**UK government Covid19 press conference 12 April 2020**

**Jeremy Hoad**

(usual caveats apply to this live transcript / commentary)

**Attending**

Matt Hancock, Health Secretary

Yvonne Doyle, Director for Health Protection and Medical Director, Public Health England

**Figures**

282,374 tested

84,279 positive

19,945 hospitalised

10,612 dead

(no figure given for deaths in last 24 hours)

**Hancock**

Great news PM discharged from hospital

Continuing his recovery at Chequers

Hope everyone has seen his message of love and thanks to all those who have cared for him so carefully

I know they’ve cared for him as the would care for anybody in this country

It’s one of the things that makes me so proud that the NHS is there for everybody

His thoughts with those affected by illness

Govt working constantly through action plan to protect NHS, protect life

Slowing spread to flatten curve

To ensure NHS always there for you and has capacity

Sombre day

We join the list of countries that have seen more than 10k deaths

Coronavirus is serious, invisible killer

National effort so imp

Sincerest condolences to families and friends of dead

Their grief is our grief

Their stories will not be forgotten

Nation is rising to the challenge

Extra tough with children, can’t go to church, not able to visit relatives if they’re shielding

Your steadfast commitment is protecting lives

Thank you for part you are playing to protect lives at this critical time in our nation’s history

Cannot be complacent

Stay home, protect the NHS, save lives

Slow spread and build capacity

2,295 spare critical care beds

Throughout crisis, operational and logistical difficulties we have always been able to provide care needed

Ppl said NHS would be overwhelmed – we’ve seen that elsewhere but.. not… here

More spare capacity now than when the crisis started

Before Nightingale hospitals come on stream 7 across UK

Record 9,975 ventilators

5k former NHS staff back

36k come forward to enlist

(enlist? This repeated war rhetoric is nauseating)

Vital financial support provided

Increasing amount of PPE, now record amounts in the system

Medicines needed – ensuring right medicines are there to treat pple

Everybody can have the medicines they need to get the care they need

Core measure of NHS capacity which is what matters to you is whether you can get the best care on that we are succeeding, more each day

Pay tribute to NHS staff

Thursday clapping shows the esteem NHS is held

Friday comprehensive PPE plan

Daily delivering millions of items

121k gowns delivered in last few days

Average time for dealing with PPE enquiries has come down over last week from 6 to 2.5 days

Working hard to resolve all logistical challenges

Sheer number of businesses have come forward to help with PPE effort

Herculean effort on PPE

(stop saying this is a herculean task, it’s getting annoying, especially when the govt is shown to be failing on PPE procurement and distribution)

Testing has huge role

42,812 NHS and social care staff and families tested

As we ramp this up we need ability to trace contacts effectively

Next step - new NHS app for contact tracing

You can securely tell NHS app if you show symptoms which will then send alert anonamously to other app users you’ve been in touch with automatically

All data will be handled with highest security ethical standards

Will publish source code

Already testing this app

Working closely with leading tech companies and experts in digital ethics to get this right

Thank all world leading experts involved

More pple get involved, the better our response will be, better we can protect NHS

Queen spoke for all of us as she so often does when she said Easter is not cancelled, we need it more than other

At a time we normally come together we must stay apart

We must persevere

Follow the rules and each new day will bring us closer to normal life knowing we did our bit, rose to the challenge and we put our loved ones, and NHS first

Pleas ethis Easter stay home, protect the NHS, save lives

(more bloody war rhetoric)

**Doyle**

Slide

All forms of transport reduced greatly, p’tic rail and tube

Slide

New UK cases 4.5k

Testing of NHS staff and key workers (838 yesterday and today)

Enhancement of testing capacity

Slide

Hospital beds

London stabilising

GB regions beginning to increase p’tic NW, Yorkshire and NE

Imp adhere to social distancing as not past virus damage yet

Slide

Global death comparisons, Tracking France, close to Italy

**Questions**

Reaction to one of your own advisers saying that UK may be on course to worst outcome in terms of death toll in Europe?

Hancock – this reinforces the central message for pple to stay at home to save lives

(not really, this suggests the government has faile4d to protect people as well as other countries)

We get all sorts of advice

Future unknowable depends on Great British public

(depends on government policies and actions as well, stop trying to put blame on other people)

Good news we are starting to see a flattening of the curve

Core goal NHS capacity always above demand for services has always been achieved

When we have reached this terrible marker we are able to support everyone who needs it and see curve starting to come down

Diff countries are different sizes so you need to be measuring statistics

Doyle – every death an absolute tragedy

depends on how pple measure statistics, time lags in deaths

early days

Earlier patterns may change, beginning to see that

Can govt give commitment of date as when PPE need will match demand? Asked yesterday, not answered.

