

NHS COVID-19 app launches across England and Wales

- NHS COVID-19 app launches nationwide to help control COVID-19 transmission alongside national and local contact tracing
- Features of the app include contact tracing using Bluetooth, risk alerts based on postcode district, QR check-in at venues, symptom checker and test booking – with user privacy and data security at its heart
- Businesses are now required by law to display the official NHS QR code posters from today so people can check-in at different premises with the app

People across England and Wales are being urged to download the NHS COVID-19 app to help control the spread of coronavirus and protect themselves and their loved ones as case numbers rise.

The app launches today, and after positive trials and rigorous testing is an important new tool to work alongside traditional contact tracing to help reduce the spread of the virus.

It will be available to those aged 16 and over in multiple languages. It forms a central part of the NHS Test and Trace service in England and the NHS Wales Test, Trace, Protect programme – identifying contacts of those who have tested positive for coronavirus.

As part of a major campaign to encourage downloads of the app a new advertisement will launch on primetime TV tonight with the strapline ‘Protect your loved ones. Get the app.’

Today the UK’s major mobile network operators, including Vodafone, Three, EE and O2, Sky and Virgin, have confirmed that all in-app activity will not come out of customers’ data allowance.

The contact tracing element of the app works by using low-energy Bluetooth to log the amount of time you spend near other app users, and the distance between you, so it can alert you if someone you have been close to later tests positive for COVID-19 – even if you don’t know each other.

The app will advise you to self-isolate if you have been in close contact with a confirmed case. It will also enable you to check symptoms, book a free test if needed and get your test results.

The app has been designed with user privacy in mind, so it tracks the virus, not people and uses the latest in data security technology to protect privacy. The system generates a random ID for an individual’s device, which can be exchanged between devices via Bluetooth (not GPS). These unique random IDs regenerate frequently to add an extra layer of security and preserve anonymity.

The app does not hold personal information such as your name, address or date

of birth, and only requires the first half of your postcode to ensure local outbreaks can be managed. No personal data is shared with the government or the NHS.

UK government Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

We are at a tipping point in our efforts to control the spread of this virus. With infection rates rising we must use every tool at our disposal to prevent transmission, including the latest technology.

We have worked extensively with tech companies, international partners, and privacy and medical experts – and learned from the trials – to develop an app that is secure, simple to use and will help keep our country safe.

Today's launch marks an important step forward in our fight against this invisible killer and I urge everyone who can to download and use the app to protect themselves and their loved ones.

From today certain businesses in England are required by law to display NHS Test and Trace QR codes so customers with the NHS COVID-19 app can use them to check-in. QR codes will help businesses meet their legal requirement to log contact details and allow public health leads to send alerts based on whether people have checked in at venues. So far, more than 160,000 businesses have already downloaded QR codes. Venues in Wales that are legally required to collect and keep a record of visitors will still need to do so.

The NHS Test and Trace team behind the app has worked closely with major tech companies, including Google and Apple, scientists within the Alan Turing Institute and Oxford University, Zuhlke Engineering, medical experts, privacy groups, at-risk communities and teams in countries across the world using similar apps – such as Germany, to develop an app that is safe, simple and secure.

The app has been through successful trials in the Isle of Wight, Newham and among NHS Volunteer Responders. Lessons learned have informed the final version that is launching today.

Dido Harding, Executive Chair of England's NHS Test and Trace Programme, said:

We want to make it as easy as possible for everyone to engage with England's NHS Test and Trace service. The NHS COVID-19 app enables the majority of people with a smartphone to find out if they are at risk of having caught the virus and need to self isolate, order a

test if they have symptoms, and access the right guidance and advice.

The features of this app, including QR code check-in at venues, work alongside our traditional contact tracing service and will help us to reach more people quickly in their communities to prevent further spread of the virus.

This is a welcome step in protecting those around us.

