



Department  
of Health &  
Social Care

*From the Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP  
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care*

39 Victoria Street  
London  
SW1H 0EU

020 7210 4850

William Wragg MP  
Chair, Public Administration and  
Constitutional Affairs Committee  
House of Commons  
SW1A 0AA

24 March 2021

Dear William,

Thank you for your Committee's report on 'Government Transparency and Accountability during COVID-19: the data underpinning decisions'. As requested, I am writing to provide a response to recommendations, from this report and the 'Parliamentary Scrutiny of the Government's handling of COVID-19' report, prior to the Coronavirus Act being considered for renewal on the 25 March.

The Chancellor for the Duchy of Lancaster will respond to the other urgent recommendations flagged in your recent letters, as well as responding to the remaining recommendations in the usual timeframes.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The Government must share all the available data with local areas in as much detail as possible, ideally to patient level. Data which will be key to decision making on the road map should be shared immediately, and ahead of the potential renewal of the Coronavirus Act. The Government should publish a comprehensive list of all data that is available and at what level. (Paragraph 132)

**RESPONSE:** The Government is completely committed to ensuring that key decisions are underpinned by data. As such, the 'COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021', published on 22 February, set out the detailed data and analysis that underpinned the Government's approach to easing lockdown.<sup>1</sup> It also set out the four data tests that will need to be met to move between each step. Relevant data is available within the public domain and provided at the local authority level, as detailed in Annex A.

The Government fully recognises that it is essential to a partnership response that local authorities have the data they need. A range of data and dashboards are currently provided to local areas by Test & Trace, Public Health England (PHE) and the NHS.

Data on the virus's spread is shared with local authorities to inform local outbreak planning, so that teams across the country can quickly and effectively respond, working with the national government when necessary.

Public Health England (PHE) routinely shares with Directors of Public Health patient-level data on Covid-19 test results data and data on individuals who are close contacts of

---

<sup>1</sup> HMG, [COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021 - Data Annex](#)

someone who has tested positive. This data sharing helps support the Directors of Public Health manage situations and outbreaks of COVID-19, conduct local contact tracing, and monitor the epidemiology and public health impacts of the virus in their local area. Access to patient data is carefully managed by PHE to ensure that confidentiality is protected, and that personal data is only used in accordance with the requirements of data protection law.

Staff in local authorities and local NHS service organisations are also being provided with access to a range of tools that use depersonalised and aggregate data to provide intelligence on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in their local area.

**RECOMMENDATION: The Government should take care to timetable the six-monthly review debate so that the two-monthly status report is published in good time before that debate takes place, ensuring Parliamentarians have the most up-to-date report to inform the debate.**

**RECOMMENDATION: It is vital that the temporary provisions in the Coronavirus Act are properly scrutinised and justified. The six-monthly review debate is one of the main avenues for this scrutiny to take place. To aid effective scrutiny and transparency, it is essential that the Government articulates: the original rationale for the temporary provisions in the Coronavirus Act, why those provisions are still justified and the evidence base for demonstrating those provisions are still effective. This should include provisions that are in force and those that are not. This will improve the transparency of these measures and help determine whether they are still necessary and proportionate. We recommend the Government publish this information in good time for the six-month review. This should be done at least two weeks before that debate takes place.**

The Government is keen for Parliamentarians to review material in the two-monthly reports in advance of debates. However, given the timings of recess and the importance of including the most up-to-date information possible from the reporting period, it has not been possible to publish the report two weeks' in advance of the debate.

We have listened to feedback following the first six-month review and have published the second six-month report/one-year review three days before the debates are scheduled. This publication timeline has allowed us to maximise the reporting window whilst simultaneously affording parliamentarians the time to read the report ahead of the debate.

We are committed to providing parliamentarians with the most comprehensive information in two-monthly reports and the one-year status report. We continually refine and improve upon the information provided in the reports, ensuring the most up-to-date information and data is collected and published.

I am very grateful to the Committee for the ongoing consideration of the Government's Covid response.

