

Jeremy Hunt's Daily Coronavirus Update 21 May 2020

Good afternoon and welcome to my daily South West Surrey COVID-19 response email. As of today, we have a total of 248,293 positive cases of COVID-19, an increase of 2,472 (up 1%) with sadly 35,704 confirmed deaths in the UK, an increase of 363 since yesterday (up 1%). There are 2,835 confirmed cases in Surrey and **296 confirmed cases in Waverley**, which represents no increase from yesterday. But one cuckoo does not make a spring.

And so, it begins! At yesterday's PMQs the Prime Minister announced that the UK's [test, trace, and trace programme will be rolled out on \(or before\) 1st June](#). This date means that the system should be up and running in time for when some children returned to school. We know by looking at examples from across the world that a successful test, track and trace plan both stops the virus and allows some semblance of return to normality. So no surprise that NHS leaders have today warned the government we must have the strategy in place [quickly](#). It is also worth noting that the much-lauded app (which is helpful but not essential in for the programme to work) may not be rolled out for another few weeks. With the 25,000 full-time contact tracers in place we will be able to follow up 10,000 new cases a day which is all good progress towards reaching [level 2 of the government's COVID-19 threat level](#).

Schools The rather silly debate around whether some school children should be returning to the classroom in June continues. Yesterday the [British Medical Association](#) (BMA) came out in support of children returning to school in line with [the government's plan](#). If we have test and trace in place and the infection remains comfortably below one what exactly is the problem? I am not aware of anywhere else where schools going back has led to the virus getting back out of control but unless children go back many parents won't be able to get to work. But the real date for that is the start of July when the government is hoping all schools can go back for at least a couple of weeks before the summer break.

Test passed. A huge leap in testing figures with over 177,000 tests being completed yesterday meaning that the PM is within reach of his 200,000 tests a day target. This increase has come from a huge increase in demand following the broadening of the eligibility criteria. There was also some good news from London which reported no new cases in the past twenty-four hours.

For the most up to date details on what you can and cannot do at this stage of the lockdown read these [FAQ's](#)

The key number to remember is 0300 200 1008 the Surrey Helpline run by Surrey County Council (Mon-Fri 8 am to 6 pm & Sat-Sun 10am to 2pm) - please call if you are struggling with getting the shopping, social isolation or know someone vulnerable who is.

WHAT'S GOING ON IN WESTMINSTER

Return of the MPs... the Leader of the House Commons confirmed his intention yesterday to get MPs back to the House of Commons from the start of June. I imagine we will still be voting remotely to avoid crowded division lobbies but anyone speaking, or questioning will have to be in the Chamber. No more speeches from my living room which will be a great relief to the Hunt children. The Chamber will still operate under social distancing guidelines so it won't be completely normal but you can read about the changes that we have agreed to on the parliament [website](#).

Social care. It is being reported this morning that the government was almost ready to announce their plans on the long term [funding of the social care system](#). Finding a solution to this was something I pushed for when I was Health Secretary and this crisis has shown just how important the sector is. We need a long-term plan and funding settlement to match what was given to the NHS so I hope they do bring forward plans as soon as possible.

Minor rebellion by your MP I voted against the government for the first time yesterday when I opposed a change which means the Chairman of the Liaison Select Committee will now be appointed by the government rather than elected. When I became an MP Select Committee chairs were always appointed by the Whips and it was a bold and important step by David Cameron and Nick Clegg to replace that with a system of elected chairs. In my view we have had much improved parliamentary scrutiny as a result so turning back the clock like this for the most important select committee - the only one that questions the Prime Minister - is a real shame. That said I am sure the new Chairman, Bernard Jenkin MP, will do a good job.

WHAT'S GOING ON IN SOUTH WEST SURREY

Electric buses for Farnham could happen if Surrey County Council and I are successful in lobbying the government for a share of their new electric bus fund. Surrey is prepared to put in £10 million to make the switchover according to Cllr Matt Furniss, the portfolio holder for Highways who I spoke to this morning. I will be lobbying hard in support of this after the emergency pollution summit I held in Farnham last October which revealed that there are three places in Farnham that regularly breach safe pollution limits. Tomorrow we also have a meeting of the Farnham Project Board looking at longer term changes needed in the town centre including the possibility of pedestrianisation - thank you to Surrey Leader Tim Oliver for his support for making changes. Farnham and Reigate remain the only two towns in Surrey to route all their traffic right through their centres.

The Hygiene Bank Farnham has seen an increase in demand over the past few weeks. This means that they are looking for donations of much needed hygiene products. For the full list of what they are looking for and where you can drop off your items take a look at their [Facebook page](#).

Do you know an unpaid carer in Surrey? If you are one of the estimated 115,000 carers living in Surrey, or you know someone who is, the coronavirus pandemic will most likely have had a significant impact on you. To access this support please contact Surrey County Council through their helpline or their [website](#).

I have been compiling a list of local groups working to support vulnerable residents. You can view them on this [link](#).

THE ECONOMY AND JOBS

Rolls Royce has announced that it is cutting 9,000 jobs from its plant in Derby. They say they've made this decision because of the unprecedented downturn that has been seen in the aviation sector and which is expected to last for some time yet. Sadly, I expect this will be the first of many grim headlines about job losses. With passenger numbers at such low levels it is going to be tough for any airline or aviation-related business to continue as usual. I don't know if today's decision will have an impact on anyone locally but if you do need any help accessing benefits please do contact the [Citizens Advice team](#) who will be able to provide tailored support.

WHAT ELSE IS GOING ON

How will the app work? An interesting piece on the [BBC yesterday](#) which explains how the new (but delayed) NHS tracing will work. The article also explores some of the issues around human rights and data protection which have been raised with me and numerous other MP's in the past few weeks.

And finally, yesterday the government put a call out for employees to become fruit and veg pickers. Strict travel conditions mean many migrants who would typically come over for the short harvest have been unable to make the journey this year and as a result many British farmers (and the government) are concerned that this year's fruit and veg harvest won't be collected in time. This could be great work for young people who have been previously working in cafes or bars and if you want to sign up visit the pick for Britain [website](#).

Any opinion expressed in this Email is not necessarily that of the Party and may be personal to the sender.

Promoted by Sean Donovan-Smith on behalf of Jeremy Hunt MP and South West Surrey Conservatives, all at 2 Royal Parade, Tilford Road, Hindhead, Surrey GU26 6TD.