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Easter this year was certainly like no other - it's one we'll all remember, albeit not necessarily for positive reasons! While it's so hard to be separated from friends and family, we owe a huge thanks to everyone who has continued to stay at home, to save lives and protect our healthcare service. Going through this alone must be incredibly difficult. From my experiences of being at home with my own family I also appreciate the occasional challenges presented by living together 24/7 - particularly for those who are juggling home-working and home-schooling!

Returning to work after recovering from his own battle with Covid-19, the Prime Minister has been clear that there are tough times ahead, with tricky decisions to be made. Lifting the lockdown too early could have dire consequences, risking a second peak, a second lockdown and further harm to the economy. We need to keep going to protect our loved ones and stop the spread, making sure all of our hard work so far is not in vain.



Having celebrated Easter and St George's day remotely, sadly we will also now be commemorating Victory In Europe (VE) Day on May 8th from the comfort of our own homes. The Government has provided [guidance](#) on how to throw your socially distant street party and the Lee on the Solent VE Day will be going live on [Facebook](#) [at 2.45pm](#), with entertainment from 1940's singers to a Churchill impersonator.

From Sunday 3rd, in collaboration with the fantastic [Gosport Society](#), I will be posting a daily historical picture of the Gosport Constituency from WWII leading up to May 8th on my Facebook page - highlighting the crucial role that our peninsula played in the war effort and the sacrifices made at home and abroad.

My Facebook Page



Given how difficult this period has been for everyone, it has been fantastic to see such beautiful rainbow displays across the constituency spreading cheer and hope. I have been asking residents to send in their creative artworks to ensure that everyone, especially those unable to leave home, can enjoy these fab creations. They are posted daily on my Facebook and Instagram pages - if you would like to send your own picture in, please email caroline.dinenage.mp@parliament.uk.

I have also been sharing the details of local, independent businesses who are offering special delivery services at the moment on my Facebook page and website. If you would like to be included and are not listed, please send an email to the same address.

Assistance In Isolation

This lockdown period has been an incredibly lonely time for many people - unable to see our friends, families and loved ones.

[#Let'sTalkAboutLoneliness](#) has been newly launched to support charities which tackle loneliness and provide support.

You can call an NHS Volunteer Responder for a chat on [0808 196 3646](tel:08081963646) or sign up to [Age UK's](#) or local [Gosport Voluntary Action](#) befriending services.

Using technology, like apps such as Facetime, Zoom and Skype, as well as a good old fashioned phone call, we can all check in and chat with our loved ones to ensure they are coping both physically and mentally. These apps have certainly been a lifeline for staying in touch with my own clan!!



As we remain in lockdown, many local businesses and charities continue to be hit financially by Covid-19. Key changes have been made this month in response to the economic hardship, including [expanding the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme](#), changing the [new-starter furlough date](#), introducing a [Future Fund](#) financial boost for innovative start-ups, an [extra £1.6b for councils](#), [£750m package for charities](#) and [Bounce Back loans](#) for small businesses - interest free for the first 12 months.

The Government is also going to match the £27 million fund-raised by the [BBC Big Night In](#), with £20 million going to the [National Emergencies Trust](#) and £7 million split between [Comic Relief](#) and [Children In Need](#).

Nearly £13bn has already been distributed by the Treasury to local authorities for the small business grant and Gosport Borough Council have already distributed over £9m to 760 businesses. There are still many businesses who have not applied, so remember to check if you are eligible below!

The Solent Local Enterprise Partnership (our regional growth team) have come up with a great Pay It Forward scheme to back local small businesses. This project will help businesses generate funds from their customer base through a crowdfund site - maybe

through advance selling of goods or services, then the LEP will match the money that is pledged up to £2000 per micro businesses and £5000 per small business.

Small Business Grant

Solent LEP Pay It Forward

Business Support

Support For The Self-Employed

Individual Support

Despite being at home, my team continue to work as usual, keeping up with local services and organisations. I spoke to [Gosport Voluntary Action](#) who are working around the clock to support vulnerable people. They are looking for volunteers with experience of management, logistics, social media or fundraising. You can contact them [here](#).

The brilliant [Acts of Kindness](#) team are supporting local people with a food bank and other vital services, they need donations to help cope with the additional demand they are facing. Find out more [here](#).

I have also had talks with the Secretary of State and Ministers at the Department for Transport as well as Local Authorities to see what extra help is available to help keep the Gosport Ferry service running over this difficult period.

Those who now can get tested for coronavirus has expanded to:

- Essential workers - from shop staff to council workers, care professionals and teachers - with symptoms
- Over 65s with symptoms
- Those who must travel to work with symptoms
- Members of their households with symptoms

A new test site has opened at the Tipner Lorry Park in Portsmouth, PO2 8AN, 10-1pm and 2-5pm, 7 days a week. You can book via the online portal.

Book Your Test



Keeping in touch with constituents at this time is more important than ever, to ensure that people have the necessary support and can continue as best they can during this period. Thank you to everyone who submitted a question to my Facebook Q&A on April 29th, I hope it provided useful information for residents.

I am also posting a weekly video with local and national updates to keep people informed on my [Facebook page](#) and [instagram](#).

As ever, please continue to watch the daily Downing Street Press Conferences and keep an eye on my website which is updated regularly. You can of course also contact me at caroline.dinenage.mp@parliament.uk if you have any concerns or are in need of any assistance.

Please continue to stay safe and follow [Government guidance](#) so that we can stop the spread of this deadly disease.

*Best wishes,
Caroline x*



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