

Study launched to monitor prevalence of COVID-19 in schools

- Teachers and pupils to be voluntarily swab tested as part of new COVID-19 surveillance study
- Up to 100 schools tested across England by end of summer term
- Data used to better understand the rates of transmission within schools

A new voluntary COVID-19 study to assess and monitor the prevalence of COVID-19 among pre-school, primary and secondary school pupils and teachers has been launched by the government.

Public Health England's (PHE) study will add to data on antibody and virus prevalence already being collected through national surveillance programmes and other nationwide studies, which report weekly.

The initial phase will collect data from up to 100 schools from across England, including 15 schools in London, with results available over the summer. We are targeting around 200 staff and children at each school.

Data will be fed back to inform a potential second phase study in September.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock said:

A critical pillar of our COVID-19 testing strategy is surveillance – testing samples of the population to gain a deeper understanding of the spread of COVID-19, especially in those who may not have symptoms.

This study will help us better understand how common asymptomatic and mild cases of COVID-19 are so that we can support parents, pupils and teachers and support staff, and inform our ongoing response to this new virus.

Generally, children have been shown to be asymptomatic. This surveillance study will seek to better understand rates of transmission in children and adults within schools over the coming months by swab testing to see if they have the virus.

A small proportion of schools will also be offered antibody tests by phlebotomists, medical professionals who are fully trained to collect blood samples from patients. Roughly 40% of schools selected for the study will receive antibody and swab tests before the summer holidays.

Participation from schools is on a voluntary basis, and all parents and guardians will be asked to provide informed consent for their children or dependents prior to testing.

We are working closely with the Department for Education to identify suitable schools who may wish to be part of the initial phase of the study.

Dr Shamez Ladhani, Paediatric Infectious Diseases Consultant, Public Health England, said:

We are delighted this study is up and running in schools across England. By working with students and staff we'll be able to better understand infection and transmission of asymptomatic and mild infections of COVID-19 that may have otherwise remained undetected.

The results of this study will play an important role in informing wider surveillance planned for educational settings in the autumn term.

Through active surveillance, contact tracing and the close monitoring of any clusters of cases, we are committed to ensuring the safety of students and staff returning to school in the coming weeks and months.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

We know that being in school is vital for children's education and their wellbeing.

Last week, primary schools began to welcome back some pupils and secondary schools will begin to do the same from 15 June, as part of our phased and cautious approach to getting children and young people back into the classroom.

Studies like this will be invaluable as we continue moving forward with those plans, and help us assess the next steps for getting all children back into schools, nurseries and colleges with their friends and teachers.

The participating schools will issue invitations to take part in the study and parents or carers will have an opportunity to ask questions and will be encouraged to involve their children and explain how they can help by taking part.

Children will receive age-appropriate information sheets and will be encouraged to co-sign the consent form with their parents or carers.

We want to ensure that pupils and staff receive the best possible care and treatment from clinical staff collecting swab and blood tests. We are seeking Headteacher and parent permissions prior to any data collection

The testing procedures are completely safe. The test to determine whether someone currently has the virus involves swab of the inside of their nose and

the back of their throat, using a long cotton bud. Trained paediatric staff will take all blood samples from children. Trained medical professionals will visit schools to carry out the testing.

The antibody test to determine whether someone has had the virus and developed antibodies requires a blood sample.

Surveillance studies form part of pillar 4 of the government's COVID-19 testing strategy, under which several national level studies have already launched. The studies aim to conduct UK-wide surveillance testing to learn more about the spread of the disease and help inform the development of new tests and treatments.

This new sector-specific study builds on the data being gathered at a national level through swab and antibody tests conducted as part of an Office for National Statistics (ONS) COVID-19 Infection Survey which has tested over 35,000 households to date, and an Ipsos MORI study of 100,000 people looking at rates of antibodies across England. To date these studies have administered over 200,000 tests since the end of April.

- Children who are currently attending primary and secondary school during the lockdown and staff will be invited to participate
- Invitation will be made via schools (through email and/or letters) to staff and parents/guardians
- In all instances, informed consent will be obtained from staff and parents/carers prior to involving the children in the study
- Staff and parents/carers will be provided an information sheet and consent form
- Staff and parents/carers will have an opportunity to ask any questions by telephone, email or in person (on the day of testing)
- PHE will ask parents/carers to involve their children by explaining why this surveillance is being undertaken and how the children can help by taking part. Children will receive age-appropriate information sheets and will be encouraged to co-sign the consent form with their parents/guardians
- Completed consent forms will be stored securely at participating NHS sites
- We will also ask staff and parents/carers for consent to contact them in the future if additional information or sample(s) is required
- Schools are being approached to participate in the study through the Department for Education

[Truss opening Statement at launch of UK Japan trade talks](#)

It gives me great pleasure today, to open formal trade talks between two of

the world's largest economies; the United Kingdom and Japan, and to do this in partnership with my esteemed colleague His Excellency Toshimitsu Motegi.

Japan is already Britain's close partner in every respect other than geography. We have a deep respect and mutual appreciation for each other's culture and traditions.

