

# NHS health information available through Amazon's Alexa

The NHS is collaborating with Amazon to provide reliable health information from the NHS website through voice-assisted technology.

Published 10 July 2019 From: [Department of Health and Social Care](#)



The technology will help patients, especially the elderly, blind and those who cannot access the internet through traditional means, to get professional, NHS-verified health information in seconds, through simple voice commands.

Amazon's algorithm uses information from the NHS website to provide answers to voice questions such as:

- "Alexa, how do I treat a migraine?"
- "Alexa, what are the symptoms of flu?"
- "Alexa, what are the symptoms of chickenpox"

The technology has the potential to reduce the pressure on the NHS and GPs by providing information for common illnesses.

Voice search has been increasing rapidly. By 2020, half of all searches are expected to be made through voice-assisted technology.

NHSX will look at ways of making more NHS services available to all patients through digital technology. The announcement supports the commitment in the

[NHS Long Term Plan](#) to make more NHS services available digitally.

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care Matt Hancock said:

We want to empower every patient to take better control of their healthcare and technology like this is a great example of how people can access reliable, world-leading NHS advice from the comfort of their home, reducing the pressure on our hardworking GPs and pharmacists.

Through the NHS Long Term Plan, we want to embrace the advances in technology to build a health and care system that is fit for the future and NHSX will drive this revolution to bring the benefits to every patient, clinician and carer.

Matthew Gould, Chief Executive of NHSX, said:

The public need to be able to get reliable information about their health easily and in ways they actually use. By working closely with Amazon and other tech companies, big and small, we can ensure that the millions of users looking for health information every day can get simple, validated advice at the touch of a button or voice command.

Part of our mission at NHSX is to give citizens the tools to access services and information directly, and partnerships such as this are an important part of achieving this.

---

## **[EA Chair responds to Committee on Climate Change Adaptation Report](#)**

The Committee on Climate Change has published a report on adaptation to climate change today, here is the response from the Chair of the Environment Agency.

Published 10 July 2019 From: [Environment Agency](#)



Emma Howard Boyd, Environment Agency Chair

The Climate Change Committee has published a powerful report today on the importance of us continuing to plan, mitigate and adapt in the face of future climate risks.

The Government has made a fantastic commitment to achieving net zero carbon. But we know that up to at least 2050, temperatures are expected to increase regardless of how strongly emissions are reducing globally. Global overheating is changing our weather and increasing our risk of flooding. That is why our draft Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy is seeking to better prepare us for a 2°C warming in global temperatures as well as planning for higher scenarios such as a 4°C rise in global temperatures.

We welcome the Committee's recognition that our draft strategy is taking the necessary and ambitious steps needed to be a climate resilient nation. We will be working with government and our partners to finalise the strategy later this year and will be taking the Committee's advice into account.

---

## [Investigation into Star Pubs & Bars Limited](#)

Paul Newby and Fiona Dickie today launched an [investigation](#) into Star Pubs & Bars Limited – part of the Heineken Group.

This is the first investigation by the Pubs Code Adjudicator and Deputy Pubs Code Adjudicator and follows a period of engagement with Star. The Adjudicators have reasonable grounds to suspect that Star has failed to comply with the Pubs Code by using unreasonable stocking terms in proposed free-of-tie Market Rent Only (MRO) tenancies.

The investigation will cover the period from 21 July 2016 when the Pubs Code became law to 10 July 2019.

Paul Newby, the Pubs Code Adjudicator, said:

Fiona Dickie and I have decided to launch this investigation to understand the extent to which the Pubs Code may have been breached and the potential impact on Star tenants.

Fiona Dickie, the Deputy Pubs Code Adjudicator, added:

“Where tenants of a brewer business regulated by the Pubs Code exercise their right to ask to go free-of-tie they may still be required to stock that brewer’s beer or cider within limits set out under the Pubs Code. This investigation concerns whether Star has been going beyond those limits by offering non-compliant terms.

“It is important that Star tenants and other interested parties provide us with information to support this investigation. Their information will help us to determine whether the Pubs Code has been broken and, if so, what further action should be taken.

“Any tenants and other interested parties who provide information for the purposes of the investigation will not be identified in the investigation report without their consent.”

As part of this call for evidence, the Pubs Code Adjudicator and Deputy Adjudicator are particularly keen to hear from any Star tenants who have been offered tenancy terms following service of a MRO notice that included the following, whether they accepted them or not:

- a) A requirement for all (or virtually all) of the keg beer stocked to be produced by Heineken.
- b) A requirement to stock brands produced by businesses other than Star or group undertakings of Star.
- c) Any other requirement to stock an unreasonably high proportion of Heineken brands or brands in which Heineken has a commercial interest.
- d) A term that seeks to influence the retail selling price of Heineken brands or brands in which Heineken has a commercial interest.

