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COVID-19: What is the UK Government's plan?

(Intervento – Annah Cheatham)

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The Post Brexit British Government

As we observe the British Government's sometimes confused attempts to manage its response to Covid-19, it's good to remember that cross-border chaos has characterised UK politics and foreign relations for several years

- Retreat from multilateralism
- Retreat from global solutions
- Remain in transitory stasis

The UK government's response: atypical, quixotic or intentionally less robust?

- Despite there being an EU response to the virus, the action of individual states has been the primary focus
- Do the approaches of individual member states indicate a narrow, protectionist agendas ?
- Is this the new European norm?

UK Policy Response Timeline

Friday 13 March: Herd Immunity

Monday 16 March: Social distancing and work from home if possible

Tuesday 17 March - Friday 20 March 2020: The government had issued the following sweeping guidance:

- All individuals returning to the UK from countries with suspected cases have been asked to self-quarantine for 14 days.
- The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has advised that all non-essential travel plans be cancelled.

- The government has advised all citizens to engage in social distancing – a departure from the previous advice that urged social distancing only for high-risk individuals and those over 70 years old
- Citizens have been asked to avoid non-essential use of public transport, avoid rush hour, work from home and avoid gatherings in spaces such as pubs, cinemas and restaurants. This advice has now been made and enforced by order
- Businesses have been urged to encourage their employees to work from home and to provide employees with all of the support and equipment that they require to do so

- Schools will be closed from Monday 23 March with only a few remaining open for the children of key workers
- 5pm Friday 20 March 2020, the government ordered all pubs, bars, restaurants, cinemas, gyms and theatres to close.

Effect of Covid-19 on the NHS

- System under strain
- Too few tests
- Too few doctors and nurses
- Too few masks
- Too many people ignoring the government advice
- Confusion over official NHS guidance For example, until the morning of Tuesday 17 March 2020, the NHS 111 online service was still telling travellers returning from Italy and Spain that there was no need to self-isolate.

Next steps on NHS response to Covid-19 as at 17 March 2020

- Free up maximum possible inpatient and critical care capacity
- Prepare for and respond to large numbers of inpatients requiring respiratory support
- Support NHS staff and support maximum availability
- Stress test operational readiness
- Remove routine burdens

Covid-19: Economic Response

- Government will pay 80% of employee salaries and examining how to provide similar support to self-employed persons
- Plans are being developed to take over rail lines and provide bailouts to airlines
- Loans to other businesses are also being considered and the Treasury is working on a plan to take equity stakes in vulnerable businesses
- All Private hospitals are being used by the NHS to treat virus patients
- Government is deferring tax payments
- Economic stimulus plans are expected to increase the budget deficit to over 10% of GDP, higher than the Financial Crisis in 2009



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