**UK government Covid19 press conference 20 April 2020**

**Jeremy Hoad**

(usual caveats apply to this live transcript / commentary)

**Attending**

Rishi Sunak, Chancellor

Anglela McLean,  Deputy Chief Scientific Adviser

Yvonne Doyle, Public Health England

**Figures**

501,371 tested (19,316 yesterday)

124,743 positive (4,676 increase)

17,971 hospitalised

16,509 dead

449 increase in dead over last 24 hours

**Sunak**

PPE – international challenge

Efforts of British businesses and embassies working hard to get PPE

Dayton (former London 2012 CEO) put in charge of domestic efforts to make and increase supply of PPE

Receiving shipments

Working to resolve delay of shipment from Turkey

Today 140k gowns from Myanmar

Pursuing every option for procurement

Economic situation

1 month ago today said we’d ste3p in and help to pay pples wages, said wld be available by end of April

Today we deliver our promise

Job retention scheme opened 8am

140k applications by 4pm

Grants received will help pay wages of more than 1m pple who would otherwise have been at risk of losing their. job

Cash in six working days

Hmrc will provide updates on numbers furloughed

Thanks to staff at HMRC - Pple have come out of retirement, worked around their kitchen tables to get this new system running – grateful to all

Remarkable story of public service

Imp to be aware of why we’ve introduced CJRS and other schemes

Never seen economic crisis like this

Demands setting aside ideology and orthodoxy and state turns to most imp job to protect pple

Supporting viabnle businesses and protect incomes of self employed

Maintain economy’s productive capacity

OBR said situation wld be much worse if we hadn’t done what weve done

Sowing seeds of ultimate recovery

Imp not to just maintain existing businesses but encourage businesses, job and technologies of the future

Innovation and entrepreneurship has driven UK economy for centuries and this is what will drive our recovery now

2 initiatives £1.25bn

New Future Fund for high growth companies in May

UK based early stage companies with convertible loans £125k - £5m

Will match private investment on terms that will protect the UK taxpayer

Innovate UK £750m grants and loan funding for innovative firms in every sector, and region of UK Alok Sharma believes in role of enterprise to recover our economy

Protect health of pple must continue to slow spread of virus, reduce hospitalisations and protect NHS ability to cope

Thoughts with families and friends of all those who have lost their lives

Encouraging signs we are making progress but Must meet 5 tests before changing approach

(repeat of tests)

Thank each and every person who is following govt advice to stay at home, protect NHS and save lives

**McLean**

Slide

Transport

Pple have responded to call to stay home

Use less than 20% of Feb, rail and tube down 95%

Slide

New cases

Stopped rising

Stable and flat

Slide

Hospitalisations

Stable across whole ctry

7th day in a row fall in London

Looking forward to same pattern across other regions

Slide

Deaths

(Nothing of interest said)

**Questions**

Continuing concerns about PPE, are you ashamed as a govt pple fear hospitals might run out? NHS staff going into work afraid for their safety.

Sunak – everybody deserves to have right equipment

1 billion pieces of PPE delivered

Challenging int’l context

Straining to do everything we can

(waffle. Avoided question)

Doyle – it is of concern

we want pple to have what they need

12m pieces to 141 trusts delivered this weekend

Incredible work going on internationally

High burn rate situation

Ensure pple use guidance in most precautionary way

(Sunak thought this was “brilliant”)

(Doyle seemed to – again – blame frontline workers for not using the guidance and PPE properly)

Extending loans scheme for businesses and raising guarantees?

Sunak – I’m not persuaded of raising guarantees to 100%

Comparisons with other ctries – we are doing more in scope and scale than other ctries, some doing because they’re not doing furlough scheme or direct cash grants

Paying SSP

12k loans to small businesses

35k applications

Acceptance rate 80-90%

Signs of progress working with British Business Banks

Sympathetic to anything to speed up delivery of loans

Working to see if we can make this more efficient

Watching it very carefully to ensure help gets to businesses that do need it

ONS indicated today hospital deaths under-reporting by as much as 40% - will deaths be higher at the end of this?

Governor of BoE does think 100% guarantees wld help why do you disagree?

PM seems to think lockdown will continue (or s’thing close to it) for many more weeks and months – agree?

Sunak – thing we can do to improve speed of loan programme

Direct cash support

Fiscal cost to all these things - need to be mindful of that

Scale of intervention more than almost any other developed ctry

(avoided 100% point)

Very clear, focussed on sticking to guidance, ref. 5 tests, not there yet

Stay at home, protect NHS

(avoided qtn about what PM has been reported as saying)

Doyle – hospital data do not tell the whole story of total deaths

Expect more by end of this week from ONS

Don’t know whether 40% figure is accurate but know 90% of deaths occur in hospital

Burden of mortality outside hospitals not mirrored depends on balance of care homes etc.

(didn’t understand or answer the specific question)

Some medical bodies concerned PPE guidance guidelines based on availability rather than safety standards - are NHS pple risking their safety?

Cost of furlough scheme? – will extend further beyond June?

