**UK government Covid19 press conference 13 April 2020**

**Jeremy Hoad**

(usual caveats apply to this live transcript / commentary)

**Attending**

Dominic Raab, Foreign Secretary

Patrick Vallance, Chief Scientific Adviser

Chris Whitty, Chief Medical Officer

**Figures**

290,720 tested

88.621 positive

XXXXX hospitalised

11,329 dead

(No figure given for total hospitalised or for the number of dead in the last 24 hours)

**Raab**

Thank you for sticking to advice

Concerned at the end of last week leading into Easter about pple continuing with social distancing measures but overwhelming majority of pple continue to do so

You stuck to advice denied virus contact it needed to spread by staying home

you saved lives

Your efforts are making all the difference

We’ve come too far

Some positive signs we are starting win the battle

(this isn’t a battle, it is a health emergency)

Still not past the peak

Continue to follow advice stay home save lives and protect NHS

SAGE will review data and we will review evidence and make decisions this week but we don’t expect to make any changes

Govt will redouble efforts to deliver PPE and source ventilators and ramp us testing to allow NHS and other key staff to return to work

Chancellor and others working round the clock to mitigate economic damage

If we let up now virus will take advantage and kill more people

We will come through this national test

Our plan is working

(really?)

**Vallance**

Slide

Reminder aim to keep numbers below nhs capacity to save lives

We’ve all stayed at home more and reduced travel

Having effect reducing transmission in community

Slide

New cases

Of course not ALL cases, just ones that have been tested

This has flattened off we expect it to decrease

More testing of key workers and NHS staff being done

Slide

Hospitalisations beginning to flatten off in many oarts of the ctry

Expect this to decrease as effects of social distancing feed through

Slide

This is the slide of deaths

(he could have phrased that better)

Looks at deaths in hospital as the international standard

Many deaths also occur outside hospital

Tracking Italy

Seeing further increase then plateau for some time before starting to decrease

(the question remains why are we tracking Italy when it was accepted Italy has been the worst hit ctry in Europe so far?)

**Questions**

Wearing of masks seems to be becoming an international norm – possible you’d change your advice?

Vallance – we would give new advice if we see new evidence that’s how science works

Evidence more persuasive on masks stopping you giving it to others, not contracting it

Evidence Is complicated, ongoing review of evidence about masks

It is accepted it is too early to relax current measures but can you share any specific idea how they might be relaxed?

Raab – far too early to talk about that we are still going through the peak we are guided by scientific and medical evidence

Relative success of social distancing measures so focus on keeping up this national effort

Lockdown measures set to be extended why no clear plan on how to get back to normal?

Raab – we are working through the peak, still going through crisis

Crucial we don’t take our eye off the ball

ability through social distancing support to deprive virus of ability to spread

As we are going through crisis and peak we must keep our eye on the ball staying at home and saving lives that way

(avoided question)

Why still no daily death toll including all who have died?

Whitty – we are measuring all deaths

Hospital deaths

ONS data covers all who have covid on death certificate including care jhome, home and other deaths

(didn’t say why ONS figures not being given, could give both if data available, hospital figures suppress real number of deaths)

Will ONS data be released?

Whitty – imp we look at all causes of mortality, direct from virus and from other causes such as pple not being able to get into hospital, currently working.

Long term health effects also of interest

(question ignored)

How will we ever know the true figure for covid19 deaths and true numbers of deaths?

Whitty – most imp number over epidemic as a whole is all cause mortality of any sort, some diagnosed as covid19

Based on testing, accuracy will increase over time

Interpreting data becomes more difficult but ramping up testing will enable better analysis

(confusing answer)

Death in care homes – not recorded properly if drs can’t get into care hjomes?

Whitty – dr will make assessment, take this very seriously to give accurate data

We want to extend amount of testing in care homes as testing ramps up over next few weeks

(next few weeks! We’ve been told testing is being ramped up for weeks now.)

PPE – pple not happy Home Sec response – why can’t Ministers just apologise?

Raab – we are working hard and trying to give assurance over need

We are straining every sinew to roll out further and faster

Plateau when death toll peaks for “some time” – how long?

Vallance – delay in deaths

Plateau expected for 2-3 weeks

(implies an increase in deaths that will remain high for several weeks)

Govt says plan working but ventilator problems, PPE problems, high death toll predicted – is this all part of the govt plan?

Raab – 2 crucial things flattening peak and making sure NHS can cope priorities

National effort on social distancing has been a success

This has helped limit the spread

Tentative signs of flattening is part of the plan

Ventilators and PPE – not saying there haven’t been problems but we’ve got ourselves into a good place and we must keep delivering on that plan

(delusional avoidance from Raab. Referring to current situation as being in a “good place” is astonishing arrogance and an insult to the dead)

Re-opening schools?

Vallance – we can only look at measures after peak when data supports that

It would be a waste to rapidly reverse progress now

Key to keep r-value below 1

Decisions difficult but must be based on data

Raab – risk 2nd wave if we took our hand / foot off the peddle

We want to take right decisions at right time

Are we nearer 1 for r-value?

Vallance – expect this is already below 1 in community

1 in 10 care homes reported infected last week – what now given modelling is so haphazard?

Whitty – total number around 13.5%

(that’s an increase in infections in care homes of 35% since last week)

92 care home outbreaks in last 24 hours

If outbreak suspected public health authorities will go in to test

(contradicts idea that care homes were already receiving extensive testing said previously)

Raab – we want to maintain focus on social distancing measures

Complaints about cost barriers for getting PPE – how are you prioritising PPE?

Raab – cost is not priority,

Bulk drop last week and this to local resilience hubs

Hotline set up to help unblock things

Doing everything we can to try and get PPE to where it is most needed

(govt can’t / won’t admit doing “everything it can” etc. is clearly not good enough)

Over 11k deaths, UK now suggested to be on course for worst in Europe -should action have been taken earlier, should scientific advisers have pushed harder for action?

Raab – I’m not sure I agree with that

Vallance - aim always to get the numbers down and maintain capacity

Heroic efforts from NHS

Superhuman efforts from NHS staff

A lot to go in new disease

A lot yet to see where this ends up

Focus on vaccine and therapeutics to get there

(specific questions abvoided / ignored by all)

Some ctries acted much sooner – isn’t it clear if we’d acted sooner it would have made a diff eg s Korea

Raab – I don’t think that is like for like and can’t say it would have made a diff

Vallance – looking closely at what other ctries do and learn from them

(again, question avoided / ignored. Running theme of denial of evidence from the ‘frontline’ and refusal to admit any failings)

(ends with govt warning video)