Any tenants and other interested parties who provide information for the purposes of the investigation will not be identified in the investigation report without their consent. The deadline for submission of evidence is 5pm on 7 August 2019. Evidence should be sent to [investigations@pubscodeadjudicator.gov.uk](mailto:investigations@pubscodeadjudicator.gov.uk)

For further information, contact PCA media on 0121 695 7769.

## **The Pubs Code and Pubs Code Adjudicator**

1. The creation of a statutory Pubs Code and the appointment of a Pubs Code Adjudicator to enforce it is provided for in Part 4 of the Small Business, Enterprise and Employment Act 2015. Paul Newby was appointed

as the first Pubs Code Adjudicator on 3rd May 2016. The first Deputy Pubs Code Adjudicator, Fiona Dickie, took up her appointment on 1st November 2017.

2. The Adjudicator and Deputy Adjudicator oversee the Pubs Code introduced in July 2016 which regulates the contractual relationships between all pub-owning businesses with 500 or more tied pubs in England and Wales and their tied tenants. Tied tenants are those who are obliged to purchase some or all of the alcohol to be sold at their pubs from their pub-owning business (or its group undertaking), or a person nominated by that business or group undertaking. There were around 9,680 such tied pub tenants on 31 December 2018.
3. Six pub companies are currently covered by the Pubs Code: Admiral Taverns Ltd, Ei Group Plc (formerly Enterprise Inns Plc), Greene King Plc, Marston's Plc, Punch Taverns Limited and Star Pubs & Bars Limited.
4. The Pubs Code has two over-arching principles – to ensure
  - a) fair and lawful dealing by pub companies in relation to their tied tenants; and
  - b) that individual tied tenants should not be worse off than they would be if they were free of the tie (the 'no worse off' principle).

### **Market Rent Only option**

1. The Pubs Code gives tied tenants the right to request a Market Rent Only (MRO) option from their pub-owning business. Under a MRO compliant tenancy, a tenant pays only a commercial rent for the pub premises and is free to buy beer and other products and services on the open market. A pub-owning business that is also a brewer is permitted by the 2015 Act to require a MRO tenant to continue to stock its products, but such 'stocking requirements' may not require these to be purchased direct from the pub-owning business and may not exclude competitor brands and must be reasonable.

### **Investigation and enforcement by the PCA**

1. Section 53 of the 2015 Act provides that the Pubs Code Adjudicator may carry out an investigation if the Adjudicator has reasonable grounds to suspect that a pub-owning business has either failed to comply with the Pubs Code or has failed to follow a recommendation previously made to it by the Adjudicator.
2. Where the Adjudicator is satisfied that a pub-owning business has breached the Code, the PCA may take one or more of the following

enforcement measures: make recommendations to the pub-owning business; require them to publish information; and/or impose a financial penalty of up to 1 percent of total UK turnover.

3. The Pubs Code Adjudicator will exercise these investigatory and enforcement functions in accordance with its published statutory guidance of 1st November 2016 which can be viewed [here](#).

---

## [Environment Agency tells water companies to clean up their act and protect the environment from pollution](#)

Water company efforts to protect the environment were described as 'simply unacceptable' in an Environment Agency (EA) report published today (10 July) with only 1 of the major water and sewage companies in England performing at the level expected.

Published 10 July 2019 From: [Environment Agency](#)



Overall water company performance has deteriorated which reverses the trend of gradual improvement in the sector since the rating system began in 2011. Serious pollution incidents increased in 2018 causing damage to the rivers and wildlife.

Environment Agency Chair Emma Howard Boyd, who has previously warned water companies they would face a tougher regulatory approach with increasing inspections, is pledging that the Environment Agency will continue to work

with Ofwat to look at financial penalties to drive better environmental performance given fines are currently only a fraction of turnover. Writing in the report's foreword she said:

Companies should be reflecting on their environmental performance and long-term resilience, if this is poor they should be asking themselves whether dividends are justifiable.

The annual report rates each of the 9 water and sewerage companies in England as either green, amber or red on a range of measures including serious pollution, pollution per km of sewer pipes, supply resilience, self-reporting of pollution and complying with permits – and also compares individual company performance to highlight the best and worst.

Northumbrian Water was the only company achieving the highest 4 star rating, showing that it is possible to bring in good environmental practices and limit the impact of operations on nature. The Environment Agency report said this improvement is to be applauded which had only been possible with focus from the top of the organisation and ongoing effort from operational teams.