Our shared history stretches back for hundreds of years. On 16 May this year, we commemorated the 400th anniversary of the death of William Adams, the Miura Anjin, the first Englishman in Japan. He was instrumental in the negotiation of the first UK-Japan Trade Agreement between Tokugawa Ieyasu and King James I, in 1613. He would have recognised a world threatened by plagues and buffeted by economic storms, albeit not one brought together through video conferencing.

I think he would be impressed to see how countries like Japan and the UK are coming together now, cooperating to keep markets flowing and trade open, and shaping the basis of the global economic recovery.

Japan is also the largest economy of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) and a natural leader of that organisation. CPTPP currently represents 13% of global GDP and would increase to more than 16% if the UK were to join. Our Free Trade Agreement with Japan will act as an important milestone towards the UK's accession to CPTPP, a goal which Japan fully supports.

We embark on these trade talks today because both of our countries believe that the right response to the unprecedented economic challenge posed by coronavirus is to make international trade easier and fairer, not to retreat into protectionism and state domination of the economy.

It was the same unshakeable support for free trade which led Margaret Thatcher to take the UK-Japan relationship to a new level in the 1980s when she encouraged Japanese companies to invest here.

By the end of Mrs Thatcher's time as Prime Minister, more than 150 Japanese companies had set up manufacturing operations here. They created employment opportunities in areas where traditional coal, steel and shipbuilding industries were in decline. From Sony in South Wales, to Nissan in the North East of England, to Mitsubishi Electric in Scotland, Japanese investments flourished, and helped the UK to do so too.

The agreement we will negotiate will build on the agreement and achievements of those times. It will see UK-Japan trade, already £30 billion annually, rise substantially in the years to come. It will benefit every region and nation of the UK. It is fitting to launch these talks in the same week that we announce our Future Tech Trade Strategy, since the UK, as a technology superpower, intends this agreement to set a new standard in the enabling of digital technologies and electronic commerce.

Of course, we must, as we have agreed, build on the existing EU-Japan agreement. But we are now free to do more – for example for our world-

leading services industries; for our highly innovative SMEs and for British consumers.

We both share a desire to have this agreement in force by the end of the Transition Period, if at all possible. So after commencing today our teams will move quickly to complete negotiations. Our common goal is for this agreement to serve as the cornerstone of an even stronger relationship between our two great island nations for many years to come.

Thank you

[Social housing sector continues adapting to impact of coronavirus](#)

Press release

Results of the regulator's second survey of housing associations and local authorities on how they are coping with the coronavirus pandemic.



The Regulator of Social Housing has today (9 June) published the [results](#) of its second monthly survey of housing associations and local authorities about how they are coping with the coronavirus pandemic.

The social housing sector is generally reporting that it is continuing to maintain service delivery for emergency repairs and key health and safety checks, and that some of the challenges that it is facing have begun to ease. Providers report that almost all emergency repairs are being completed, but challenges with access to properties and the reduced reporting of repairs mean that backlogs of routine repairs and some safety checks continue to rise. Almost all gas safety certificates are in date for most providers but compared to April, a higher number of providers are reporting that they are currently completing most, rather than all, gas safety checks. Many providers have said that they normally operate a 10- or 11-month gas servicing cycle to mitigate against the risk of failing to meet the 12-month statutory cycle

should problems arise. In the current circumstances the effectiveness of this mitigation is diminishing and as a result, the backlogs of gas safety checks are rising and are likely to continue to rise.

Social housing landlords responsible for care and support settings are reporting that they are continuing to maintain safe staffing levels and essential services. Absence rates appear to be recovering and providers generally appear to have successfully identified stable supply lines for PPE.

Housing associations and local authorities are continuing to address the ongoing challenges with adapted approaches including remote working, continuing alternative deployments of staff and increased communication with tenants. In many cases, they are now also planning for recovery.

Fiona MacGregor, Chief Executive says:

The ongoing impact of the coronavirus outbreak continues to affect how social housing landlords provide services to tenants and keep them safe. It will take time for the recent easing of restrictions to be fully reflected on the ground and in the responses to our cross-sector operational survey.

We are pleased that housing associations and local authorities are generally able to report continued service delivery in the areas surveyed, including some plans for recovery. Providers and their staff have adapted well to the changing circumstances and we anticipate that the flexible and agile approaches they have taken will continue as restrictions ease further.

Notes to editors

1. The short survey asked providers to answer a single multiple-choice question on each of five key areas: emergency repairs; statutory gas safety checks; statutory fire safety checks; asbestos, electrical, legionella and lift checks; and care and support staffing levels. For each area it also asked them to identify any key constraints, risks and mitigating actions and the scale of any backlog and how this has changed since the previous survey.
2. The survey and supporting guidance were made available for providers to complete on RSH's online data collection portal NROSH+ from Friday 15 to Friday 22 May. It was issued to all private registered providers with 1,000 or more properties, local authorities, and to some smaller private registered providers with over 500 properties and/or a high proportion of care and support activity. The next round of the survey will take place between 19 and 26 June.
3. We intend to run the survey monthly for as long as is necessary and will keep the frequency under review. However, where providers believe tenant safety is threatened or viability is under strain, we urge them to inform RSH immediately through their key contact at the regulator, or our [Referrals and Regulatory Enquiries team](#) or SmallProviders@rsh.gov.uk

or by calling 0300 124 5225.

