

## Gareth Johnson MP for Dartford



March 2020

### Coronavirus - update

Since my bulletin earlier this week, the Coronavirus crisis has changed fairly significantly and I have now included the latest guidance available at this time. Please click on the blue and white buttons to access links to the latest information on what to do if you think you or a member of your household is infected. Guidance on social distancing is also available.

My office is dealing with a substantial number of queries so please be patient if you have not yet had a response. We are doing our best to work our way through them. We do aim to respond on the same day you contact us but we cannot guarantee this.

This is a challenging time for us all. Supplies of many items in the supermarkets are low or non-existent but the supply chains are operational and most local stores are recruiting new workers to help cope with the increased demand both in store and online.

Coronavirus is concerning for both young and old. Older people are more susceptible to its symptoms and may need to self-isolate for a protracted period of time. Younger people have been denied the chance of mixing with their school friends and taking exams that would accurately reflect the hard work they have put into their studies.

This virus is an evil that has affected us all but we will bounce back. There are still darker times to come but if we all continue to pull together and follow advice, we will beat it.

[Stay at home: guidance for households with possible Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection](#)

[Guidance on social distancing for everyone in the UK and protecting older people and vulnerable adults](#)

## **Closure of schools**

After schools shut their gates this afternoon, they will remain closed until further notice except for children of key workers and vulnerable children, as part of the country's ongoing response to Coronavirus.

As frustrating as it is, children need to heed the advice surrounding social distancing.

Essentially, children who can stay at home, should stay at home but further information for parents and carers can be found at the link below.

[Closure of educational settings: information for parents and carers](#)

## **Reduced Southeastern timetable will be introduced from Monday 23 March**

From Monday 23rd March, Southeastern will introduce a reduced timetable to ensure that vital train services for key workers can keep running throughout a prolonged Coronavirus outbreak.

This national change has been made in agreement with government and means around half the usual number of trains will run. Enough capacity will be provided to allow those passengers making essential journeys to keep following the official guidance on social distancing.

The amended timetable will be introduced from Monday 23 March until further notice, and will be available in online journey planners by Sunday 22 March.

A map of the planned service frequency can be found by clicking on the button below.

[Southeastern planned service frequency from 23rd March](#)

## **Complete ban on evictions and additional protection for renters**

The Government has announced a package of measures to protect renters and landlords affected by Coronavirus.

- Emergency legislation to suspend new evictions from social or private rented accommodation while this national emergency is taking place
- No new possession proceedings through applications to the court to start during the crisis

- Landlords will also be protected as 3-month mortgage payment holiday is extended to Buy to Let mortgages.

## Financial help during the crisis

More information about the package of measures announced at Budget 2020 to support public services, individuals and businesses affected by Coronavirus can be found by clicking on the link below.

[Support for those affected by Coronavirus](#)

## Government agrees measures with energy industry to support vulnerable people

New emergency measures with the energy industry have been agreed by the government to protect the domestic energy supply of those most in need during the disruption caused by Coronavirus.

From 19th March, customers with pre-payment meters who may not be able to add credit can speak to their supplier about options to keep them supplied. This will benefit over 4 million customers.

This could include nominating a third party for credit top ups, having a discretionary fund added to their credit, or being sent a pre-loaded top up card so that their supply is not interrupted.

More broadly, any energy customer in financial distress will also be supported by their supplier, which could include debt repayments and bill payments being reassessed, reduced or paused where necessary, while disconnection of credit meters will be completely suspended.

## Testing

As of 16th March, the UK had tested more people than almost any other major economy outside of China, South Korea and Italy.

The UK passed its 2,500th case as of 18 March and has tested 828 people per million of its population. At this point in their outbreaks, Italy had conducted 386 tests per million citizens.

As of 18 March, 56,221 people in the UK had been tested for coronavirus. The number of tests has been rising from just over 1,000 a day at the end of February, when testing began, to more than 6,000 per day by mid-March.

The government plans to increase this to 10,000 a day initially, with a goal of reaching 25,000 tests a day within four weeks.

Tests that can show if someone has had the virus but either did not show any symptoms or only minor ones, will soon be available.

## Kent Police

Kent Police has contingency plans to deal with pandemics such as this. These are being activated and a Chief Superintendent is overseeing them. I am in regular contact with the Borough Commander and I am reassured that policing in Dartford will continue as normal.



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