The report highlighted the best and worst performance including:

- Northumbrian Water improved to gain the highest rating of 4 stars.
- Severn Trent Water, United Utilities and Wessex Water dropped from 4 stars to 3 stars, with Anglian Water and Thames Water remaining on 3 stars. Companies with 3 stars must improve their performance to reduce their impact on the environment.
- Southern Water, South West Water and Yorkshire Water were only given 2 stars and described as demonstrating an 'unacceptable level of performance.'
- Again this year South West Water is poor performing and has consistently demonstrated unacceptable performance and a red rating for pollution incidents. Most water companies look set to fail to meet 2020 pollution targets.
- Southern Water and Thames Water failed to demonstrate they have robust enough plans to maintain secure water supplies.

Executive Director of Operations Dr Toby Willison said:

Water companies need to clean up their act. People expect water companies to improve the environment, not pollute rivers and ensure secure supplies of water. With only one exception, none of the companies are performing at the level we wish to see, the country expects and the environment needs. We will continue to challenge CEOs to improve company performance and we will take strong and appropriate enforcement action.

Companies performing well have a positive ripple effect on the natural environment and communities in their regions. We want all water companies to meet the expectation of their customers, the

needs of environment and learn from the best practice that the leading company is demonstrating.

The report is available here: [Environmental performance of the water and sewerage companies](#)

---

## [New masterclass to prepare students for independent living](#)

**New workshops will be available from September to support schools and colleges teach young people about living independently.**

Published 10 July 2019 From: [Department for Education](#) and [The Rt Hon Damian Hinds MP](#)



Young people will be put through their paces by their college or sixth form to prepare them for independent life after school, the Education Secretary has announced with the launch of new courses today (10 July).

Leapskills workshops, developed by student accommodation provider Unite Students, will offer schools and colleges resources to teach Year 12 and 13 pupils about independent living, managing money and dealing with conflict.

Schools, colleges and sixth forms will be able to put on the optional Leapskills sessions from September, using specialist resources developed by Unite, which cover areas including:

- Independent living
- Managing personal finances



- Developing and maintaining relationships
- How and where to access support

The sessions act as an innovative digital interactive masterclass to enhance how schools and colleges teach young people about what to expect and how to prepare for the leap of living away from home for the first time.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds said:

For young people leaving school, starting the next chapter of their life should be a positive life-changing experience – but we know that many people struggle with the pressures of moving away from home and living independently for the first time.

A huge part of education is preparing young people for adult life and it is right that we teach them what to expect for life after school, whether that's at university, work or an apprenticeship.

Whilst the majority of that focus is on the knowledge and skills needed to get qualifications, it is also important that we teach our young people the life skills they need like managing finances and understanding healthy relationships, as well as helping them to build character and resilience to be equipped to cope with the everyday challenges in life.

Unite Students offer schools and colleges free resources for teachers to deliver the Leapskills workshops, which use video content and a digital game to present a number of student life scenarios that simulate shared living, problem solving and conflict resolution.

Across the country, 1000 students have already benefited from the Leapskills workshops through a 18-month trial, with survey feedback showing 96% of students were engaged during the session and 91% of teachers would recommend it to a colleague.

Unite Students CEO Richard Smith said:

Every year we welcome over 50,000 students into their new home as they make the leap to university. For many this is one the most important and exciting moments in their lives but it's also a time of uncertainty. We see first-hand the challenges they experience as they make this important transition.

We believe that resilience is vital in young people and that given the right opportunities and experiences, young people can build resilience. The better prepared young people are for the transition to university, the easier they will find managing the highs and the lows often involved in this leap.

That's why we feel so strongly about creating the Leapskills

programme and offering it for free to schools across the UK. Building resilience in our young people is crucial to their experience of university and their life beyond. We welcome the Secretary of State's support for Leapskills and the part we are playing in providing all students with the opportunity to thrive.

Natalie Corriette, a teacher at St Bonaventure's 6th Form in Forest Gate who took part in the workshop said:

We were keen to offer our Year 12 students this opportunity as students can sometimes feel anxious and unsure about what to expect when living away at university. These sessions afforded them the ability to reflect on university life and to consider how they can best prepare for university life in terms of establishing support networks and fostering social relationships and friendship groups.

Our survey indicated that students' confidence levels in terms of their knowledge and understanding of university life more than doubled by the end of the session. I would recommend Leapskills to other schools as it really helped to empower the students and allay any concerns they might have about living away from home.

James Appiah, Year 12 student from St Bonaventure's 6th Form, said:

The Leapskills University Workshop was my first real taste of university life. The tour around the university accommodation and the real life problems we were given to solve helped to make me really feel mentally prepared for university.