

# Dedicated app for social care workers launched

- Care workers get access to guidance, learning resources, discounts and other support all in one place
- Support will be offered on mental health and wellbeing through toolkits and resources
- The Care Workforce app will unite 1.5 million care workers across more than 18,000 care providers

A new dedicated app for the adult social care workforce in England has been launched to support staff on-the-go through the coronavirus pandemic.

The social care workforce is spread across 18,000 providers and it can often be difficult to communicate with all staff in one clear way. The Care Workforce app, developed with NHSX and the NHS Business Services Authority, will be introduced under the new CARE brand and will act as a single digital hub for social care workers to access relevant updates, guidance, support and discounts from their phone.

The CARE branded app comes in response to calls from the sector for a more unified and connecting brand, and can be downloaded on Apple and Android supported smartphones or accessed by browsers on any device.

New mental wellbeing guidance will soon be published to further support the care sector with bespoke advice for care workers. This guidance will be signposted on the Care Workforce app when available. The tool will be the first of its kind provided for the care workforce, and will:

- act as a single one-stop-shop providing the sector with all the latest guidance, wellbeing support and advice they need to protect themselves from COVID-19 and keep themselves well
- provide access to learning resources on crucial areas such as infection control as well as practical advice and support for mental wellbeing
- show how care workers can take advantage of offers available to NHS and social care staff, including free car parking and discounts through organisations and initiatives like Discounts for Carers and the Blue Light Card
- signpost free access to apps like Silvercloud, Daylight and Sleepio, which can help boost users' mental wellbeing through programmes covering sleep, stress and resilience

New mental wellbeing guidance will soon be published to further support the care sector with bespoke advice for care workers. This guidance will be signposted on the Care Workforce app when available.

It builds on a cash injection of £1.6 billion for local authorities, as well as the recently launched [social care action plan](#), which set out a series of measures including ramping up testing and access to personal protective

equipment (PPE).

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

“Our incredible social care workforce are on the frontline day and night providing quality care to the most vulnerable in our society during the most unprecedented time in our history. The whole country is incredibly grateful of the work they continue to do for our loved ones.

“As part of our continued work to back the care sector, we have launched a new app specifically for care workers to make sure they have the most up-to-date guidance to keep them safe, connected with their colleagues across the country, which also allows them to access discounts like their NHS counterparts.

“It’s available to download right now, and I would urge everyone in social care to do so.”

Helen Whately, Minister of State for Care, commented:

“The care sector is a vital part of our health and care frontline and this pandemic has shone a light on the skills, commitment and dedication of our care workers.

“The Care Workforce app is there to help those frontline care workers – from providing the latest news and guidance, to sharing stories to draw inspiration from in challenging times, and as a way of connecting colleagues from Cornwall to Carlisle. I hope it will help unite people working in care across the country.

“The care workforce have long asked for a single, unifying brand to connect them to each other and I am delighted that we are able today to launch this important new tool under the CARE umbrella.”

In the future, the app will act as a networking platform to bring the social care workforce together in one place to share learnings, best practice and inspiring stories from across the sector

A version of the app is also under consideration for NHS workers.

This follows the launch of the social care action plan, which set out a range of measures to protect staff and residents living in care homes.

The workforce will be expanded by 20,000 through a new recruitment campaign, while NHS nurses and student nurses are being deployed to support social care sector where appropriate.

Care homes are being supported with new ways to order PPE, with millions of items delivered so far. Care staff, alongside residents, are now eligible for testing, whether or not they have symptoms, and since this was announced on 28 April we have delivered over 30,000 tests.

An extra £1.6 billion has also been made available to local authorities to

address the additional pressures from COVID-19, with a further £1.3 billion available to provide enhanced support for patients being discharged.

Professor Martin Green OBE, Chief Executive, Care England, said:

“This new app will help to keep the social care workforce fully informed of all the issues in social care, and it will provide an easily accessible and portable resource for every care worker”

Kathryn Smith, Chief Executive at the Social Care Institute for Excellence, said:

“It’s more than welcome to see an app like this that’s specifically designed with the adult social care workforce in mind.

“That workforce has many challenges at the moment, including how to keep services running during the COVID-19 situation; but also how to ensure that issues such as safeguarding, mental capacity and rights under the Care Act are not lost. We’ve all been using technology a lot more in the last few weeks and I’m sure that this will be a really useful addition to help the workforce to provide the best care and support that they can during the current crisis.”

