

Health Secretary reminds the public of the message to Stay at Home

Today's media briefing at St Andrew's House was conducted by the Health Secretary, Jeane Freeman, along with National Clinical Director Jason Leitch and Chief Nursing Officer Fiona McQueen.

In Lothian there have been 2,665 confirmed cases, 165 people in hospital at midnight last night with confirmed cases of Covid-19 and 8 people in ICU.

In England the total number of deaths in the country now total 25,691.

This is what Ms Freeman said:

"Good afternoon, and thank you for joining us for today's briefing.

"I want to start this afternoon by updating you on some of the key statistics in relation to COVID-19 in Scotland.

"As at 9 o'clock this morning, there have been 15,101 positive cases confirmed – an increase of 60 from yesterday.

"A total of 1,329 patients are in hospital with COVID-19 – 845 who have been confirmed as having COVID, and 484 who are suspected of having the virus. That represents a total change of 24 from yesterday, including an increase of four in the number of confirmed cases.

"A total of 44 people last night were in intensive care with

confirmed or suspected COVID-19. And that is a decrease of six since yesterday.

“I am also able to confirm today that since 5 March, a total of 3,560 patients who had tested positive for the virus have been able to leave hospital, and I wish all of them well.

“Regrettably, I also have to report that in the last 24 hours, nine deaths have been registered of patients who have been confirmed through a test as having COVID-19 – that takes the total number of deaths in Scotland, under that measurement, to 2,270.

“It is worth bearing in mind that fewer deaths tend to be registered at the weekend than on other days of the week – and that is almost certainly part of the reason why today’s figure is relatively low.

“And, as always, I want to stress that these numbers are not simply statistics. They represent individuals who were loved, who were valued, and whose loss is a source of grief to very many. So I want to send my deepest condolences to everyone who has lost a loved one to this virus.

“As Health Secretary, I also want to once again thank those working in our health and care sectors. That thanks is due to all staff – in care homes, in GP practices and COVID assessment centres, emergency dental and eyecare, paramedics, procurement staff, people working in NHS 24; and the many cooks, cleaners, porters and maintenance staff who make all of this possible.

“What you do is essential to the health and wellbeing of our country. And all of us owe you a huge debt of gratitude.

“I have one issue that I want to update you on, before I remind everyone of the guidance in place right now – and it is directly relevant to the point that I have just made, about the importance of frontline workers.

“Social care workers have always played a vital and valuable role – but the importance of what they do has never been more apparent than during this emergency period.

“Several employers already offer employment contracts to social care workers which are broadly in line with the Scottish Government’s fair work principles – but it is clear that others do not.

“At this time, even more than is usually the case, that cannot be justified. It is not acceptable for any social care worker to be faced with the impossible situation of testing positive for the virus, knowing that their weekly income will reduce to only the level of statutory sick pay. So we have intervened to ensure that social care workers do not face that situation, but receive better levels of sick pay. It is also the case that for some social care workers, their contract of employment offers no cover for death in service. Again, that is not acceptable, so our intervention will also ensure that in the tragic circumstances of this pandemic, when a social care worker dies their next of kin will receive financial support.

“That sick pay fund will ensure that care workers who test positive for COVID-19 will receive sick pay above the current statutory level of £95.85 a week.

“The death in service benefit will see a one-off payment of £60,000 made to a named survivor of any social care worker who dies without death in service cover in their contracted pension arrangements. And both these arrangements will be retrospective.

“Over the course of the next week, we will work with local government, social care providers and trades unions on the details. But our aim is clear. This Scottish Government will provide fair benefits care workers. They have continually shown, in recent weeks, how vital their work is. And we must help them, as they provide help to those who need it.

“The people in our health and social care services are doing a tremendous job, but they need us to play our part. And part of that is by following the rules that we have put in place.

“So I think it is essential today to remind everyone – because it is hugely important – what we mean by Self-Isolation, and what we are asking you to do.

“That message may have become confused in the last 24 hours because of events in other parts of the United Kingdom, so let me be clear what we mean here in Scotland.

“Self-isolation means the following – if you think you have the virus – if you have a persistent cough, a fever or loss of taste and / or smell, you should self-isolate at home for a minimum of seven days. In that time you should get tested if you can – bearing in mind that testing is now open to anyone over the age of five who has symptoms.

“At the same time – anyone in your household should self-isolate for 14 days – to see if they develop the virus, and if they do, they should isolate for seven days from that point.

“On the eighth day, if you do not have any more symptoms, you can go back out, back to the lockdown measures that apply across the country.

“Self-isolation is not the same as lockdown. When you are self-isolating you should not go to the shops, or out for exercise or to help others. You should not leave the house for any reason.

“Instead if you need anything you should have it delivered to you, whether that’s by family and friends, local volunteers, supermarket delivery services or by phoning the National Helpline on 0800 111 4000.

“If you are concerned about vulnerable people who are with you or that you care for – again – phone the National Helpline – 0800 111 4000.

“I cannot emphasise enough how important self-isolation is, as part of our efforts – your efforts – to tackle the virus. It is all about breaking that chain of transmission, and I encourage everyone who has symptoms to follow these rules completely.

“We hope, as the First Minister indicated, that later in the week we will be able to confirm that some lockdown restrictions – especially relating to outdoor activities – will be relaxed.

“But even if those restrictions are relaxed, some key advice – including what I’ve just read out on isolating if you have symptoms of COVID, as well on physical distancing, washing your hands and the use of face coverings – will remain the same. In fact, they will become even more important – to avoid undoing all the progress that you have made through your sacrifices and your compliance with the rules, particularly as we move into Test and Protect.

“For the moment, however, all our key public health guidance remains unchanged.

“So please stay at home – except for essential purposes, such as daily exercise; buying essential items such as food or

medicine; or going to essential work which you cannot do from home.

“You can exercise more than once a day – but when you do leave the house, stay more than 2 metres from other people. And do not meet up with other households other than your own.

“Please wear a face covering where appropriate – for example if you are in a busy shop or on public transport. And wash your hands thoroughly and regularly.

“I know that this is a bank holiday weekend – and that talk of emerging from lockdown probably makes following these restrictions even harder. But the fact that we have stuck with them so far, that is what makes it possible to think about relaxing them.

“By doing the right thing, all of us – all of you – are helping to slow the spread of the virus, protecting our NHS, and you are saving lives.

“So thank you to every single person who is doing that.”