

Health Secretary launches biggest diagnostic lab network in British history to test for coronavirus

- This is the first of 3 'Lighthouse Labs' to be set up across the country, dramatically increasing the number of coronavirus tests that can take place each day
- Each lab will have the capacity to test tens of thousands of patient samples each day, prioritising NHS staff to help them return to work

Health Secretary Matt Hancock visited Milton Keynes today to launch the first Lighthouse Lab, a diagnostics facility which has the capacity to test tens of thousands of patient samples each day for coronavirus.

The site in Milton Keynes is the first of 3 mega-labs that will be integrated into the new national testing infrastructure, with new sites being set up each day across the country to take patient samples. This is the first of three Lighthouse Labs to be set up across the country, dramatically increasing the number of coronavirus tests that can take place each day. The labs have taken their name from the PCR testing technology, which uses fluorescent light to detect the virus.

Since rollout began on 24 March, there are now 13 drive-through sites for NHS frontline staff and their families in operation across the UK, helping to provide the labs with patient samples.

Two further Lighthouse Labs will be opened in Alderley Park and Glasgow in the next 2 weeks to further add lab capacity to test swabs for the virus. The testing of NHS staff and their families currently in isolation will continue to be prioritised, allowing those testing negative, or with family members who test negative, to return to work.

The lab in Milton Keynes is already able to test thousands of patient samples each day, and will work with other Lighthouse Labs to automate the testing process with robotics to increase this to tens of thousands over the coming weeks.

A new digital platform is currently also under construction to meet the UK's target of 100,000 tests a day by the end of April. The platform will automate the country's collection of patient samples, supported by world-class, cross-sector British logistics experts, supported by military planners.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock said:

We have set the challenge of achieving a 100,000 coronavirus tests a day by the end of the month.

A stream of new testing and diagnostic facilities are being brought

online, and the opening of the first of our new Lighthouse Labs is an historic moment.

Backed by Britain's world-class scientists and industry partners, the opening of Milton Keynes lab today is a crucial step taken in tackling this virus.

National Testing Co-ordinator Professor John Newton said:

The progress made to increase coronavirus testing across the UK in just a matter of weeks is truly remarkable. I am proud to see the country pulling together in unprecedented times to achieve unprecedented things. The Lighthouse Labs will be the largest network of diagnostic labs in British history.

New testing sites are a key part of our 5-pillar plan to scale up testing. We will use the new mega-labs to continue our work to prioritise NHS staff and key workers currently in isolation, helping those without the virus safely return to work.

Last week the Health Secretary Matt Hancock announced the UK government's [5-pillar plan](#) to rapidly scale up coronavirus testing across the UK. The new 5-pillar plan outlines the ambitions to:

- Pillar 1: Scale up swab testing in PHE labs and NHS hospitals for those with a medical need and the most critical workers to 25,000 a day in England by mid to late April, with the aligned testing strategies of the NHS in the Devolved Administrations benefiting from PHE's partnership with Roche through a central UK allocation mechanism
- Pillar 2: Deliver increased commercial swab testing for critical key workers in the NHS across the UK, before then expanding to key workers in other sectors
- Pillar 3: Develop blood testing to help know if people across the UK have the right antibodies and so have high levels of immunity to coronavirus
- Pillar 4: Conduct UK-wide surveillance testing to learn more about the spread of the disease and help develop new tests and treatments
- Pillar 5: Create a new National Effort for testing, to build a mass-testing capacity for the UK at a completely new scale

So far more than 280,000 coronavirus tests have taken place across the UK.

Professor John Newton of Public Health England has been appointed as National Testing Co-ordinator to bring together government, industry, academia, the NHS and many others, behind this national effort to better understand how the virus is spreading.

The Lighthouse Labs are being actively supported by pharma companies GSK and AstraZeneca, who are providing access to data and resources to further increase their capacity as they scale up at record pace. An extensive supply

chain of resources is being established to bring further resources to these facilities as they become operational and scale up.

The new Lighthouse Labs have been constructed through a partnership with the Department of Health and Social Care, Medicines Discovery Catapult, UK Biocentre and the University of Glasgow. Their development is being closely supported by both NHS and Public Health England.

