**UK government Covid19 press conference 22 April 2020**

**Jeremy Hoad**

(usual caveats apply to this live transcript / commentary)

(press conference now preceded by advice video with trancey dance music)

**Attending**

Dominic Raab, Foreign Secretary
Chris Whitty, Chief Medical Officer (England)

Nick Carter, Chief of the Defence Staff

**Figures**

559,935 tested

133,495 positive

XXX hospitalised (no figure given)

18,100 dead

No figure given for increase in dead over last 24 hours

**Raab**

Deepest condolences to friends and loved ones of those who have died

Measures we have taken has saved lives

We have considered scientific and medical advice at all times and have taken the right steps at the right times

I know it has been tough

Physical strain as we adapt to working and living at home

Economic strain

Mental strain on everyone

Pple stuck at home,elderly isolated

We are making progress but we are not out the woods yet

Measures must remain in place for time being

Greatest riskj is second spike with threats to life and then second lockdown with associated economic risks

5 principles referenced

Stick to plan to take right steps at right time we can get through this.

Even in darkest moments light has been shone on the best of us

With General Carter here today only right to pay tribute to our amazing military

If we take the right steps at the right time we can get through this crisis and I know we will

Nation has come together

Tribute to MoD and armed forces, nightingale hospitals, mobile labs

NHS nightingale Harrogate and Bristol deployments

33k beds freed up across NHS

Pple used to joke you cld never build a hospital that quickly, well we haven’t just built one we’ve built seven equivalent to 50 district general hospitals

(this is a lie – the Nightingale Hospitals are NOT equivalent to real hospitals)

For British pple the sight of armed forces working side by side with public services is reassuring

Ramping up. Testing capacity

Over 1bn items distributed to frontline

I’m on the phone every day to source PPE deliveries from abroad

Rise to int’l challenge

Working night and day to return stranded British nationals from all four corners of the world

(repeating existing measures)

At home and abroad we are meeting the whole range of challenges from covid19

**Carter**

Supported housing, community and local govt and devolved administrations

Dozens of pple embedded into public services

Decentralisation key

Defence Sec delegated authority early

DHSC and NHS support – first and foremost a logistics challenge

In 25 days 240 customers to. 50k customers

(he means hospitals and other places needing equipment when he says “customers”)

260k sq feet of wharehousing

38 additional. Delivery routes per day

(military pple love quoting big figures. They get off on it even if the figures are not particularly helpful)

Involved in command and control, planning and resilience in Skipton House and Victoria House

Manning regional. Test centres and mobile pop up centres

Aviation task. Force support across UK

(you’ve got planes. We know. You are the military)

Involved in repatriations and security advisory teams

Cabinet Office Rapid Response Unit quashing rumours and countering disinformation

73 ongoing tasks, 30 completed

Whole force including reservists, defence civilians, Porton Down and Engineering Staff Core

Catalysing, designing and supporting

Ref. a reservist dealing with logistics

Still involved in protecting the ctry whether nuclear deterrent or overseas operations

Take great care not to endanger the population

(no shit. You are Chief of the Defence Staff. That is your job.)

We have even mobilised 99 year old veterans

(mobilised???? Tom Moore was not mobilised. Arrogant shit for suggesting this was some sort of military action)

Collective national effort to combat unprecedented national challenge

(Raab said this was “brilliant”. Raab was clearly snivelling to Carter as if he was head boy who had got a military old boy to come and talk to the sixth form)

**Whitty**

Slide

Transport

Remained very stable

Slide

New cases

Broadly flat with slight trend downward from 8/4

Slide

Hospitalisations

Situation improving or broadly flat across all 4 nations (sic)

Slide

Deaths in hospital

Steep upward climb up to early April now flattened off

Slide

Global death comparisons

Diff to compare data

Slide (new slide)

Global deaths rolling 7-day average

Even in ctries that started epidemic earlier downward slope is relatively slow

Don’t expect sudden fall of cases

**Questions**

Doubling of care home deaths in England, in virus that targets elderly and vulnerable do you see that as inevitable?

Raab – no, we are fighting tooth and nail to minimise impact of virus

We are doing everything we can to protect care homes, workers and residents

Targeting all of our efforts to protect vulnerable

Whitty – p’tic a virus of the older and for those with co-existing medical problems

Very vulnerable group

ONS statistics of covid19 deaths still relatively modest but think this will be an underestimate

Need to. Look at all-cause. Seasonally adjusted mortality over time

Critical pple use NHS as normal in emergency situations and NHA continues to be able to manage these

Sure we will see high mortality rate in care homes

Promises about protective equipment and testing but still not seeing that so what reassurance can you give them

Raab – we are getting PPE to places that need it and working with military on mobile testing labs

Revised guidance an hospital discharge

Doing everything we can to protect those in care homes

Reps of TSSA have been told to prepare for poss phased increase in transport service from 11-18/4 – timetable for modifications of lockdown?

Overseas NHS workers pay NHS surcharge – is there a case to waive that?

Raab – I don’t recognise those dates or what you say

Home Sec already outlined measures to make sure their interests are safeguarded

Didn’t say whether that would be waived?

Raab – teeling you that is not a govt timetable

Pay tribute to all those from overseas who work in NHS

NHS workers just want to know they will have equipment – when will shortages be resolved?

Health Sec said we have reached peak and time. To reopen NHS to normal care – ease of restrictions on 7/5 when lockdown reviewed?