Yours ever,



**MATT HANCOCK**

## Annex A – Data shared with local authorities and other data in the public domain

### Data shared with local authorities

1. Individual (record) level data accessible by local authorities:
  - Line list – positive tests and cases
  - Line list – negative and void tests
  - Line list – contact tracing
  - Line list – school helpline data
  - Line list – enhanced contact tracing
  - Co-Vis (COVID19 – Visualisation of Infections and Situations) – contains line list data (same data as positive tests and cases)
  - HPZone (case management system used in Health Protection Teams in PHE to record details of cases, incidents and enquiries received) data – contains venue level data naming the setting of where the outbreak is
  
2. Aggregate and interactive data and reports accessible by local authorities:
  - Vaccine data
  - Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOA) cases
  - High-level summary – situational awareness report
  - COVID-19 epidemiology – COVID-19 tests and cases; COVID-19 mortality
  - COVID-19 surveillance – wastewater; Google mobility and 111 data
  - Outbreaks, clusters and settings – COVID-19 exceedance data
  - Modelling and forward plans – epidemic phase model, nowcast

### Other data in the public domain

Coronavirus (COVID-19) statistics and analysis

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-statistics-and-analysis>

Data sources of numbers relating to the coronavirus pandemic in the UK.

Coronavirus data informing local and national decision-making

The Joint Biosecurity Centre (JBC) provides evidence-based, objective analysis to inform local and national decision-making in response to COVID-19 outbreaks.

[Coronavirus data informing local and national decision-making](#)

COVID-19 Vaccinations

This section contains information on the number of COVID-19 vaccinations provided by the NHS in England, both in total since vaccinations began and to the current eligible population.

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/covid-19-vaccinations/>

COVID-19 cases and deaths

Information about the number of recorded cases and the number of recorded deaths for people who have tested positive.

- [UK data on cases and deaths](#)
- [Northern Ireland data on cases and deaths](#)
- [Scotland data on cases, testing, people in hospital and deaths](#)
- [Wales data on cases and deaths](#)
- [Deaths from COVID-19 by ethnic group](#)

### Estimated infection rate

The ONS infection survey estimates the number of cases in the community. The reproduction number (R) and growth rates estimate the change in infection rate across the population.

- [ONS infection survey for England](#)
- [Estimated R number and growth rate](#)

### Deaths where COVID-19 is suspected

Some deaths occur when COVID-19 is suspected but not confirmed by a test. The statistics below include these cases.

- [Deaths in England and Wales](#)
- [Deaths in Scotland](#)
- [Deaths in Northern Ireland](#)
- [Guide to mortality statistics](#)

### Excess deaths report

[The Excess deaths report](#) measures additional deaths in England that are not included in the sources above.

- [Northern Ireland excess deaths report](#)

### Testing and tracing

The number and type of tests carried out.

- [UK data on testing](#)
- [Northern Ireland data on testing](#)
- [Wales data on testing](#)
- [Tracing statistics for Wales](#)
- [Scotland data on testing](#)
- [NHS Test & Trace in England](#)
- [Weekly COVID-19 report published by Public Health Scotland](#) (also including information on hospital cases in Scotland)

### Hospital cases of COVID-19

Information about demand for healthcare services.

- [UK people in hospital with COVID-19](#)
- [Wales hospital cases](#)
- [Northern Ireland hospital cases](#)
- For Scotland hospital cases, search [Scotland dashboard](#)
- NHS England also publish information on [COVID-19 hospital activity](#)

### Business and the economy

- [Survey on the impact of coronavirus on business](#)
- [Coronavirus and the latest indicators for the UK economy and society](#)
- [Employment retention scheme statistics](#)
- [Funding for business](#)
- [Self-employment income support scheme statistics](#)
- [Universal Credit claims \(Great Britain\)](#)
- [Universal Credit claims \(Northern Ireland\)](#)
- [PPE deliveries statistics \(England\): weekly reports](#)

## Education

- [Attendance in education and early years settings in England](#)
- [Attendance in education and early years settings in Scotland](#)
- [Attendance at local authority settings in Wales during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) pandemic](#) (covers attendance of children and staff at local authority settings)
- [Attendance at educational settings in Northern Ireland](#)

## Shielding

- [Shielded patient list in Wales during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) pandemic](#)
- [Shielding population in England](#)
- [Shielding population in Scotland](#)

## Social impacts

Statistics relating to the impact of coronavirus on education, travel and the wider community.

- [Coronavirus and its social impacts survey, Great Britain](#)
- [Coronavirus and anxiety, 3 April to 10 May, Great Britain](#)
- [Personal and economic wellbeing, 20 March to 7 June, Great Britain](#)
- [Coronavirus and its social impacts survey, Northern Ireland](#)

## Transport

- [Transport usage during the coronavirus pandemic, Great Britain](#)