Vic Rayner, Executive Director, National Care Forum, said:

“Care Workforce is a welcome addition to the frontline. It brings together all the important guidance and information for staff into one place – making sure the workforce have at their fingertips the information they need to deliver great care.”

Alex Fox, OBE FRSA, Chief Executive, Shared Lives Plus, said:

“It has never been more important for everyone working in social care to be connected with each other and well informed about the latest changes in policy. The app will help all of us with this. Shared Lives Plus is working closely with the Department of Health and Social Care through the pandemic and we encourage everyone working in Shared Lives to sign up.”

Skills for Care CEO Oonagh Smyth said:

“Technology has proved to be incredibly valuable in keeping our workforce informed during this crisis and this new app specifically aimed at the social care workforce will help workers get easy access to the information they need, when they need it.”

“Hard-pressed care workers now have an app that offers them access to useful resources on the move. They can get details on offers they can take up from companies recognising the great work that they are doing and information on how they can support their wellbeing during these very challenging times.”

1. The app will be available to download from on the Apple App Store and Google Play Store, as well as being accessible online at <https://workforce.adultsocialcare.uk>.

2. It is available for anyone working in social care in England.
  3. This follows the launch of the social care action plan which set out a range of measures to protect staff and residents living in care homes.
  4. The workforce will be expanded by 20,000 through a new recruitment campaign, while NHS nurses and student nurses are being deployed to support social care sector where appropriate. Care homes are being supported with new ways to order PPE, with millions of items delivered so far. Care staff, alongside residents, are now eligible for testing, whether or not they have symptoms, and since this was announced on April 28 we have delivered more than 30,000 tests.
  5. An extra £3.2 billion has also been made available to local authorities to address the additional pressures from COVID-19, with a further £1.3 billion available to provide enhanced support for patients being discharged.
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## [New funding to support dairy farmers through coronavirus](#)

England's dairy farmers will be able to access up to £10,000 each to help them overcome the impact of the coronavirus outbreak.

The new funding will help support dairy farmers – who together continue to produce over 40 million litres of milk every day – who have seen decreased demand for their products as bars, restaurants and cafes have had to close.

Today's announcement is the latest action from the government to support dairy farmers, building on the unprecedented levels of support already announced by the Chancellor and our recent action to [temporarily relax some elements of UK competition law](#) to allow suppliers, retailers and logistics providers in the dairy industry to work more closely together on some of the challenges they are facing.

With some dairy farmers facing financial difficulties and excess milk, the new fund will provide support for those most in need. Eligible dairy farmers will be entitled to up to £10,000 each, to cover 70% of their lost income during April and May to ensure they can continue to operate and sustain production capacity without impacts on animal welfare.

It also comes as the government today backed a £1 million campaign to boost milk consumption and help producers use their surplus stock.

**Environment Secretary George Eustice said:**

Our dairy industry plays a crucial role in feeding our nation and we are doing all we can to ensure they are properly supported

during this time.

We've already relaxed competition laws so dairy farmers can work together through the toughest months, but recognise there is more to be done. That is why today we have kick started a new campaign to boost milk consumption and have announced a further package of funding.

We will continue to stand alongside our dairy farmers through this difficult period.

The dairy sector is the UK's largest farming sector, with milk accounting for 16.85% of total agricultural output in the UK in 2018. Since the start of the coronavirus outbreak, the dairy industry has faced challenges of excess milk, falling prices, and reduced demand from the hospitality sector.

While many farmers have already rerouted their milk supplies to retailers and supermarkets – which have seen increased demand in recent weeks – today's move will give the farmers in the greatest need the financial assurance to ensure they can remain operational, sustain production capacity and continue to meet animal welfare demands at this time.

Eligible dairy farmers who have lost more than 25% of their income over April and May due to coronavirus disruptions will be eligible to access this funding for those qualifying months, with no cap set on the number of farmers who can receive this support or on the total funding available.

It comes as the [Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board \(AHDB\) has today launched a new marketing campaign](#) to increase consumption of milk in UK households, funded jointly by the AHDB, Defra, the Scottish Government, Welsh Government, Northern Ireland Executive and Dairy UK.