Raab – we are coming through the peak but not there yet

We have kept NHS capacity with headroom

Whitty - I’m not an int’l procurement expert but clear we are very tight for diff things at diff times

Inefficiencies tend to lead to local problems

Not underwater at a national level but close to the line in local situations

Have broadly managed a diff situation without yet getting. To the point we are no longer able to cope with it

Need to manage it as best we can

I care about it and check on this the whole time

Don’t want to spell out what you intend on lockdown but other ctries providing lockdown – British pple aren’t silly can’t you at least give them some idea?

Raab – that’s why I set out 5 principles

We need more data as transmission comes down to. Inform measures we can actively consider

Need data before touting around idea that might risk a second spike

Need to keep our eye on the ball

Praised work of. Military – 20k on standby but. Under 3k used are you underutilising them?

100k tests per day – will military support this?

Porton Down trying to work out proportion of infections in population – results?

Raab – we want to use all resources as effectively as we can

Difficult decisions, need to deploy resources as. Best we can

(pointless waffle)

Carter – we have deployed what we have needed so far

Working closely with DHSC and others on testing

Right testing that customers need

(I think he means people, not “customers”)

Overall system being put together at the moment

Whitty – Porton Down has some of best capacity to do serological testing but we don’t have a test that is as good as we would want

Working on improved tests, one of critical bits of info, hoping shortly to have ranging shot of infections across population

Shortage of PPE – are military going to be protected enough?

Arrival of PPE from Turkey?

Raab – all consignments checked, Turkey consignment has landed and expect further in future

Need excellent cooperation with Turkish govt and military

(this was the supply of PPE from Turkey that was supposed to arrive on Monday and the government lied about when mentioned on Saturday)

Carter – Military equipped for the function they are. Performing

SAGE have looked again at masks to say wld be good idea to wear. Masks when are you going to meet to decide that – shld pple wear masks or not?

What shape is easing of restrictions taking? How can you ever be sure?

Raab – We will look at evolving evidence, nothing will change until we get advice back from SAGE

(refuses to say anything again)

Whitty – upper and lower band of what is possible

Cannot allow r rate to go above 1 for any period as this wld lead to exponential growth of transmission again

At bottom end disease is NOT going to be eradicated, it won’t disappear, disease will be with us for the future

Have to be realistic that wholly unrealistic that we can get back to normal suddenly, we will have to do quite a lot for a considerable period of time

Is establishing r below 1 enough – 0.5 or 0.25 needed?

Whitty – r not above 1 is a minimum ask

Multiple diff ways epidemic will kill pple or cause ill health

Direct infection, indirect impacts and pple who die because of reorientation of health service, if interventions extend deprivation that is also a risk to pple health

Need to think about best balance of measures to give best outcome

Can you guarantee if Oxford or Imperial trials British pple will be first to get vaccines as we have paid for them?

Can you release lockdown measures before contact tracing?

Exercise Cygnus – tens of thousands died in simulation, can you commit to making results public?

Raab – No, I can’t commit to releasing Cynus report

(in denial about past catastrophic government failures)

Whitty – Uk will want early or fast access to any vaccine wherever it is developed

Trials then manufacturing and scaling up means not a straightforward position

Contact tracing is one element

Put to Ministers options and they will decide on best balance of measures

(basically not our decision, decision for Ministers)

Raab – vaccine not coming any time soon to enable release of lockdown measures

Whitty – long run exit either highly effective vaccine and / or highly effective drugs to prevent death

Until we have those – probability of having these any time in the next year is incredibly small

Until then we will have to rely on social measures

Socially disruptive measures for next calendar year?

Have you read Cygnus?

Raab – I would have to check (about Cygnus), it isn’t something that immediately springs to mind, I have read lots of material in the last few weeks

(astonishing arrogance and stupidity. The government’s own exercise on global pandemic preparedness and he refuses to admit ever seeing it)

Whitty – expect to have proof of concept vaccines much less than a year but long time to get to full use vaccine

Until then we have social measures

Raab – lower we get the r rate the more options we have

Social distancing making a big difference

Mass population testing being considered?

Rely on new app being developed or personal with military?

Raab – looking at boosting effectiveness of app

To allow us to look at diff options and control resurgence of virus

Testing, tracking, tracing cld have significant impact on ability to ease out of current social distancing measures

Whitty – testing across community will do a lot more of this

To find earliest point r. rates are below 1

Raab – 5 tests inform future decisions

Contact tracing app – will pple be willing to install this due to privacy concerns or pple who don’t have smartphones? Will other measures be used?

Raab – public expect us to do what we can to innovate

Will look at those decisions

Exceptional crisis, need to take measures we wouldn’t do normally

(avoided the questions completely – he seems out of his depth / stupid)

Health Sec said we have reached peak – but variations across ctry eg Bristol?

2/3 SMEs have suffered in Bristol wld you consider earlier lockdown release here?

Whitty - SE has had lower rates than elsewhere

Peak at the moment is not the natural peak but that brought about by intervention measures so actual peak will occur at similar point across the UK because this is an artificial peak brought about by activity

Nightingale gave us ability and extra capacity to deal with emergencies

Will still give us flexibility planning forward which gives options we wouldn’t otherwise have

Sign of success Nightingales have not had to be used to levels they might have but NHS will be under pressure for some time

Raab – SMEs the lifeblood of economy, will be part of Britain bouncing back, risk if we move too early we’d get second spike and need second lockdown that wld protract economic pain

(Bristol specifics given, otherwise waffle avoiding question)

Counterproductive / dangerous to ease up too early for public health and entrepreneurs

Will military help staff Nightingale hospitals?

Carter – in Bristol we have allocated some combat medics and other general duties personnel to support it as well

(ends with govt warning video)