Sunak – don’t have estimate of take up yet

OBR set out estimate last week, see that

Right to extend to June to provide long term certainty for businesses and security for employees

Under constant review

On PPE In all cases we have taken advice in line with WHO and CDC and PHE

(he ignored the question and repeated the propaganda line)

Doyle – guidance remains exactly the same

(not true)

What has happened over weekend is to cover pple and give reassurance over weekend

Advice on how to be safe where supplies may be at riskj

Opposite of putting pple at risk when supplies may be at risk

Imp pple understand

This is advice, the Guidance has not been downgraded

Medics feel guidance based on availability, not safety - do you understand why workers might feel they cannot work if they are not safe?

Doyle – of course I understand anxieties where pple on frontline

Advice put out precisely to give info in these circumstances based on guidance that exists consistent with CDC and WHO on what shld be done in exceptional circumstances

If dr or nurse or care home worker says they’re not prepared to go into work because they don’t have the correct equipment if they don’t feel safe would you support them?

Doyle – local situations

guidance based on risk assessments

Ppole need to base decisions if they’re in a risky situation or not

Diff to legislate for that at a distance from here

Guidance vbery clear on what is safe and not safe to do

(ignored or misunderstood the qtn)

It’s not necessarily the local advice, it’s the Principle – is it OK for pple to say that and wld you support that?

Sunak – I can’t comment about local circumstances

we have a hotliune

Decision for local managers

Determined to do everything we can to support frontline workers

We are doing everything we can to get equipment they need

Working night and day to do that

(ignored the qtn about supporting frontline workers)

Economy – Blair said he’s terrified about long term econ consequences – Treasury analysis worse than OBR – deep and long recession?

Sunak – clear what we need to see to lift lockdown need to avoid second peak bad for health and the economy

OBR said we’re in a very uncertain place

Any responsible Chancellor wld have range of scenarios in place

Interventions to bridge current situation to recovery to make sure it is as strong as poss when it comes

Challenging period we can;’t save every job or business

Get back to normal as quickly as possible

Business and jobs support best in world but you’re leaving pple behind

Do you hear UC calls from Labour and SNP calls for more self-employed help? Saying you can’t save all jobs and businesses doesn’t reassure, it sounds callous

Sunak – not every ctry has scheme for self-employed

Our scheme covers 95% of pple with tax records and information

Need to avoid abuse and fraud

UC – poss everybody to get payments from day 1

Removing requirement for pple to physically attend job centre – can do on phone

Injected £7bn into welfare system

Strengthened safety net

Confident we’ve taken extraordinary steps to provide biggest safety net for as many as possible

(ignored questions and parroted govt line on its approach again - didn’t offer comeback from journalist, what a surprise)

Football Madrid game 7/3 3k supporters despite major outbreak in Madrid, Deputy CMO Jenny Harries said on same day large events wouldn’t have a big impact but we are seeing a surge in deaths in Liverpool, Madrid Mayor says this was a big mistake – was allowing this and other big events such as Cheltenham a big mistake?

Liverpool and other councils bore brunt of austerity can you guarantee they will not pay ultimate economic price and will get fair settlement?

McLean – genuinely sad to hear so many pple unwell and died in Liverpool

General policy at the time

Normally football match not p’tic greater extra risk at the time

We wouldn’t do that now in diff circumstances

Interesting to see diff viruses circulating in Spain and Liverpool after this crisis

Interesting hypothesis you raise

Sunak – used to be local gvt Minister, they’ve come to challenge

£1.6bn incremental funding for LAs, total extra to over £3bn

Commitment to stand shoulder to shoulder with all those pple on frontline whether in local govt or NHS

(oh bloody hell, he said “shoulder to shoulder”)

Guidance changed – mass gatherings banned, was govt too slow to cancel major sporting fixtures and we are seeing the effects if that decision now?

Sunak – at every stage we have been guided by scientific advice and have been making the right decisions at the right time

(he repeated this twice)

Unprecendented situation

Things we will all learn from this

We made the right decisions at the right time

Right guidance at right time

(repeated slogan a third time, just sloganeering waffle and denial)

Futures Fund will mean UK govt will own equity stakes in UK start ups – move to more French or German approach – is this a broader shift longer term?

SIFTED is start up itself – start ups have short cash runways – assurances money will come quickly, 6 months will be too late for many?

Deputy Gov of BoE said not clear pple will return to work – any behavioural modelling about this?

McLean – terrific question

We spend a lot of time speaking to behavioural scientists feeding into SAGE

we have terrific careful scientists saying diff to predict how pple will behave in the future

unprecedented times, diff to produce view now

Happy to go away and ask them how pple will behave when and if they can go back to work

Hard to predict given what starnge days we are in

(seemed caught off-guard by what she said was a. terrific qtn)

Sunak – not something we’ve done before

Specific response to unprecendented circumstances

Historically we’ve funded capital to funds

UK is a success story across Europe so we haven;’t needed to do s’thing like this

May not need this as things get back to normal

Will keep in review, see how Futures Fund performs

Designed to support one of most dynamic parts of economy

Scheme will be running in May, open until September

Go and look at that Term sheet for convertible product available online ready to provide capital to drive your growth into the future whether at SIFTED or any other start ups that cld benefit from the scheme

Thanks everyone and for complying with rules

There is light at the end of the tunnel

Stay at home, protect the NHS and save lives

(ends with govt warning video)