The £1 million promotional campaign will help increase sales of dairy products by encouraging the public to drink more milk.

**Christine Watts, AHDB's Chief Marketing Officer said:**

This new innovative marketing campaign is a fantastic demonstration of what can be achieved when industry and Government join together to meet a common supply chain challenge.

It will support dairy farmers and processors in driving demand for milk within households across the UK. It will link consumers' love of the great taste of milk and dairy with how we are all having to manage these challenging times at home and at work.

The UK's food supply chain remains resilient and the Environment Secretary continues to meet regularly with representatives of the food and farming industry to ensure people can get the food and groceries they need.

### **Further information:**

- The new hardship fund announced today can be accessed by eligible dairy farmers in England. More detail on the fund will be issued in due course
  - The new AHDB dairy campaign is jointly funded by Dairy UK, Defra, the Welsh Government, Scottish Government and Northern Ireland Executive and will be implemented across the UK
  - The temporary relaxation of competition rules for the dairy industry is effective across the UK
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## **Bank of England consent to transfer of authorisation to issue Northern Irish banknotes**

- Only go outside for food, health reasons or work (but only if you cannot work from home)
- If you go out, stay 2 metres (6ft) away from other people at all times
- Wash your hands as soon as you get home

Do not meet others, even friends or family.

You can spread the virus even if you don't have symptoms.

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## **Flexible operating hours pilots conclude at Manchester and Brentford**

News story

Pilots are now being independently evaluated after testing civil and family hearings at different times.



A pilot scheme to test whether more flexible operating hours can be used for court hearings has come to an end ahead of an independent evaluation process.

Courts traditionally sit between 10am and 4pm, but from September 2019 to March 2020, Manchester Civil Justice Centre and Brentford County Court operated outside of these traditional hours.

The aim of the pilot in civil and family cases was to test the impact of using court and tribunal hearing rooms more intensively, and how a wider range of hours offers the potential to improve access to justice. During the six-month pilot a range of cases were heard, including family financial dispute resolution, road traffic accident, small claims and rent possessions.

To assess the pilots, HMCTS has appointed IFF Research and Frontier Economics to provide an independent evaluation. The evaluation will include feedback from members of the public, court staff and the judiciary on their experiences. Their findings will be published in a report later in the year.

Huw Evans, HMCTS service manager for the flexible operating hours pilot, said:

Flexible operating hours have been piloted as part of HMCTS's £1 billion investment in reforming our courts and tribunals system, which aims to ensure our justice system is just, proportionate and accessible.

We're grateful to court users, our staff, the judiciary, local legal professionals and other organisations who have taken part in the pilot and given their feedback.

Any decision about the use of flexible operating hours in the future will only be made after careful consideration of the independent evaluation and the effects, costs and benefits of flexible operating hours across the justice system.

The independent evaluation report is due later this year. Once available, the report will be published on GOV.UK.

- Manchester has been testing late sittings (4.30pm to 7pm) involving

civil and family work

- Brentford has been testing early (8am to 10.30am) and late sittings (4.30pm to 7pm) involving civil work only

More information about [HMCTS' flexible operating hours pilot](#) and the wider [HMCTS reform programme](#) is on GOV.UK.

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## [Biometrics Commissioner's address to the Westminster Forum: 5 May 2020](#)

In January this year I wrote my last annual report as commissioner on the use of biometrics for policing. When it was finished, I sent it to the Home Secretary and I am waiting for her to publish it, as she is required to do by laying it before Parliament. As I was writing that report, I was aware of the emergence of a new virus in China but not that it would become a global pandemic. Many commentators have made the point that when we eventually come out of this emergency the world that emerges may not be as it was before – that the effects of coronavirus (COVID-19) will lead to some enduring change. That there will be a new 'normal'. However, there is much less agreement about how it will be different.

When I wrote my report, I was largely looking back and reporting on the police use of biometrics in the previous year. There was an exception to that in a section where I addressed the issue of the emergence of new biometrics and the Artificial Intelligence (AI) driven analytics on which they depend and whether, if they are used in policing, that should require new legislation to provide a governance framework? Those comments were made in a world that has since been turned upside down by coronavirus. My term of office comes to an end in mid-June and since this will probably be my final speech as Commissioner, I thought that I would try and address the question of whether the points that I made then about the need for new legislation are still applicable now?

