
No.10’s press conference

Michael Gove, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, was joined by Dr Jenny Harries, Deputy Chief Medical Officer for England, and Sir Simon Stevens, Chief Executive of NHS England and NHS Improvement.

Key points include:

- Gove confirmed that the Prime Minister is continuing to lead the government’s response to coronavirus through video conferencing, despite testing positive for the virus. The health and social care secretary, Matt Hancock, has also tested positive. Chief Medical Officer, Prof Chris Witty, is self-isolating following mild symptoms.

- He also confirmed that businesses, universities and research institutes have been brought together in an alliance to boost the antigen testing capacity for frontline workers. Gove reported that the tests will be trialled for those on the frontline immediately, with hundreds of tests to take place by the weekend.

- Dr Harries said that it is not possible to predict exactly when the peak will be, but does not expect a significant change in numbers for two to three weeks.

- Dr Harries also assured that 3.5 million antibody tests are coming through a variety of different manufactures, but the government will need to check the specificity of the tests and evaluate them.

- Sir Simon Stevens confirmed that there were presently over 6,200 COVID-19 patients in hospital across England.

- An extra 33,000 hospital beds have been created for COVID-19 patients following a reconfiguration of services and two further NHS Nightingale hospitals will be built at the Birmingham National Exhibition Centre and the Manchester Central Convention Complex.

- With regard to cancer treatments, Sir Simon stated that treatments should continue, but said that specialists should have the opportunity with patients to decide whether it is more risky to embark on treatment at this time.

- While recognising that pressure on the NHS will intensify over the next few weeks, Sir Simon assured that the NHS has freed up the equivalent of 50 fully-staffed hospitals over recent weeks.