[Foreign Secretary's statement on coronavirus \(COVID-19\): 9 April 2020](#)

Good afternoon, welcome to today's Downing Street press conference. I'm joined by Chris Whitty, Chief Medical Officer and Sir Patrick Vallance, the Chief Scientific Adviser.

Can I start with an update on the Prime Minister. He is still in intensive care but he continues to make positive steps forward and he's in good spirits.

I can also report from the Government's ongoing monitoring and testing programme that, as of today:

243,421 people have now been tested for the virus.

65,077 have tested positive and the number of people admitted to hospital with coronavirus symptoms now stands at 16,784.

Of those who have contracted the virus, 7,978 have sadly died and our thoughts and prayers are with their families and friends.

The whole country has been practicing a stringent form of social distancing for 3 weeks now. Precisely because we're doing everything we can to minimise the bleak numbers that I just read out and, for that, I want to say a massive thank you to everyone who has gone the extra mile during this very challenging period.

Thank you to all of those who are looking after us in our time of need.

The NHS workers on the front line who have treated the sick, saved lives and tended for those who, sadly, could not be saved.

For the doctors and nurses who have died of Coronavirus whilst caring for others, we will never forget their sacrifice, we will never forget their devotion to helping others.

And I also want to say a big thank you to the carers, the charity workers, all those who are looking after, or even just keeping an eye on, those in

their local neighbourhood. You are the lifeline to so many people in our communities.

Thank you to the workers who keep the country running, the supermarket workers, the delivery drivers, the technicians, the cleaners, the public servants who just kept going, determined to keep providing the daily services we all rely on.

I think you've certainly made us all think long and hard about who the "key workers" are in our lives.

Thank you to the volunteers who have stepped up across the country, whose big-hearted sense of responsibility defines British community spirit at its very best.

And a massive thank you to every single person who has stayed home to stop this terrible virus from spreading, you have helped protect the NHS, and you have helped to save lives.

Now, as we look forward to the long bank-holiday Easter weekend, I know some people are going to start wondering is it time to ease up on the rules.

So I've got to say thank you for your sacrifice.

But, also, we're not done yet.

We must keep going.

Let me just explain a little bit about why that is so important.

Today, I chaired a COBR meeting with senior Ministers, officials and representatives from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, as well as the Mayor of London, so that we could take stock and assess where we are right across the United Kingdom. And at this stage, the Government is continuing to gather all of the relevant data to obtain the fullest picture possible of the effect of the social distancing measures we have put in place.

Now, while the early signs suggest that they are having the impact we need to see, it's too early to say that conclusively.

SAGE will meet next week to discuss the latest evidence, and we will keep the measures we have put in place under review. And as we've said on many occasions now, we will be guided by the science at all times. So we don't expect to be able to say more on this until the end of next week.

Let me just be, again, very clear about this.

The measures will have to stay in place, until we've got the evidence that clearly shows we have moved beyond the peak.

I know these restrictions take their toll, day in day out. On people's livelihoods, on people's quality of life, on people's mental health. And I appreciate that it's often the little things that hurt the most.

With the Easter Bank Holiday coming up, I would normally spend it with my two boys, 7 and 5 year old boys, with their grandparents doing an Easter egg hunt. And I know there is going to be lots of people who would normally be planning a family get together or just getting out in the sunshine with friends and loved ones.

Unfortunately, right now, we just can't do those sorts of things. And I am really sorry about that.

But take a moment to think of the progress we've already made, Following the guidance, staying home, denying this virus what it needs, to spread more easily and to kill more people.

It's been almost three weeks, and we're starting to see the impact of the sacrifices we've all made. But the deaths are still rising, and we haven't yet reached the peak of the virus. So it's still too early to lift the measures that we've put in place. We must stick to the plan. And we must continue to be guided by the science.

Our top priority, our immediate priority, remains to slow the spread of the virus and to save as many lives as possible. That's why we have to ask you to continue to ask you all to keep complying with the guidance. As we've said consistently from the outset, it is vital we take the right decisions at the right time.

