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Coronavirus (COVID-19) update: First Minister's speech 26 June 2020

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Good afternoon, and welcome to today's briefing.

I'll start with the usual daily update on Covid-19.

An additional 17 positive cases were confirmed yesterday - that takes the total now in Scotland of confirmed cases to 18,213.

Coronavirus update from the First Minister: 26 June 2020





It's possibly worth noting that the percentage of people tested who turn out to be positive is now well below 1% on a daily basis. Yesterday it was 0.3%, which is one of many signs of the progress we are making.

A total of 823 patients are currently in hospital with the virus either confirmed or suspected. That is three fewer than yesterday, and it includes a reduction of five in the number of confirmed cases.

A total of 17 people last night were in intensive care and that is one fewer than yesterday.

Since 5 March, a total of 4,042 patients who had tested positive for Covid-19 and needed hospital treatment have been able to leave hospital. I wish all of them well.

And in the last 24 hours, I'm very pleased to say that no deaths were registered of a patient confirmed through a test as having COVID-19. It's worth noting that when I've announced a zero figure for deaths in last couple of weeks, it's been reflecting deaths registered at the weekend and we know those can be artificially low.

Today is the first time that figure has been at zero on a weekday since 20 March, which is before lockdown began.

That is really significant and it is down to the sacrifices of each and every one of you so thank you to all of you.

And it means that the total number of deaths in Scotland - under that measurement of people confirmed by a test as having the virus - remains at 2,482.

The loss of life is still devastating of course, and I want to send my deepest condolences to everyone behind these statistics who has lost a loved one as a result of this illness. As I hope we continue to report lower numbers of deaths, we should never become inured to the human suffering behind these figures, so again my thoughts are with everybody who has suffered bereavement.

I also want to express my thanks – as I always do – to our health and care workers, and indeed to all our key workers across the country. I'm going to make a special mention today, given an issue which I'll mention later on, to our refuse collectors who - right throughout this crisis - have been working to help keep our country clean and tidy. Key workers the length and breadth of the country are doing extraordinary work and you have my, and the Scottish Government's, very grateful thanks.

There's one main issue I want to focus on today. And it concerns a very significant change which comes into effect next week.

From Monday, all retail premises with outdoor entrances and exits will be able to reopen. That change doesn't apply to indoor shopping centres yet – they will have to wait a bit longer. But it does cover the vast majority of shops.

Many stores have - of course – been planning for this moment, for some time.

At the start of phase 1 - in late May - we published guidance to help retailers prepare for a safe reopening.

This morning, I visited the New Look store at Fort Kinnaird, in Edinburgh. And I saw for myself, the kinds of measures which shops are putting in place.

Among other things, those measures include new limits to the number of customers that are allowed in store at any one time; new processes for cleaning and quarantining items which have been handled; and new signs to help with physical distancing.

Alongside these in-store preparations, retailers and local authorities have also been making changes to the public spaces outside shops. For example, distance markers are being laid down, and street furniture is being removed – to allow for safe outdoor queuing.

All of that has required an enormous amount of work. So I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who is helping our retail sector to get back up and running. At the same time, I also want to thank the key workers – in shops and pharmacies – who have kept our country going over the past three months, because they've been working in what we have called essential shops. All of your efforts are hugely appreciated as well.

Scotland's retailers are making the necessary preparations, but I want to stress that all of us – each and every one of us - have a role to play in making sure that this reopening can work and work safely.

That's why today the Scottish Government is publishing new guidance for customers. It sets out the basic rules that all of us need to follow, in order to keep safe ourselves and to help keep others safe too.

As the guidance says, there are some people who should not be going into shops at all for now – for example, those who have COVID-19 symptoms and are self-isolating, and those who are in the shielding group.

If you are in either of these groups – or if you need extra support – then you can have food and medicine delivered to you – that might be by family and friends, local volunteers, or supermarket delivery services. If you need help over and above that you can call our National Helpline – the number is 0800 111 4000, and help, including the delivery of essential food and medicines can be arranged.

For those of us who are able to go to the shops from Monday, the guidance is clear.

You should shop locally if you can. For now, use the five mile limit as a guide – and don't travel further, unless it's absolutely necessary. I appreciate that for people living in rural or island communities, it might not be possible to stick to that kind of limit – but for most of us, it should be, and it is perhaps an opportunity to support our local shops in the process as well.

You should try to shop on you own – or in as small a group as possible. And avoid going to crowded shops at peak times – choose a time when the shops are likely to be less busy.

When you do go into a shop, please wear a face covering. That's something that we are advising you strongly to do.

I wore a face covering this morning, when I visited New Look. So I know that it takes a bit of getting used to. But you do get used to it.