Hancock – impossible to say as the quest is to get right PPE to right pple at right time across many millions of pple across NHS and social care

Effort moving in right direction

Until everybody gets PPE they need then we won’t rest

We have 1,000s of pple working on this 24/7 including bank holiday weekend

Enormous effort

I want to go out of my way to thank the procurement experts

Gowns most in need, making progress over weekend

(avoided saying when supply would meet demand or address the increasingly desperate calls from frontline staff for PPE)

Royal College of Nursing has issued new guidance to members saying they should not work rather than compromise their safety. Will you apologise for to nurses and other medical and healthcare workers being put in this impossible situation?

Hancock – As I said before we are working night and day on this

I want to pay tribute to pple working to achieve what is needed

I work closely with College of Nursing because it is so imp we get this right

(question avoided, maybe because the govt is. getting it wrong)

You painted positive picture at the moment for NHS but very different picture in nursing homes, witnessed flimsy PPE, a lot of illness, overstretched staff, some death. Care sector are crying out for tests. Home owners saying they’re operating in the dark and not getting tests, desperate to hear they will get tests, crucially for those being transferred from NHS to care sector? Can you assure them?

Hancock – Yes I can, that is coming

testing is being opened up to care home last week, an area of incredibly high importance

Some of most vulnerable pple live in care homes and especially in nursing homes

Getting this right is just so important

We have succeeded as a country in recognising care staff on frontline just as much as NHS staff

Expanding testing capability to care staff and residents

We are addressing issues you raise which are incredibly important

But Care Homes saying they need it NOW. What’s the timescale for regular widespread tests to get into care homes? How long?

Hancock – we have already made that change already for care home staff at the end of last week we are rolloing that out right now

For residents testing has been available throughout

We always keep under review protocols for transfer from hospitals to care homes

Most impt thing is interests of patient put first

Are you satisfied care homes have enough support?

Hancock – I am constantly trying to get more support for them and p’tic for testing

(but the evidence is this was not a priority and this is still not being done)

Doyle – very aware of connections between care homes and local for a, truly integrated approach to care

Much more to do here in n ursing and care homes where the most vulnerable are

Guidance taken account of this to take account of what pple need in that sector and simplify guidance

Updated figures on no. of NHS staff who have died? And why?

Hancock – don’t have an update on 19 NHS staff who died figure gave yesterday but looking into each circumstance trying to learn as much as we can to protect health workers as much as possible and where they caught the virus whether at work or outside

Doyle – of great imp scientifically as well to determine avoidable factors, under investigation at the moment

Hancock – pple who go into NHS, as PM said so movingly, admiration incredibly high, hope you’ve seen PM video

Need to learn as much as we can from each case and give full account to family members

Has PM been advised how long to rest before return to work?

Hancock – no advice on how long, clinical decision for drs to take with him

Govt operating efficiently within PM strategy

Reduction to 2.5 days to get PPE to pple. Is that an acceoptable time?

Hancock – 2.5 days is time taken to fulfil a query

58,000 locations can use hotline

2.5 days isn’t necessarily wait to get any PPE, can be advance orders

2.5 days is an average

Measure is important to track how quickly we can go from alarm being raised on hotline to pple getting PPE, measure of how fast system can respond

Complicated challenge getting PPE to every person that needs it

Diriving hard at goal of PPE for all when they need it

We have known about the dangers for months, were we too late putting in orders? Other ctries have been able to protect staff in a way we weren’t able to do?

Hancock – I don’t agree

Challenge is a logistical one

Previous 200 organisations served, now 58k

Been challenge of logistics as much as supply

Ref. PPE plan from Friday

Need to replenish stockpiles

We went into crisis with significant stockpiles

(avoided question as to how other ctries have coped better)

Vallance went on record that 20k would be good outcome -can we still achieve that good outcome?

Hancock – future path of this pandemic in this country is determined by how people act and we repeat the message of social distancing to reduce spread and maintain NHS capacity – most imp measures we’ve got

Gowns and medicines imp also

Behaviour of pple in this ctry to do their bit to flatten the curve

Predictions not poss as they depend on behaviour of British pple

(this is a common theme – putting responsibility on NHS staff and public for the crisis. Seems like deflection from govt failures.)

Doyle – we are learning about virus and about deaths

At this stage imp thing is to do what we’re doing breaking transmission chain and shielding most vulnerable

(but the most vulnerable were NOT shielded earlier. Not in care homes, not in at risk groups)

We need to do this for some time to come

(nonspecific open-ended nature of lockdown must be addressed with a plan)

Tributes paid to NHS and highlighted overseas pple – are these the right policies on immigration in future when these pple have been told they’re not a priority?

Hancock – we’ve brought in NHS visa precisely to attract pple from around the. World

Tragically a high proportion of those who have died in NHS are those who came to this ctry to give their time to the NHS

Admiration for those who came from overseas

Imp pple know the nation values their work

(gross hypocrisy from a Brexit supporting anti-immigration government)

We went into this crisis with record numbers of pple and funding for the NHS

(it takes some gall to say this after a decade of austerity, the slashing of social care budgets, tens of thousands of vacancies across the NHS and a care system that pays people appalling low wages)

(ended with govt warning video)