[New technology challenge to support people who are isolating](#)

The funding will be available to innovators who can find digital ways to support people who need help during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

The 'Techforce19' challenge aims to support those who need to stay at home for several weeks and need help. This could include people who need mental health support or who have social care needs.

Funding of up to £25,000 per company is available.

The programme is looking for digital solutions that can be launched in the next few weeks, and could include:

- providing remote social care — for example, by locating and matching qualified carers to those in need
- optimising the volunteer sector — for example, by developing tools to recruit, train and coordinate local volunteers into clinical and non-clinical workers
- improving mental health support — for example, by making it easier to discover and deliver mental health services and support
- any other solutions to ease pressures on services and people during this time

This technology will supplement existing support for those who may be most affected by staying at home for long periods of time.

The programme is being launched by NHSX and managed by PUBLIC, a GovTech venture firm. PUBLIC will not receive any payment for running this competition.

For more information on the programme and how to apply, visit techforce19.uk.

The government has strongly advised everyone to reduce social interaction to help minimise the spread of the virus, especially those aged 70 or over, people with underlying medical conditions or pregnant women.

Those considered most at risk of having serious complications from the virus, for instance people receiving treatment for cancer, have also been asked to stay at home for 12 weeks as part of efforts to shield them from the virus.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

> Staying at home and avoiding contact with others will be absolutely necessary in reducing the spread of this virus and ultimately it will save lives.

However, we know isolation is not easy — especially for older people, those who live alone, have mental health problems or those who care for others.

If people cannot leave the house, we need to quickly find ways to bring support to them and today I am calling on the strength of our innovative technology sector to take on this challenge.

Techforce19 will mobilise the UK's incredible reservoir of talent to develop simple, accessible tools that can be rolled out quickly and help tackle the effect of social isolation.

I am calling on our brilliant tech sector to take on this challenge.

Matthew Gould, Chief Executive of NHSX, said:

Tech can play an important role in helping the country deal with the challenges created by coronavirus. This competition is focused on the problems created by isolation, which lend themselves to digital solutions.

It will allow NHSX to accelerate the development of those solutions, so within weeks they can help those in isolation suffering from loneliness, mental health issues and other problems.