

Changes to COVID-19 testing in England from 1 April

Symptomatic testing

Symptomatic testing in high-risk settings, where infection can spread rapidly among people who may be at higher risk of serious illness, remains important to ensure that COVID-19 is detected as quickly as possible.

This is to help minimise the number and impact of outbreaks to protect those who are most vulnerable.

Free tests for people who have COVID-19 symptoms will continue to be provided to the following groups, largely via the existing channels:

- NHS patients in hospital, who will be tested via the established NHS testing programme
- those eligible for COVID-19 antiviral and other treatments, who will be sent a pack of tests and can request replacements if they need them
- NHS staff and staff working in NHS-funded independent healthcare provision – the current lateral flow test ordering portal will remain available for this group to order their own tests
- adult social care staff in care homes, homecare organisations, extra care and supported living settings and adult day care centres, as well as residents in care homes and extra care and supported living settings via the established organisation ordering portal
- adult social care social workers, personal assistants, Shared Lives carers and CQC inspectors will be able to order tests from the current online lateral flow ordering system
- staff and patients in hospices will be supplied tests by the hospice
- staff and detainees in prisons and other places of detention will be supplied tests by the detention premises as currently happens
- staff and detainees in immigration removal centres will be supplied tests, as currently happens, by the organisation concerned
- staff and users of high-risk domestic abuse refuges and homelessness settings

Asymptomatic testing

During periods of high prevalence, asymptomatic testing will continue to mitigate risk. Testing will continue to be provided for:

- adult social care staff and a small number of visitors providing personal care
- hospice staff
- patient-facing staff in the NHS and NHS-funded independent healthcare provision
- some staff in prisons and other places of detention, and some refuges

and shelters

Care home outbreak testing for all staff and residents will also continue all year.

Full guidance will be published shortly setting out how the current testing regimes will change to reflect the [Living with COVID-19 strategy](#), which will include specific guidance for high-risk settings.

Visitors to high-risk settings

Most visitors to adult social care settings, the NHS, hospices, prisons or places of detention will no longer require a test.

Tests will continue to be provided to a small number of visitors to care homes and hospices who will be providing personal care.

Visits by people with symptoms may still be allowed in exceptional circumstances, such as end of life visits. Please contact someone responsible at the setting prior to visiting in these circumstances.

If you wish to test yourself, lateral flow tests will continue to be available to buy from pharmacies and supermarkets, including online.

It is vital that everyone continues to follow the [simple steps to keep themselves and others safe](#).

Changes in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

The devolved governments have set out their own plans:

The government will continue to work together with our partners to keep all of these measures under review.

If you do not fall into the categories listed here but you wish to test yourself for COVID-19, lateral flow tests will continue to be available to buy from pharmacies and supermarkets, including online.

[Director of Blackburn automotive business banned for 8 years](#)

Anthony Stephen Miller, 48, from Blackburn was director of Millers Commercial Refinishers Ltd which traded from July 2017 until early 2020 after which it went into liquidation in June 2020.

Millers Commercial Refinishers was an automotive business based at Great

Harwood near Blackburn. It provided a body repair service for vehicles damaged in accidents.

The company had ceased trading in early 2020 and Miller, having already informed third parties that the company would be put into liquidation, approached an Insolvency Practitioner in February 2020.

When the company did eventually go into liquidation in June 2020, the company liquidators referred the case to the Insolvency Service.

The subsequent investigation by the Insolvency Service found that the company had applied for and received a £50,000 Bounce Back Loan, despite it being clear that companies that had already ceased trading were not eligible for the loans, which were intended to support genuine companies during the pandemic lockdown.

Miller transferred nearly £30,000 of the loan out of the company's account to a connected company, despite owing HMRC at least £30,486 in unpaid VAT, PAYE and other charges at the point Millers Commercial Refinishers went into liquidation.

The Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy accepted a disqualification undertaking from Miller, which begins on 22 February 2022 and lasts for eight years.

The disqualification undertaking prevents Miller from directly or indirectly becoming involved in the promotion, formation or management of a company without the permission of the court.

Rob Clarke, Chief Investigator at the Insolvency Service said:

Bounce Back Loans were made available for trading companies adversely affected by the pandemic. Anthony Miller knew his company had ceased trading yet he took it anyway.