Simon Thompson, Managing Director of the NHS COVID-19 App, said:

We have worked tirelessly to develop the new NHS COVID-19 app and we are incredibly grateful to all residents of the Isle of Wight, London Borough of Newham, and NHS Volunteer Responders, the learnings and insight have made the app what it is today. We are now ready to roll-out the app across England and Wales.

This new version is so much more than just a contact tracing app – it has a range of features which will quickly alert you if you're at risk of coronavirus. The more people who use it, the better it works.

We are confident that every person who downloads the app will be helping to protect themselves and their loved ones.

Wales' Health and Social Services Minister, Vaughan Gething, said:

The launch of the NHS COVID-19 app is an important part of Wales' coronavirus response, bolstering our Test, Trace, Protect programme. The more people who download and use this app, the more it will help us to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

We have worked closely with the app development team to ensure it works seamlessly across England and Wales, providing people with the right advice based on where they live. In Wales, the app will complement our existing contact tracing and testing services and will further support our co-ordinated response to COVID-19 at both a local and national level.

I strongly encourage everyone in Wales to download and use the app to keep Wales safe.

In a joint statement Apple and Google said:

We built the exposure notifications system to enable public health authorities in their efforts to develop apps to help reduce the spread of the virus while ensuring people can trust in the privacy-preserving design. We are committed to supporting the government's effort to launch an app based on this technology.

Hamish MacLeod, Director at Mobile UK, said:

The mobile industry welcomes the opportunity to support the government's efforts to combat the global COVID-19 pandemic by zero-rating access to the new NHS COVID-19 app. Customers can be reassured that all in-app activity will not come out of their data allowance.

Helen Dickinson, Chief Executive of the British Retail Consortium, said:

The NHS COVID-19 app is a great addition to the safety measures already being put in by retailers. We hope it provides extra reassurance for customers and their families all across the country.

As well as contact tracing, the app has a range of additional, enhanced features that will help to reduce personal and public risk from COVID-19 as part of the wider testing and contact tracing service:

- alert: letting users know the level of coronavirus risk in their postcode district
- QR check-in: enabling users to check-in at a venue and alerting them if they have recently visited somewhere they may have come into contact with someone who later tests positive for COVID-19
- symptoms: allowing users to check if they have coronavirus symptoms and see if they need to order a free test
- test: helping users book a free test through the app and get results to know whether they have COVID-19
- isolate: if a user is told to self-isolate, a timer feature will help count down that period and access will be provided to relevant advice

More [information on the NHS COVID-19 app App explainer video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lCH__yEHa4s&) [App privacy video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lCH__yEHa4s&)

When someone reports symptoms through the app, it will detect any other app users that the person has been in close contact with over the past few days,

including unknown contacts such as someone they may have sat next to on public transport. The app will be able to anonymously alert these contacts and provide advice, including how to get a test if they have symptoms.

The mobile industry has committed to supporting the new app with the major operators Vodafone, Three, EE and O2 (including giffgaff and Tesco Mobile), Sky and Virgin, 'zero-rating' data charges for all in-app activity. This means customers will not be charged for data when using the in-app functions, or if they are directed out of the app to information on nhs.uk websites. If a customer is directed to other web pages outside of the app, this may use data from their allowance.

1. Customers will need data in order to download the Test and Trace app initially, this cannot be zero-rated.
2. In-app activity has been zero-rated by mobile operators. From the app, customers may be directed to nhs.uk websites, which have also been zero rated. However, if a user is passed from the app to websites on gov.uk, data charges will apply.
3. O2, Three UK and Virgin Media have zero-rated the subdomain .gov.uk for [registering a COVID-19 test](#)
4. A full [list of compatible devices](#) is available.

Those who may not have access to the app, or the ability to use a smartphone should continue to use traditional contact tracing services provided by NHS Test and Trace or, NHS Wales Test, Trace, Protect.

Find out more information about [how businesses can prepare for the NHS COVID-19 app](#).