**UK government Covid19 press conference 4 April 2020**

**Jeremy Hoad**

(usual caveats apply to this live transcript / commentary)

**Attending**

Michael Gove, Cabinet Secretary

Stephen Powis, Medical Director for Public Health England

**Figures**

183,190 tested

42,903 positive

15,073 hospitalisations

708 people died in last 24 hours

4,313 deaths total

**Gove**

pattern of admissions different across the UK

life under lockdown can be challenging but we must continue with social distancing. stay at home to protect lives.

Reminder of two nurses who died yesterday.

We can honour them by staying at home to help stop the spread of Covid19

Reference also to 13 year old who died

5 year old child with underlying health conditions who has died

Don't go outside even when the weather is better

More we stay at home, more we

Yesterday grateful to Prince Charles for opening the Nightingale hospital in London

New ones in Birmingham, Glasgow, Manchester, Bristol, Harrogate

Spoken to Andy Street in Midlands

Over 10,000 test administered yesterday

critical part of reducing impact

next step appropriate treatment - clinical trials going on

working to increase ventilation capacity across NHS - both invasive and non-invasive

UCL team working with Mercedes Benz developed new non-invasive machine

300 invasive ventilators arrived from China yesterday

(We were told almost all of this yesterday)

First models scaled up coming off production lines this weekend.

Securing components from across globe

MoD personnel will be delivering new machinery and equipment

Next week new device production to start at Kelso

More ventilators, more patients can get treatment

Need to ensure safety and scalability

The more we all stay at home the more time we buy for more ventilators come on steam

Teachers have kept schools open where needed

Vouchers available for free school meals over holiday period

More announcements next week

Government responsibility to communicate clear, factual, timely information and recognise efforts of all.

Criticism of some government actions - designed to challenge govt performance and improve it. We welcome it.

Investing more in govt information campaign

Share information, volunteer info

Buy British to help national effort

Work collaboratively to help defeat virus

unions, devolved administrations, all political parties

Sire Keir Starmer congratulated and wished well.

**Powis**

Slide

Transport use remains low

Resist temptation to disregard instructions whatever the weather

Slide

Cases in UK have continued to rise but have stabilised in last few days

Should not be complacent

Slide

Hospitalisations

Vast majority mild cold / flu like but some will require hospitalisation

Rate plateaued in last few days in London

We need to continue to comply with instructions

Slide

Deaths continue to be high

likely to continue over next week or two

**Questions**

Prof Neil Fergusson has warned infection rates could remain high for weeks and weeks. What is govt planning to do to make sure people stay at home?

Gove - death rate, pressure on NHS people must ask what am I doing to reduce spread of disease.

I know lockdown is challenging particularly for families with children

Guidelines must be respected because that is the ONLY way we can reduce spread

Police have powers to explain and enforce rules

Balance adhering to rules against protecting lives of our loved ones.

Powis - people's safety and lives depend on following govt instructions.

We absolutely know this can and will work

We need to stick with this

I know its tough, its hard

Any indications as to whether people are following stay indoors instruction this weekend?

Gove - indications people are observing instructions, being public spirited

Severe restrictions substituted by end of May based on technology?

Powis - new virus, learning about it all the time

new strategy will have to be developed to cope but too early to know what that will be

Reduction in transmission in community, some evidence this is reducing transmission, will have benefit reflected in reduction in transmission, hospitalisation and deaths.

Some reason to be hopeful but will still take time.

Not just a week or two weeks ago but we will have to continue in coming weeks.

Imperative to maintain social distancing, reduce contact, stop spread

13 residents in Burlington Court Care Home in Glasgow died but not tested. Their deaths not in numbers. How much greater do you think the real numbers are?

Powis - deaths do happen in the community.

Figures reported are for hospitals.

ONS able to report on deaths in the community and have started to do that in the last week

Only in days ahead as data comes through that question can be more fully answered

We will continue to see high deaths for a few weeks yet

Universal Credit - should it be made more generous?

Gove - designed to support people to find work but unprecedented times.

Up to 1.5m people in most vulnerable category

New task force to identify more vulnerable people to ensure they can also get support

Monitoring system

UC only brought into line of SSP at £94.50 per week. Cannot live on that. Why not increase it?

Gove - under review

How and when will lockdown end? Can you help us with the how? What is exit strategy?

Gove - end of measures will depend on compliance. No fixed point. Under review.

Wholly new virus

We need to be certain in every area we can fight this virus we improve capacity and develop tools to fight it including vaccines and NHS resilience

Powis - I don't like exit strategy term

Need strategy to manage this over time, not just next few weeks or months

countries will be working together

scientific knowledge still being discovered

strategies will evolve as more known

Herd immunity while not strategy is inevitable as most people get Covid19. Will most people get it?

Powis - immunity is one part but not only part of approach

comparison with HIV and AIDS where new strategies were developed over time

Too early to know what sort of immunity is developed.

Can't say if most people will get it as this depends on strategies and knowledge and treatments

Blood plasma treatments looked at by NHS?

(not answered)

Problems with bureaucracy for NHS staff trying to get tested at new centres

Gove - grateful to Boots and others for drive through testing for NHS workers

I will talk to SoS for Health to ensure people who need tests do get them

Need to cut through red tape

will report back on progress

5G masts being burned down - can you please debunk that myth?

Gove - this is dangerous myth

Powis - utter nonsense, fake news

mobile networks critical when people staying at home and also used by emergency services

outraged and disgusted people doing this

absolute and utter rubbish

testing of NHS staff being ramped up at new centres and also in existing facilities / laboratories

Why numbers of infection rates have jumped so quickly in Midlands, NE and Yorkshire?

Powis - difficult to give geographical explanation of variations in infection rates

cf Flu rates in a normal year that has variations in infection rates

Self employed support - can this be reviewed for company directors who didn't receive much money from that?

Gove - designed to hjelp principally those on lower incomes

Treasury keeping measures under review working with banks

Govt trying to put their hands round all working people

Can be looked at again to ensure effectiveness

Infection rate in mind to trigger scaling back distancing measures?

Powis - No particular figure in mind for infection rate to trigger change of approach

Still not clear how many might have had virus but not developed symptoms

Work going on around the world to find out more

We still have capacity to cope with the surge of infections even in London

Do you have demographic data suggesting young people are being less compliant?

Gove - yes, some evidence younger people are less compliant

we need to reach everyone

possibly some young people think they are less vulnerable

evidence is people appreciate why self restraint can help others at a time like this

confident we can work with British people to address needs for control over virus

What other methods could be called on to ensure compliance after months?

(not answered)

How many ventilators will be needed to cope with peak and how many do we have?

Gove - the more people do what is asked, the more we but time to develop and build capacity

we have more than 8k ventilators now and want to increase this

capacity being sourced internationally

Powis - we have planned over last few months to stay ahead of demand

Won't give a specific figure

non-invasive ventilation equipment being developed and explored to address problem

if we all comply this gives us best chance demand never exceeds capacity

(neither wanted to give a figure for how many ventilators they expected to be needed)

focus on coronavirus but NHS is still working for people with other health emergencies

people should contact NHS as normal if they have symptoms of, eg, a heart attack or stroke.