The legislation governing the police use of biometrics is the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012, but it only governs DNA and fingerprints because, whilst at that time the possibility of other biometrics was known, there was scepticism as to whether they would become reliable enough to be deployed in policing. Since that legislation was passed, the situation has been transformed by the growth of AI analytics and the availability of very large data sets for their development. Facial and voice matching has improved significantly, and trials of their use are being conducted. This rapid growth of both AI and biometrics has meant their use is being widely explored across



both the public and private sectors, although mainly outside of policing. Whatever the post coronavirus world looks like, the one thing that I am certain of, is that these new technologies will play an important role in shaping that future world. Consequently, the new technologies are now part of high politics across government and not just a niche issue for policing and the Home Office, although the police use of technology will always require particular attention.

In January I concluded my discussion of the new technologies with a point that I was cautious about making. It was that decisions about the use and governance of AI analytics and biometrics involved a politically strategic choice about what kind of future social and political world we wanted to create. I did so because it was clear to me that the new technologies had widespread (possible) application across almost every aspect of society to the point that, whether we liked it or not, they would result in a major disruption of our world, perhaps of an order like those wrought by past major technological changes. The technologies are going to lead to a new social and political framing of the world we will live in and they may even be the basis for re-building our economy, if it emerges badly damaged from the pandemic. The emergency is also illustrating the fact that the new technologies themselves will not determine the nature our future world – there is no necessary technological determinism, driven either by God or mammon. Our world will be the product of the decisions that we make about how we use the new technologies. That is progress because in January I still felt that it was necessary to argue against such determinism and for the need to make political choices.

I pointed to the example of China as a country that had already made its strategic political choice and was actively seeking a technological lead in this area as a basis to develop its global power and influence. The Chinese choice is to use the technologies for a new and previously unattainable form of social control over both the lives and thinking of their citizens. My caution was because I knew I could be accused of shroud waving and inviting the response that we were not China and would not make the same choices. But that misses the point which is that if we do not want to create a future in the image of China then we need to decide what kind of future do we want to create?

I feel less cautious in making that claim now because the pandemic has underlined the point. China has demonstrated how effective their technical means of control can be and also how it raises opposition and how brutal the response to such doubts will need to be.

In this country concerns have been raised that the new technologies should not be deployed without a proper consideration of their operating model and whether that sustains our civil liberties. There is also a debate as to how to distinguish what uses of the new technologies may be acceptable in an emergency and how we ensure different judgements apply once the emergency has abated. Parliament recognised the problem in its debates of the emergency coronavirus Act, by insisting that its application be time-limited, and that any extension should be approved by Parliament. In so far as the Act made emergency changes in the retention of biometric profiles by the police, my

Office will have to make a report on the consequences of those changes before Parliament considers any extension.

Different uses of the new technology have emerged out of a series of separate pragmatic decision from government and the private sector. So far, continuing with that approach has seemed to be the preferred method of the government, encouraged by a muted public response to current uses of the technologies. However, the extent of public concern has been growing.

In past examples of such major transformations, laissez faire pragmatism quite quickly had to be governed by public decision making in order to guide the society legislators wished to see. We must be careful, of course, that regulation does not stifle innovation or limit other aspect of freedom, such as the freedom to pursue knowledge. The practical problem is how we choose the right balance in our approach.

Liberties are a touch stone but how should our concern for liberty be used in developing a vision of our new 'normal'?

In trying to address that question My first point in January was that the new technologies are developing at a speed that politics, government and legislation has not kept up with. That remains the case and indeed has been knocked further back by the current emergency. Even though not all of government is dealing directly with coronavirus, it seems to have paralysed other thinking, as the Brexit debate did for the years before.

At the same time, the search for solutions to coronavirus is pushing the new technologies even faster, whether that be vaccine development or case tracking by mobile phones. If the new technologies are to be part of our future, then we also need some proper thinking about their governance.

My second point was that we have failed to develop properly rigorous methods for trialling and evaluating the new technologies before deploying them. I was talking about trialling new technologies for policing but the same could be said more generally. There is a danger that instead of choosing how to deploy new technologies based on evidence, we fall under the spell of technical wizardry as providing easy solutions to problems.

During the current crisis there has been an admirable determination to conduct proper trials of vaccine and medical therapeutics, even if at break neck speed. Proper trials methodology is well embedded into medical science and its governance but not in many other areas.