And the hard fact is that a bit of discomfort - which none of us enjoy - is preferable to getting COVID or passing it on to someone else.

Face coverings serve a really important purpose, in enclosed spaces like shops.

By wearing one, you reduce the risk that you will unknowingly pass on the virus to other people. And other people, by wearing a face covering, are helping to protect you. So please – unless medical reasons prevent it – wear a face covering if you're going into a shop.

In addition, you should only visit stores which have infection control measures in place. You should use the hand sanitiser they provide – and at New Look this morning there were plenty of hand sanitiser stations around – but take your own as well in case you can't find any that is available.

And finally, when we are out shopping, all of us need to remain patient and polite.

There are going to be times when retail staff ask us to follow rules which we're not used to because they haven't previously been in place. So it's important for all of us to listen to them, and

because they haven't previously been in place. So it's important for all of us to listen to them, and to treat staff – and our fellow customers – with respect. These rules are there for the protection of all of us. Abusing retail staff because they're telling you to do something you don't want to do is not acceptable. These people are at work and have to be kept safe too so please, treat them with respect and courtesy.

The guidance we're publishing today is very straightforward – it's also extremely important. So please take a look at it. As with all our guidance you'll find it on the Scottish Government's website.

By following the guidance, we can help to support our retail sector. This crisis has been and continues to be tough for our economy overall, but within that the retail sector has been hard hit, so I want to see people support our shops in communities the length and breadth of the country, but make sure we do it safely and responsibly so that this important step out of lockdown can be taken while we continue to suppress the virus.

And that really is my concluding point.

Suppressing the virus, driving it as far as we can towards total elimination has to be our overriding priority.

We have made exceptional progress over the past three months, and the figures today highlight that. But it has only been possible, because the vast majority of us have stuck to the rules.

You'll keep hearing me say this time and time again, because it's true and it is important that we never forget it. The virus hasn't gone away, and it will not go away of its own accord. There are plenty of parts of the world right now where it is still on the rise, and there are some parts of the world where, unfortunately, it appears to be on the rise again as societies and economies open up. The warning signs are all around us and we must not ignore them. We ignore them at our peril.

A big concern for me is that – as we ease more restrictions – people drop their guard. It is perhaps human nature. And of course, the potential for that increases – as people are out and about, and seeing each other much more.

We saw an example of that last night in Kelvingrove Park in Glasgow. And while I understand people's desire to enjoy the sunshine – on the very days of the year when we actually have any - please avoid crowded places.

If you find that the place you want to visit is busy, don't go there. Try to find somewhere quieter or go back at a time when it is going to be quiet. Crowded places are a big risk, and that is true of outdoor crowded places – although the risk might be slightly lower than it is of indoor places. Crowded places generally, please seek to avoid them.

When large crowds gather, it provides opportunities for the virus to spread. And this highly infectious virus - which we know can be deadly and increasingly we know it can do long term health damage – this virus will take those opportunities if we give them to it.

So we mustn't provide them.

And, of course, if you are out and about, enjoying public spaces responsibly, please take litter home with you. Refuse collectors across the country are doing an incredible job – and I thank them - but they should not have to clean up after outdoor gatherings.

So please, now more than ever our individual decisions affect all of us - they affect society as a whole. That means all of us need to be considerate of one another. That should be the case at all times but it is particularly true right now. It's really important that we care for each other, that we look out for each other, that we remember that the things we do could harm other people. And if we all act in that collective spirit of love and solidarity, as we have throughout this, then we will continue to see that progress continue.

So before I hand over to the Economy Secretary, I want to remind everyone what key public health guidance says.

At the moment, you should still only meet up with other households outdoors. So if you think it may rain, plan for that, don't go indoors just because it's raining.

And only meet with up to two other households at any one time. The restrictions on larger gatherings – and it's worth stressing that includes mass gatherings such as demonstrations - remain enforceable by law.

If you are visiting people, you should only be going indoors to use the toilet, or to get through to a garden. And remember to clean any surfaces you touch, as you do so.

I will end with facts, as I have done repeatedly in the last few days, which is the public health campaign summarising the key points you need to remember.

- Face coverings should be worn in enclosed spaces such as shops. They are mandatory on public transport.
- Avoid crowded places.
- Clean your hands and hard surfaces regularly.
- Two metre distancing remains the rule.
- and Self isolate, and book a test, if you have symptoms.

If we all remember and abide by these five basic measures, all of us can stay safe, protect others and save lives.

We have made so much progress - but it will reverse in a heartbeat if we drop our guard.

It would be heartbreaking - for so many reasons - to go backwards now.

So please let's all unite to keep this virus under control.

I want to thank all of you for what you have been doing, and what I know you will continue to do, to help us achieve that.

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