

HSE's Chief Scientific Adviser welcomes introduction of new Covid-19 research programme

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has been asked to lead one of seven studies as part of a national COVID-19 research programme funded by the UK government and fronted by the Government's Chief Scientific Adviser, Sir Patrick Vallance.

Britain's regulator for workplace health and safety has been asked to lead a study addressing the transmission of COVID-19 in the environment, including in workplaces, transport and other public settings. The study is structured around five themes, each led by a leading scientist in the field: Professor Cath Noakes (Leeds University), Allan Bennett (Public Health England), Prof Wendy Barclay (Imperial College), Prof Martie van Tongeren (University of Manchester) and Dr Yiqun Chen (HSE).

Reacting to the news, HSE's Chief Scientific Adviser, Professor Andrew Curran said:

"HSE is privileged to lead this programme and use our experience in workplace risk management to improve our understanding of how the virus is transmitted. We employ some of the leading scientists in workplace health and safety who are skilled in addressing complex issues such as this. We will also harness the knowledge and expertise of our counterparts in other organisations to coordinate the most effective response to answer these important questions.

"As findings emerge, they will be shared. We hope they will feed directly into effective approaches and guidance that will help improve practices in workplaces. This work will yield information on an ongoing basis, improving our understanding of what a COVID-Secure workplace looks like. When infection rates will allow sustained re-opening of the economy, working safely will be even more crucial than it is now."

The National Core Studies are a small group of key research projects and infrastructure programmes designed to answer essential policy and operational questions as the UK enters the first winter period of the coronavirus pandemic.

The seven studies will examine fundamental questions such as: the levels of infection in the general population and in specific settings such as schools and nursing homes, the role of different environments in enhancing spread, and whether antibodies confer protection and for how long.

The programme will be a multi-agency response with each study lead drawing upon the best scientific knowledge and expertise available in the UK from within government and academia to help ensure these and other critical questions are answered quickly and well.

About HSE

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is Britain's national regulator for workplace health and safety. We prevent work-related death, injury and ill health through regulatory actions that range from influencing behaviours across whole industry sectors through to targeted interventions on individual businesses. These activities are supported by globally recognised scientific expertise. www.hse.gov.uk

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