4. Please see our [Coronavirus statements page](#) for the latest updates.
5. The Regulator of Social Housing promotes a viable, efficient and well-governed social housing sector able to deliver homes that meet a range of needs. It does this by undertaking robust economic regulation focusing on governance, financial viability and value for money that maintains lender confidence and protects the taxpayer. It also sets consumer standards and may take action if these standards are breached and there is a significant risk of serious detriment to tenants or potential tenants.
6. For press office contact details, see the [Media enquiries page](#). For general queries, please email enquiries@rsh.gov.uk or call 0300 124 5225.

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[Courts shut down rogue education publisher](#)

Safety Guide Ltd was wound up in the public interest in the High Court in Manchester before District Judge Bever on 4 June 2020. The Official Receiver has been appointed as the Liquidator.

In considering the petition, the court heard that Safety Guide sold sponsorship opportunities to businesses with the promise that their business name would feature in educational booklets sent to schools, focussing on knife-crime and bullying.

The company began trading in 2016 and targeted small businesses, having purchased contact details from data suppliers, before making unsolicited sales calls.

Following complaints, however, investigators from the Insolvency Service carried out confidential enquiries into the Safety Guide's practices and established that the company's sales staff made misleading claims to persuade customers to sponsor the educational booklets.

Tactics included misleading customers by stating that they had previously entered into a verbal contract to provide sponsorship and that the booklets were already printed with the customer's name included.

Investigators found that no previous agreement had been sought and the booklets were printed in bulk and the sponsor's name and details were added only after they had paid Safety Guide. Some of the schools who received the booklets also questioned their educational value.

Safety Guide gave the impression in sales calls that it was a not-for-profit organisation and claimed to be offering booklets as part of a time-limited campaign. This suggested to potential sponsors that Safety Guide was working closely with schools and education authorities, which was not the case.

Through these inappropriate sales practices, the book publisher secured just over £2.5million by February 2019. However, investigators found Safety Guide's accounting records to be inadequate and were unable to verify outgoings, including payment for sub-contract labour of more than £900,000.

Additionally, payments of a similar amount were made to employees but not accounted for via the company's payroll system and PAYE records.

The Court wound the company up on the grounds that Safety Guide traded with a lack of commercial probity, engaged in misleading and aggressive sales practices, and failed to maintain, preserve or deliver up adequate accounting records.

David Hope, Chief Investigator for the Insolvency Service, said:

This company acted with a lack of integrity and used dubious sales tactics to elicit significant funds from small businesses.

Thankfully the court recognised the severity of the misconduct and now that the company has been wound-up, the Official Receiver can undertake further enquiries into Safety Guide's practices, including those of the directors.

All public enquiries concerning the affairs of the company should be directed to the Official Receiver: Manchester.OR@insolvency.gov.uk.

Safety Guide Ltd (Company number: 10140828) was incorporated on 22 April 2016. The company's registered office is at: 4 Henry Square Chambers, Petersfield, Ashton-Under-Lyne, England, OL6 7ST.

The petition was presented under section 124A of the Insolvency Act 1986 on 23 March 2020.

Company Investigations, part of the Insolvency Service, uses powers under the Companies Act 1985 to conduct confidential fact-finding investigations into the activities of live limited companies in the UK on behalf of the Secretary of State for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS). [Information about how to complain about a live company.](#)

[Information about the work of the Insolvency Service.](#)

You can also follow the Insolvency Service on:

World Environment Day in Ashgabat

World news story

British Ambassador Hugh Philpott took part in an internal United Nations event dedicated to celebrating World Environment Day in Turkmenistan.



World Environment Day in Ashgabat

To mark [World Environment Day](#) on 5 June, Her Majesty's Ambassador Hugh Philpott took part in an internal United Nations (UN) event dedicated to celebrating [World Environment Day](#) in Turkmenistan. In his speech, Ambassador Philpott explained that climate change was a global challenge which affects all, and that no country would be spared the impact of global temperature rises. The Ambassador continued by stressing that mitigating climate change, protecting nature and building resilience in our societies was an opportunity which would improve not only our lives, but also contribute to global prosperity. He concluded that preserving the environment and tackling climate change was not optional and had to be enshrined in law everywhere and recognised as the duty of every human being on this planet.

During the event, Ambassador Philpott outlined why this was a critical moment to amplify the UK's climate messages in the lead up to [COP26](#). The United Kingdom is proud to have been nominated as Presidency of the [COP26](#) process, in partnership with the Italian partners. [COP26](#) will provide an excellent opportunity to deliver a step change on the global crises of Climate Change and biodiversity loss. These are central themes to COP26 Presidency and the UK wants to use the event to show the commitment to addressing climate change through nature-based solutions and biodiversity.

[World Environment Day](#) also sees the launch of [RaceToZero](#) the global [COP26](#) campaign to mobilise businesses, cities, regions and investors towards the goal of achieving net zero emissions by 2050 at the latest.

Together we must act ForNature [COP26](#)

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