

Government Launches Coronavirus Information Service on WhatsApp

The new free to use service aims to provide official, trustworthy and timely information and advice about coronavirus (COVID-19), and will further reduce the burden on NHS services.

This will help combat the spread of coronavirus misinformation in the UK, as well as helping ensure people stay home, protect the NHS and save lives.

The GOV.UK Coronavirus Information Service is an automated 'chatbot' service which will allow the British public to get answers to the most common questions about coronavirus direct from government.

The service will provide information on topics such as coronavirus prevention and symptoms, the latest number of cases in the UK, advice on staying at home, travel advice and myth busting.

The service will also allow the government to send messages to all opted-in users if required.

To use the free GOV.UK Coronavirus Information Service on WhatsApp, simply add 07860 064422 in your phone contacts and then message the word 'hi' in a WhatsApp message to get started.

A set of menu options is then presented which the user can choose from and then be sent relevant guidance from GOV.UK pages as well as links to GOV.UK for further information.

Prof Yvonne Doyle, Medical Director, Public Health England, said:

This service will help us ensure the public has a trusted source for the right information about coronavirus, updated with the latest public health guidance and providing assurance that they are not misled by any of the false information circulating.

Matt Idema, Chief Operating Officer, WhatsApp, said:

At difficult times like these, people are using WhatsApp more than ever to connect with and support their friends, family and communities. We are pleased to be able to provide the UK Government with the communications tools to help them answer the public's questions about the virus with reliable, timely health advice, in order to keep people safe.

Other recent Government communications include:

Earlier this week the government texted people across the UK to inform them of the new rules announced by the Prime Minister on 23 March 2020. Details here –
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/coronavirus-sms-messages>

The Government has also sent text messages to the vulnerable as part of the shielding package announced by the Prime Minister on 22 March 2020. Details here –
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>