

Gareth Johnson
MP for Dartford

9th April 2020



Coronavirus - update



Can I first of all wish you a peaceful Easter weekend.

As you are aware, the 'lockdown' continues until such time as further guidance is given from the Government.

I appreciate it is very frustrating but it is essential that we all stay home in order to

save lives. If we all play our part, then this awful situation will be over sooner. It is early days but there are some signs that the lockdown is beginning to work.

Despite the difficulties we are currently enduring, we have all seen so many positive stories of how people are pulling together in this time of crisis. This outbreak has brought out the best in so many people.

Throughout this period, my office will remain functioning and I can be contacted on:

gareth.johnson.mp@parliament.uk

0207 219 7047



Boots Bluewater - temporary closure

I have been notified by Boots that their Bluewater store will be temporarily closing with effect from the evening of Tuesday 14th April.

All customers and any prescription services, will be directed to the nearest alternative Boots. Any customers who have existing deliveries or prescriptions to collect at the store, will be contacted over the course of the next few days. Boots will update them on the best way to manage their prescriptions moving forward, including details of the nearest alternative Boots pharmacy. Customers can also find out further information about store locations and opening times on the Boots website.

Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

I want to update you on the opening of the [Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme](#).

I have now been informed, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme will open for claim submissions **on 20 April**.

Emails to employers and tax agents letting them know that updated guidance is available on [GOV.UK](#) at:

Employer guidance

- www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-for-wage-costs-through-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme

Employee guidance

- www.gov.uk/guidance/check-if-you-could-be-covered-by-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme

HMRC will shortly be able to provide employers with the information they need to prepare to make a claim. In the meantime, customers are being urged to review the guidance on [GOV.UK](#) to ensure they understand the latest position.

Employers should also reassure their staff that employees do not need to take action, as applications for funding to the scheme will be made via their employer.

Chancellor announces help for charities

Yesterday the Chancellor announced £750 million of funding for the charity sector. £370 million of that funding will support small, local charities working with vulnerable people.

In England, this support will be provided through organisations like the National Lottery Communities Fund.

£60 million of this funding will be made through the Barnett formula to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The UK government will also provide £360 million directly to charities providing essential services and supporting vulnerable people, as we battle the coronavirus.

Up to £200 million of those grants will support hospices, with the rest going to organisations like St Johns' Ambulance and the Citizens Advice Bureau, as well as

charities supporting vulnerable children, victims of domestic abuse, or disabled people.

And last night the BBC announced their Big Night In charity appeal on April 23rd and the Chancellor confirmed the Government will match pound for pound whatever the public decides to donate- starting with at least £20 million to the National Emergencies Trust appeal.



Kent Together

A 24 hour helpline has been set up to support vulnerable people in Kent who need urgent help, supplies or medication.

The helpline – called **Kent Together** – provides a single, convenient point of contact for anyone in the county who is in urgent need of help during the Coronavirus outbreak. It is a collaboration between KCC, central Government, District, Borough and local councils, the voluntary and community sector, the NHS, emergency services and other partners to ensure help is at hand for vulnerable people.

It is also the place to report your concerns about the welfare of someone else.

Kent Together is being coordinated by Kent County Council which will feed the information through the network of volunteers, district and borough council teams and local support groups, to ensure people get the support they need, when they need it.

People's needs will be assessed and staff will liaise with Community Hubs in the districts to prioritise those who need urgent help.

If you are vulnerable and have an urgent need that cannot be met through existing support networks, you can contact the Kent Together helpline at www.kent.gov.uk/KentTogether or by calling on 03000 41 92 92. It is a 24 hour service.

Kent County Council also has a page on its website answering frequently-asked questions and the very latest Coronavirus information on its service updates page.

Visit www.kent.gov.uk to find out more.

Emergency worker attacks

Sixteen Kent MPs have signed a letter that has been sent to Kent's judiciary. The purpose of the cross-party letter is to convey their view that emergency workers deserve protection from those that deliberately cough or spit at them.

It was with great anger that Kent MP's learned of a number of incidents where Kent Police had been both spat at and coughed at by people claiming to have coronavirus.

Kent Police Chief Constable Alan Pughsley said: "My officers will always place themselves in harm's way to protect the public and in doing so they are sadly and unacceptably assaulted in the lawful execution of their duty. It is not unusual to have up to a dozen officer assaults over a single weekend and a growing number now include being spat at. The personal impact on my staff (and their families) requires months of medical testing and a great deal of anxiety until such tests have been completed. I am saddened that this behaviour is increasing, and I will stop at nothing to bring those disgraceful offenders to justice."

Kent's Police and Crime Commissioner Matthew Scott said: "Kent Police Officers, staff and volunteers are on the front line every day keeping us safe and protecting people from harm. It's disgusting that there are a few who think it is acceptable to spit at or attack them – and even more so when trying to cause fear by threatening them with covid-19. I hope that the law will be used to protect all emergency services and key workers with long prison sentences for those who attack them."

Gareth Johnson
Member of Parliament for Dartford



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

6th April 2020

Dear Sirs,

I am contacting you on behalf of the Members of Parliament below, representing the population of Kent, who we all serve.

We are grateful to you for the diligent approach you take in ensuring justice is administered appropriately in this county. The contribution you make to the justice system is such that people can have confidence that we have a fair and robust approach in our local courts and we pay tribute to you for this.

This letter is an unprecedented approach to Kent's judiciary by its Members of Parliament during unprecedented times. There is a separation of powers that rightly exists in this country, yet it is also right we express our constituents' views.

We believe that any person, convicted in Kent's Courts of coughing or spitting at or in any other way threatening an emergency worker by using coronavirus, should expect an immediate term of imprisonment.

Assaulting an emergency worker by coughing or spitting at them is a despicable act at any time. Carrying out such an act at this time is particularly repugnant.

Sadly, Kent Police has experienced a number of incidents this week where their officers have been coughed and spat at by people claiming to have the virus. I am sure you will agree that our emergency workers deserve protection from this.

There should be no doubt in any person's mind that if they deliberately spit at or cough at an emergency worker in this county, then an immediate term of imprisonment will follow.

Judicial decisions must always rest with the judiciary but we feel compelled to make you aware of the strength of feeling held by us and our constituents at this time.

Yours faithfully,

Gareth Johnson

Craig Mackinlay

Damian Collins

Tracey Crouch

Kelly Tolhurst

Laura Trott

Helen Grant

Greg Clark

Gordon Henderson

Rehman Chishti

Adam Holloway

Sir Roger Gale

Damian Green

Tom Tugendhat

Rosie Duffield

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