Each other area of application – for example policing – needs a standard trials methodology. Unless we have proper trials we run the risk of deploying technologies that have unforeseen or even harmful effects, or that we fail to develop the necessary decision making framework for their successful use, or that they are less effective and more costly than existing solutions, or in some cases simply do not work and so lead to embarrassing reversals.

We must address the fact that claims made by technology developers, perhaps in good faith based on their evaluations, may not be replicable when their

technologies are used in real world applications. The point is not one of hostility to developers or to dampen technical development but to extend the development process into the application phase with rigour. There is a debate to be had as to whether developers should engage in this application evaluation and not just finish with a limited demonstration. That is what happens in medicine.

My third point was that not all applications of the new technologies will be in the public interest to deploy. This a more controversial point in that we may have different views as to how we should make judgements as to which technologies it is acceptable to deploy. My report was about policing and I argued that we should resolve such differences by applying a public interest test.

In other words, that we should determine, based on the best evidence available to us, how far a use-case would bring public benefit (rather than benefits to a particular, partial or commercial interest). The reason I hold this view is that biometrics depend on analytics that often use data about individuals and sometimes reveal very personal aspects of our biological being or social behaviour.

This means that some uses of the new technology will intrude into individual rights, including but not limited to, the right to respect a person's privacy. Such intrusion can only be justified on the basis that it brings other, more general benefits, that outweigh these disadvantages. In other words, intrusions into individual rights must be balanced against a wider public interest: what lawyers refer to as 'proportionality'. Such an approach is well established in policy making and public law, at least in western democracies. It is reflected in trans-national governance such as the European Convention on Human Rights. We already have a framework for thinking about proportionality. Proportionality judgements are always made in context as we respond to a changing world and that is why decisions made in this emergency must be re-visited once it is over and not be allowed to drift into a different context.

This does not mean that I think that the new technologies can only ever be deployed if they are in the public interest. There will be situations in which it is reasonable to allow use for private or commercial interests but again proportionality tests should still apply. How such cases are identified and in which governance is something that our legislators will have to grapple. The issue is already firmly on the political agenda in many countries, because of concerns about the use being made of individual data holdings by tech-based companies, and legislators are under pressure to provide a governance framework.

My fourth point was that by their very nature, public interest tests can't be made by a partial or vested interest. Whilst groups may work to develop their own governance arrangements – the police service, for example, are doing so – they will risk foregoing public trust if they are viewed as being partially or self-interested no matter how high minded and lawfully, they operate. The Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police has talked of this danger in recent speeches.

Groups are likely to achieve public trust if they reflect or implement general propositions taken by a public body determining the public interest, whether that is Parliament or the courts declaiming public law. The same general point, it seems to me, will apply to what governance Parliament decides is appropriate for the use of the new technologies by the private sector.

Trust will be central in future to the deployment of new technologies as it always has been and once lost can be difficult to re-gain. The present crisis has demonstrated just how important public trust is for a government trying to manage an emergency. When the emergency is over and we come to re-examine our national threat assessment and our planned responses, as we surely will, then the government will need to address the best way to maintain public trust in an emergency just as much as how they best use scientific advice.

My fifth point was public interest tests ought to be informed by the sentiment of the public, but that sentiment is not best read from simple public opinion surveys, although methodologically more sophisticated work may have a part to play.

For citizens to reach an informed view they need to be informed by a public debate – the sentiment of the public should be formed based on such evidence and reasoning. This public debate ought to be instigated, if not led, by ministers. To date this has been largely missing and if government wants a future which makes significant use of AI and biometrics, ministers will need to persuade the public that it is their interests to do so and they have put clear governance in place to prevent abuse.

My final point was that public interest tests need to be made by a public body that has legitimacy to do so and ultimately that means by Parliament. That means that we will need fresh parliamentary legislation to govern the police use of new biometrics beyond DNA and fingerprints. The present government gave a manifesto commitment to do this which appears to change the approach adopted by the previous administration. The lessons of the current pandemic make it obvious that legislation creating governance for new biometrics will need to go beyond policing and cover the broader use of the new technologies certainly by State actors but probably also the private sector.

Such legislation will need a cross-government approach, will not be easy and take time to develop. What I do not see yet is a minister anywhere in government leading such thinking and starting a public conversation.