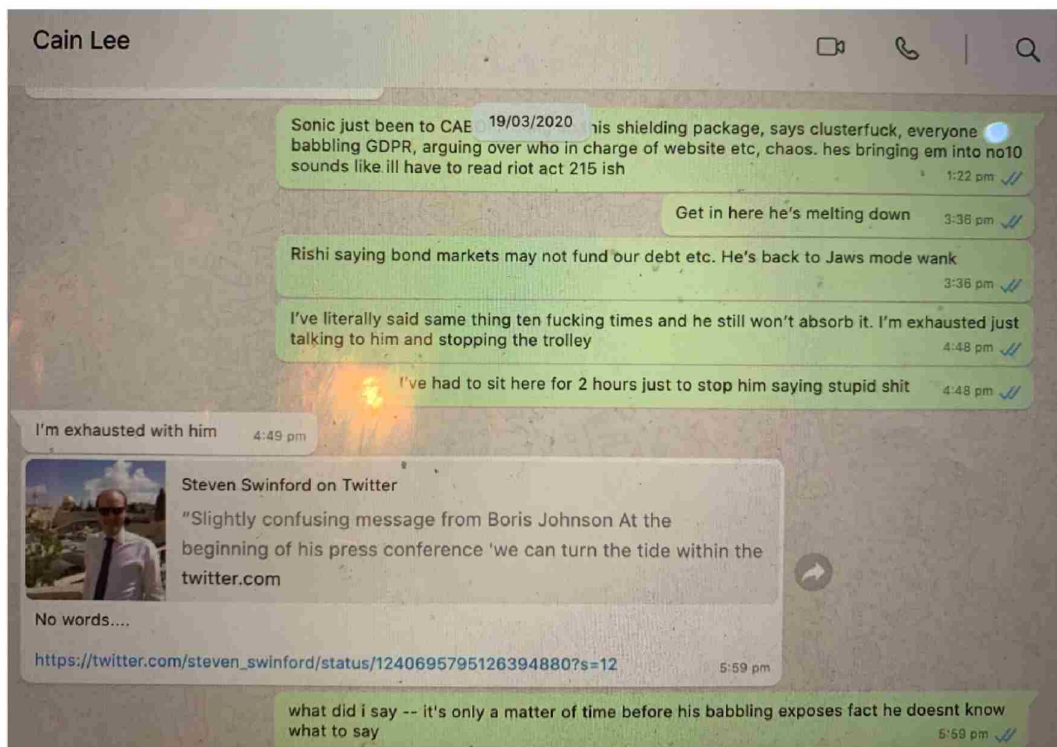


everything down ASAP, build testing 100X etc, and that on current trends London's ICUs would be overwhelmed within ~15 days.

243. At the end of the 18th Lee Cain and I had some very difficult discussions with the PM who had swung back to 'I should be the Mayor of Jaws, we've fucked up' by accelerating. He was also spending time on irrelevant or frankly alarming things (e.g talking about meeting Lebedev which he did the next day to discuss, as I was told at the time, his peerage and bunging cash to the *Evening Standard*, which I unsuccessfully opposed).
244. By the evening of 18th rumours of London lockdown had reached the media and there was speculation of No10 planning to use the army to encircle London. (I assured the BBC that this was untrue and asked that they not report it as I feared it would spark mayhem.)
245. By the morning of 19/3 we had stopped him trolleying but then there was another meeting with the Chancellor who raised the spectre of a financial armageddon, bond markets collapsing etc. This prompted another bout of 'Mayor of Jaws'. Lee Cain and I again went through what a disaster it would be to now switch back to 'leave the beaches open'.
246. This exchange sums up the problem (the top message refers to the shielding debacle): [INQ000267920]



247. He would keep bouncing back and forth on this over coming days according to who he spoke to last. What really changed is the tide of the bureaucracy shifted in that week from 'herd immunity, single peak' (Monday) to 'we must suppress or catastrophe' (by Friday).
248. On 19/3 I was appalled to be told that Mark Sweeney, the senior official recently put in charge of covid by the Cabinet Secretary, was a) self-isolating and b) was not working on covid that day because he was working on the Windrush report. (NB. I am not blaming