And the most important thing right now is that people continue to follow the government's guidance until we've got the evidence that the virus is firmly under control. So that means please do stay at home, to protect our NHS and to save lives. After all the efforts that everyone's made, after all the sacrifices so many people have made, let's not ruin it now.

Let's not undo the gains we've made. Let's not waste the sacrifices so many people have made. We mustn't give the coronavirus a second chance to kill more people and hurt our country. I know it's tough going. But this is a team effort, and we'll only defeat this virus for good if we all stay the course.

So please stay home this bank holiday weekend.

For everyone's sake.

Prison estate expanded to protect NHS from coronavirus risk

- First wave of 500 temporary cells to be installed at prisons
- Extra prison space will limit spread of Coronavirus in jails
- Builds on Government's action to protect staff, prisoners and the NHS

Across the estate Prisons are moving towards single-cell accommodation, as much as possible, to limit the spread of infection and the number of deaths.

Today's action marks the start of work at six priority jails over the coming weeks and, combined with the [recently announced early release](#) of low-risk offenders, it will increase space in prisons and help reduce the spread of Coronavirus.

The project is then expected to be expanded to additional prisons. This follows public health advice that prisons present a unique environment where rapid outbreaks of the virus could place a significant strain on local NHS services.

While this temporary accommodation remains within the existing, secure, prison estate and will be monitored by staff, as normal, only lower-risk category C and D prisoners will be held in the temporary units, following careful risk assessment.

Lord Chancellor and Justice Secretary Robert Buckland QC MP said:

Our absolute priority is to protect the NHS and save lives, which is why we have taken unprecedented steps to stop the spread of Coronavirus in our jails.

Creating additional space in the existing estate, alongside measures to limit prisoner movement and releasing low-risk offenders, will help prevent our NHS being overwhelmed.

The first wave of sites have been chosen because they have the highest number of shared cells, lack in-cell sanitation and house high numbers of vulnerable prisoners.

Installation of temporary accommodation will start this week at HMP North Sea Camp, with HMPs Littlehey, Hollesley Bay, Highpoint, Moorland, Lindholme and Humber to follow.

Further prisons could be chosen based on whether the extra accommodation is needed and if there is sufficient space.

To protect prison staff, prisoners and safeguard the NHS, the Ministry of Justice is:

- Shielding vulnerable prisoners through social distancing measures
- Re-deploying staff, where appropriate, from headquarters into operational roles
- Working with the judiciary to expedite sentencing hearings for those on remand to reduce the numbers being held in custody
- Releasing [risk-assessed prisoners](#) who are within two months of their release date, with strict conditions

- Pregnant [women in custody](#) who do not pose a high risk of harm to the public will be temporarily released from prison.
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[HMRC to accept service of legal proceedings by email](#)

Due to coronavirus (COVID-19), HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) has requested that, where possible, new legal proceedings and pre-action letters should be served via email rather than by post.

This is to ensure that, during the pandemic, we can protect our staff by reducing the handling of paper documents where possible.

For new legal proceedings

New legal proceedings in England and Wales which are required to be served on the Solicitor for HMRC can be sent by email to newproceedings@hmrc.gov.uk.

Pre-action letters

Any correspondence which is required to be sent to the Solicitor for HMRC in compliance with any pre-action protocol to the Civil Procedure Rules, including the Pre-Action Protocol for Judicial Review, can be sent by email to preactionletters@hmrc.gov.uk.

Unless you are requested to do so, please do not send hard copy duplicates.

Attachments

If you are including attachments with your email, please ensure they:

- are in a common format such as PDF or MS Word
- do not exceed 10mb (in total)

If you are likely to exceed the 10mb limit, please split the contents into smaller emails. If this is not practical, you should serve the principal documents (such as the claim form and particulars of claim) and ask HMRC to contact you to make alternative arrangements to serve the remaining documents.

Other correspondence

These email addresses are for the service of new proceedings and pre-action letters only.

Any other correspondence sent to these email addresses will be deleted unread.

For all proceedings (including in the Supreme Court) an HMRC lawyer will be allocated the case, and all subsequent service should be effected on their, or any nominated successor's, HMRC email address.

[Team spirit pays off for Distington residents](#)

- 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.