COVID-19: Latest developments | 9 April 2020

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**Daily press briefing**

The foreign secretary, Dominic Raab, was joined today by the government’s Chief Scientific Adviser, Sir Patrick Vallance and Chief Medical Officer, Professor Chris Whitty

Key points include:

- 243,000 have been tested for COVID-19 in total: 65,000 have tested positive, 16,000 have been admitted to hospital and 7,900 have died.
- SAGE (Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies) will meet next week to look at the collective evidence and review government action, but measures would have to stay in place.
- The early signs are encouraging and social distancing measures are helping to slow the increase in new cases.
- People were repeatedly urged to stay at home over the bank holiday weekend.
- Mr Raab referred to many, including care workers, as the “lifeline of people in their communities” and went on to say “I think you have all made us think long and hard about who the keyworkers are in our lives”.
- He also suggested that there will be a moment when we look at how we formally recognise all those on the frontline, but would not detail what this would look like.
- Prof Chris Whitty expects the ONS figures due to come out next week, which include care home deaths, to be higher. But he added that there will be a time lag as their numbers take longer to gather.
- Sir Patrick Vallance stated that the measures the UK is taking are preventing transmission of the virus and keeping cases in hospital down.
- Suggested that new cases had not gone “sky high” and if anything, there might be some flattening.
- Sir Patrick also said that we are beginning to “see the first signs of this levelling off” on hospital admissions, but the number of deaths continues to rise
- At present the NHS can cope, as it has the right number of beds.

View the NHS Confederation’s response.

Health and Social Care Select Committee to hear from Matt Hancock regarding COVID-19
The Health and Social Care Select Committee has announced that it will be hearing from the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on Thursday 16 April as part of its ongoing inquiry into managing the coronavirus outbreak.

The NHS Confederation will be submitting evidence to the committee for the session. MPs will ask questions on the progress of the government’s plans to carry out 100,000 tests a day by the end of April. MPs will also focus on the government’s overall strategy, development and effectiveness of antibody tests, medicines that could be used to treat coronavirus, and the timing of updated guidance on the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) in community care settings.

**Shadow frontbench appointments and new faces in the health team**

In addition to confirming that Jonathan Ashworth MP remains as shadow health and social care secretary and Rosena Allin-Khan MP is to take on the mental health brief, the rest of the shadow team has been confirmed as follows:

- Liz Kendall MP (social care)
- Justin Madders MP (public health and prevention)
- Alex Norris MP (public health and patient safety)

Our member briefing looks at what Keir Starmer’s leadership might mean for health and social care.

**Labour calls for urgent action to support the social care system**

The Labour Party has called for “clarity from the government on the support it will provide to increase testing, access to PPE and financial support to the social care system”. Jonathan Ashworth MP said: “It’s heart-breaking to read reports of deaths and outbreaks of COVID-19 in care homes across the country. Every family with a loved one with dementia or needing help will be anxious to ensure they are receiving the care they need. And our hardworking care staff deserve protection and security too.”

“Increased testing for care home residents and providing full PPE are both actions that should be taken to provide greater protection to those who receive care. We hear day after day that care homes aren’t able to access either tests or the PPE they need, putting both staff and care home residents at risk. We cannot leave care home residents and staff fearing for their lives. The government must provide reassurance to care home residents and their families by setting out the steps they are taking to keep people safe.”

**ADASS: Prioritise social care and protect us all**

The ADASS President, Julie Ogley, has “called on the government to properly prioritise adult social care and acknowledge its importance in the battle against COVID-19” and “to recognise the role and contribution of social care colleagues putting their own lives at risk; address shortages in PPE; prioritise testing for social care colleagues and carers; and ensure that we are counting the number of cases and deaths outside of hospitals”.

Institute for Fiscal Studies: Economic downturn and wider NHS disruption likely to hit health hard – especially health of most vulnerable

A new briefing from the IFS suggests that the coronavirus pandemic poses clear and obvious dangers to the health of individuals who are infected with the virus. But worsening economic conditions and disruptions to NHS services will have important and far-reaching consequences for the health of the broader population.

The briefing suggests that the coronavirus pandemic is putting the NHS under unprecedented strain and leading to cancelled operations and disruptions to non-coronavirus emergency care. This will disproportionately affect older individuals, and those from less affluent backgrounds, both in the short and the medium term. This is because in normal times:

- Emergency hospital admissions per head are 10 times higher among those in their 90s than among those in their 30s, and 1.7 times higher among those from the most deprived areas than among those from the least deprived. These groups therefore will be hit hardest by disruptions to emergency care.
- Elective (pre-planned) admissions per head are more than 6 times higher among those in their 70s and 80s than among those in their 20s, and 4½ times higher than among those in their 30s. So older people will also be hit hardest by the (understandable) decision to cancel all non-urgent operations.
- Evidence suggests that staff disruptions – from increased rates of absence and healthcare staff working in unfamiliar settings – will have severe impacts on the quality of care provided and resultant patient outcomes.
- In the medium and longer term, the economic downturn itself will have persistent negative health effects, with these effects being worse for some groups than others. For example, recent estimates suggest that the employment loss associated with the 2008 recession could have resulted in an additional 900,000 people of working age suffering from a chronic health condition, including mental health.

We should be particularly worried about the consequences of worsening economic conditions for those with pre-existing poor mental health, the briefing argues, and for young children and those currently in utero. Current policies – such as the Job Retention Scheme – will help many, but by no means all, in these groups.

Effects will also vary across the country as some industries (and thus areas) are hit harder than others by social distancing measures and the associated economic downturn. Evidence shows that the detrimental impact of adverse economic shocks can persist for many years. Government policy has a key role to play in mitigating these impacts.

UKVI release employer guidance on UK points-based immigration system

UKVI has released information to help employers prepare for the UK’s new points-based immigration system.