in the coming weeks.

PM said 2 weeks ago he wanted to get to 250,000 tests a day. Why is it taking so long for reality to match rhetoric?

Sharma - we are evaluating the antibody test. Accuracy important before launching test.

1 million antibody tests arriving from China in next few days but PHE is dragging its feet approving these. When?

Doyle - Important test is valid. We are testing the tests at the moment. Also testing other tests. We want to be doing tests as soon as we can.

If 2,000 NHS staff have been tested and 125k are self isolating do you have a target for the future?

Doyle - Intention to go from thousands to hundreds of thousands over coming weeks.

(not much use when the peak is projected before the testing gets ramped up)

Reagents manufactured by manufacturers of machines. Working with industry to ensure good supply. There is a global market. Supplementary work going on for the future which is very exciting.

(no explanation of what this is)

We haven't had a proper explanation as to why Germany is doing 500,000 tests a week and we are not.

Sharma - we are working with industry and scientific community. Harries looking to create lab based testing on a scale equivalent to building a care factory. We are making progress.

(basically he ignored the question)

What is governments exit strategy for getting out of lockdown?

Sharma - measures in place for initial 3 week period. Need to avoid a dangerous second peak.

Doyle - PM committed to review after Easter. We will be guided by clinical evidence. We wanted to make the right call at the right time.

(hollow laughter at this claim)

Mass testing will depend on review and teqniques will evolve as we come to different phases.

NHS workers showing courage. Crisis put at unnecessary risk with lack of PPE. Govt keep offering warm words but not taking action.

Sharma - paying tribute to NHS staff. We have delivered 390m PPE products over last 2 weeks. Also NHS hotline to request PPE. We will continue to do more.

Doyle - absolutely our commitment to protect frontline staff. We are working rapidly to make sure deliveries reach where they are needed.

(This is obviously not happening from multiple reports across the nation.)

Sharma - we do request everyone follow the government guidelines.

(We don't need promises, evasion and self-congratulatory claims of success. We need action. The government is failing the NHS, social care workers and the population.)