**UK government Covid19 press conference 5 April 2020**

**Jeremy Hoad**

(usual caveats apply to this live transcript / commentary)

**Attending**

Matt Hancock, Secretary of State for Health

Jenny Harries, Deputy Chief Medical Officer

(usual cabinets apply as this was a live transcript / commentary)

**Figures**

195,524 tested

47,806 positive

16,702 hospitalisations

4,934 deaths total

(no number given for last 24 hour deaths)

**Hancock**

Govt is working through its action plan

Based on best medical and scientific advice to take right steps at right time.

First to slow spread of virus

Second by boosting capacity of NHS to protect NHS and prevent it from being overwhelmed

I have lost two people who I was fond of.

Queen will give address tonight

We will all be watching and. Listening to know what she has to say

People are yearning to know how long this will last

This will depend on how much people follow rules that are mission critical

The more people follow the rules the faster we will allbe through it

If you are pushing the boundaries or breaking the rules you are threatening your own life and that of others.

We can’t rule out further steps, eg allowing exercise

Thank you to everyone following the rules on behalf of us all and especially NHS staff

NHS capoacity increasing

Humbling to see NHS, military and others pulling toegtehr for new Nightingale hospital in London

Many more to come

2,336 spare IC beds available

Over 9k ventilators available

Deliveries from China

Thanks to NHS professionals signing up to come back

Latest technology status checker launched this weekend for those with symptoms to allow us to allocate resources

https://www.nhs.uk/coronavirus-status-checker

New technologies can help us meet these new threats.

Ultimately strongest weapon in our arsenal is if we join together in tough times and follow the rukles put in place.

I have children so I understand the challenges

Virus thrives on human contact and human bonds that bring us together.

We will have these moments again but stay at home, protect NHS and save lives now.

**Harries**

Slide

Tranbsport use down and remains down since end Feb / early March

Thanks for observing this

Slide

New cases, lab test reported

Capacity increasing all the time so caution required

Apparent surge in last 24 hours but we must watch for trend over time

Slide

England hospital admissions

Increase in all areas

Delay in number of hospital admissions after infection so lag on data

Slide

Tries to give international comparison but comparisons difficult

UK data – covid associated deaths, not all covid specific

Will learn from other countries as we can

**Questions**

Just over 9k ventilators and in due course 18k in place – how many next week at projected peak

Hancock – we are ramping provision up

Domestic manufacture coming onstream

Exact figure for next week not available but expect many more coming

We don’t expect to need 18k

(strange as previous required number was said to be 30k)

People won’t understand why they can’t sit in a park if they stay 2m apart? What chages might be brought in and when and why?

Hancock – We are not planning changes imminently but current rules must be followed

Sitting and not exercising doesn’t give you the advantage exercising does.

Harries – need to balance physical and mental needs

Scientific advice about what you’re. doing and how

If people sit on a bench people tend to accumulate

What does “tightening up the measures” actually mean”

Hancock – we are not planning etc. (repeat)

Police can enforce

Everyone must follow the rules

We have set and are enforcing rules as best way to stop spread

(avoided question)

NHS directive gone out that if a lot of oxygen is used whole supply can fail and some oxygen supplies running out

Hancock – we have adequate supplies in each region

We have had an equipment failure so we had to divert some ambulances but this was a normal thing

High degree of confidence

Harries – NHS means we can flag issues before they become a significant problem so this is a positive thing to flag and deal with them

No insufficiency of oxygen

PPE rules changed a few days ago – was doctor correct to be scared about moving between cancer patients and covid patients

Hancock – advice upgraded to be in line with WHO advice

We will keep upgrading advice as we learn more about virus

Harries – we want to maintain good infection control

UK is very good at this using a systematic approach and using PPE carefully to keep this at bay

UK guidance was endorsed by WHO but guidance adapted to meet change in disease

Aerosol generating procedures key and need to maintain adequate protection here

Need to recognise changing settings as Covid19 has spread

Need to have PPE cover in anticipation of spread of disease

Should we have had higher levels of protection earlier?

Hancock – you can only make decisions based on the information you have at the time

Question we always ask in govt is are we doing the right thing now and how can we can improve for the future

Harries – we are learning all the time

Basic guidance was entirely appropriate before

Slightly different environment for some clinicians has led to review to ensure safety and reassurance

PPE must be used appropriately and judiciously whether in NHS. Care homes or domicillary support

How do you square what Queen says today about the nation’s attributes for self-discipline with your warning about having to toughen restrictions if people don’t adhere to rules?

Hancock – we are all looking forward to seeing what Queen has to say

We need perseverance in the face of great challenges including following the rules

Requirement backed by law to ensure people stay at home. 4 exemptions only.

(journalist gave away the pre-release of what the Queen would say)

What is testing strategy for care homes and prisons? And when?

Harries – we always keep a close eye on these

Both environments and threats well recognised

Testing in both has always been on the priority list

We wouldn’t necessarily test everybody. Usually test about 5 people to establish what the issue is on a clinical basis

Has been ramping up

(no direct answer to when)

When will govt take extra steps to support very large businesses and would Virgin / Branson be appropriate recipient given he sued NHS

Hancock – Sunak doing unbelievable work in this area

Recognised around the world

Taken right steps across the board

Enormous economic consequences of decisions we HAD to take

PM and Chancellor have respoinded in a first rate manner

(specific question avoided)

Exit strategy? Neil Fergusson ref.

Harries – staggered introduction of measures to maximise impact

We don’t know whole population impact of measures yet

Different interventions could come off sooner or later depending on levels of immunity

Wary of increased levels of social interaction increase undermining progress leading to second spike

Need to get over first hump

Many people will be wondering if and when it is safe for people to see family if they’ve followed advice and rules already.

Hancock – virus can spread in all sorts of different ways eg air or objects so only effective way of bending curve down is to reduce social contact so that’s why we took decisions we did high proportion of public understand and follow rules

Harries – sometimes people intermix “family” with “household” but the household is important in infection control terms

Household tend to have same risk exposure

Mixing family and household is NOT what we want to do

Hancock – rules are there for a reason

Not yet confident how much higher immunity is or how much lower infectiousness is for people who have had it to change the rules.

How many people estimated to have or have had virus in UK?

Harries – can answer this and won’t try

This is why we need to understand the immune picture across the country

We learn from other countries but no country can do this confidently yet

CMO in Scotland has driven to a holiday home twice taking her family as well. Should she resign?

Hancock – Calderwood is a matter for Scottish govt but rules are there for everyone

Has Harries visited or does she have a second home?

(rather silly question which was ignored)