COVID-19: Latest developments | 3 April 2020

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Daily press briefing

Health and social care secretary Matt Hancock was joined by Ruth May, Chief Nursing Officer for England and Professor Jonathan Van Tam, deputy chief medical officer for England.

Key points include:
- 173,784 people have been tested, of whom 38,168 are positive. The death toll stands at 3,605. Two nurses and two healthcare assistants have died.
- 2,500 more critical care beds have been made available.
- The first Nightingale Hospital has opened by HRH The Prince of Wales. Work on new hospitals would take place in Bristol (1,000 capacity) and Harrogate (500 capacity). More Nightingale Hospitals will open in Birmingham, Manchester, Glasgow.
- 26 million PPE products have been delivered to 281 organisations.
- 5 million PPE products would be delivered to Northern Ireland.
- 7000+ NHS staff have been tested.
- Three national clinical trials have been established, focusing on primary, hospital and critical care.
- An expert therapeutics taskforce has been established.
- The next round of clinical trials will be new medicines.
- Repurposed medicines are a key focus for research.
- The recovery clinical trial had 926 patients, three weeks after the call for volunteers began.
- Hospital admissions and cases have continued to rise.
- Prof Tam outlined the behaviour changes as of 29 March, which showed a decline in mobility.

World’s largest trial of potential COVID-19 treatments being rolled out across the UK

The Department of Health and Social Care has announced that the world’s largest randomised clinical trial of potential coronavirus treatments is well underway in the UK as part of the race to find a treatment. Hundreds of patients are joining the new clinical trial.

A number of promising treatments are being tested and, if the science supports it, will be given to NHS patients as quickly as possible.

Definitive results on whether the treatments are safe and effective are expected within months. If positive, they could potentially benefit hundreds of thousands of people worldwide.
Almost 1,000 patients from 132 different hospitals have been already recruited in just 15 days and thousands more are expected to join the randomised clinical trial in the coming weeks.

The trial will test a number of medicines recommended by an expert panel advising the Chief Medical Officer for England, Professor Chris Whitty.

They include:
- Lopinavir-Ritonavir, commonly used to treat HIV
- Dexamethasone, a type of steroid use in a range of conditions to reduce inflammation
- Hydroxychloroquine, a treatment for malaria.

The trial is being conducted in over 130 NHS hospitals across the UK. Adult patients who have been admitted to hospital with COVID-19 are being invited to take part. The trial is specially designed so that as further medicines are identified, these can be added to the study within days.

**Use of the Clinical Frailty Scale (CFS) and do not attempt cardiopulmonary resuscitation (DNACPR)**

Claire Murdoch, national director for mental health, NHS England and NHS Improvement, Dr Roger Banks, national clinical director for learning disability and autism, NHS England and NHS Improvement, and Dr Nikki Kanani, medical director for primary care, NHS England and NHS Improvement wrote to health leaders in primary care, acute trusts and community trusts.

The letter was sent to leaders to ensure that there is clarity in relation to the use of the Clinical Frailty Scale (CFS) and the use of do not attempt cardiopulmonary resuscitation (DNACPR) with younger patients, those with a stable long term physical need, learning disability or autism.

**NHS Confederation queries nursery openings for key workers**

The NHS Confederation recently contacted the Department for Education to raise the issue of nurseries not remaining open for the children of key workers, such as NHS staff, due to nurseries feeling that remaining open is not financially viable. Additionally, the NHS Confederation raised the matter of key workers needing childcare provision during the scheduled Easter holidays.

The Confederation also inquired about speculation over the prospect of emergency legislation being passed to require childcare institutions to remain open.

Following the Confederation's contact, the Department for Education responded with the following assurance:

“We know that many critical workers will be looking to arrange childcare provision during this time so that they can continue to work over the predicted COVID-19 peak. Our current guidance states that where possible, we would encourage childcare providers, schools and colleges to continue to look after critical workers’ children and vulnerable
children throughout the Easter holidays…

“… the Coronavirus Act (2020) grants the Secretary of State for Education powers to require the provision, or continuing provision, of education, training and childcare during the pandemic. However, we are not currently mandating that providers remain open. This is because much of the early years sector does not normally operate over the holiday period and will not have factored the additional cost of this into their business planning. We are working through how Government can support early years providers in staying open at a time when they are losing a significant amount of their (parent-paid) income, with the aim of ensuring as many stay open as possible. As with all of our Covid-19 response work, we are keeping this under review and will make information available should the situation change…

“We are engaging closely with NHSE to understand the demand for childcare in trusts across the country so that we can help to ensure that provision is available for critical workers who need it. The recent BBC News report highlighted individual cases of NHS workers being unable to access provision, and we are working to understand the scale of the issue. We have already made an introduction between NHSE HR colleagues and a leading childcare provider chain to facilitate placing children of critical workers. We are also working closely with local authorities and early years stakeholders to gather intelligence and test our thinking about how best to support critical workers while maintaining the health of the education and care sectors during this very uncertain time.

Interim guidance on DBS and other recruitment checks

The Care Quality Commission has published interim guidance on DBS and other recruitment checks, for providers recruiting staff and volunteers to health and social care services in response to COVID-19.

The interim guidance has been published in response to temporary changes being made by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) to DBS applications and processes. It will be in operation for the period the Coronavirus Act 2020 remains in force.

The CQC has committed to reviewing this guidance on a regular basis.