We will not hesitate to take action against directors who have abused Covid-19 financial support like this, and his lengthy ban should serve as a warning to others.

Notes to editors

Anthony Stephen Miller is of Blackburn and his date of birth is December 1973.

Millers Commercial Refinishers Ltd (Company Reg no. 10574101).

Disqualification undertakings are the administrative equivalent of a disqualification order but do not involve court proceedings.

Persons subject to a disqualification order are bound by a [range of restrictions](#).

[Information about the work of the Insolvency Service, and how to complain about financial misconduct.](#)

Contact Press Office

You can also follow the Insolvency Service on:

[Foreign Secretary supports the withdrawal of serving UK judges from the Hong Kong Court of Final Appeal](#)

- Foreign Secretary reached this conclusion following consultation with the President of the UK Supreme Court and the Deputy Prime Minister and Lord Chancellor.

The Foreign Secretary supports the withdrawal of serving UK judges from the Hong Kong Court of Final Appeal. Following discussions with the Deputy Prime Minister and Lord Chancellor and the President of the Supreme Court, it was agreed that it is no longer tenable for serving UK judges to sit on Hong Kong's top court.

British judges have played an important role in supporting the judiciary in Hong Kong for many years. However, since the imposition of the National Security Law in 2020, China has continued to use this legislation to undermine the fundamental rights and freedoms of the people of Hong Kong.

These rights and freedoms were set out in the Joint Declaration agreed between the UK and China in 1984. China's actions include restrictions on freedom of expression, the stifling of opposition voices, and the criminalising of dissent.

The National Security Law also violates the high degree of autonomy of executive and legislative powers and independent judicial authority, provided for in the Joint Declaration.

The UK Supreme Court has continued to assess the situation in Hong Kong carefully in consultation with the UK Government. As National Security Law cases proceed through the Courts – and we see the far-reaching chilling effect of the legislation – it has become increasingly untenable for the UK Government to endorse UK serving judges sitting on the Hong Kong Court of Final Appeal.

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said:

We have seen a systematic erosion of liberty and democracy in Hong

Kong. Since the National Security Law was imposed, authorities have cracked down on free speech, the free press and free association.

The situation has reached a tipping point where it is no longer tenable for British judges to sit on Hong Kong's leading court, and would risk legitimising oppression.

I welcome and wholeheartedly support the decision to withdraw British judges from the court.

Deputy Prime Minister, Justice Secretary and Lord Chancellor, Dominic Raab, said:

Since 2020 and the introduction of the national security law, our assessment of the situation in Hong Kong is that it has shifted too far from the freedoms that we hold dear – making free expression and honest critique of the state a criminal offence.

This flies in the face of the handover agreement we have had with China since 1997 and, having discussed at length with Foreign Secretary and the President of the Supreme Court, we regretfully agree that it is no longer appropriate for serving UK judges to continue sitting in Hong Kong courts.

I thank our judges for being a bastion of international rule of law in Hong Kong over the past 25 years.

Background

- High profile cases proceeding through Hong Kong's Courts include those of key pro-democracy activists such as Jimmy Lai, Andy Li and the NSL 47.

[Eustice: supporting farmers ahead of the coming growing season](#)

The Government has announced steps to assist farmers with the availability of

fertilisers for the coming growing season to help address uncertainty amongst growers and keep costs down for farmers.

With agricultural commodities closely linked to global gas prices, farmers are facing rising costs for inputs including manufactured fertiliser, due to the process depending on gas.

Environment Secretary, George Eustice has announced that changes to the use of urea fertiliser will be delayed by at least a year. The delay has been made to help farmers manage their costs and give them more time to adapt in the light of a global rise in gas prices leading to pressures on the supply of ammonium nitrate fertilisers. A consultation on restrictions was launched a year ago, in order to reduce ammonia pollution in the air. When restrictions are introduced, they will include the use of ammonia inhibitors rather than a complete ban.

In a move to further support farmers, revised and improved statutory guidance has been published on how farmers should limit the use of slurry and other farmyard manure at certain times of year. This will provide clarity to farmers on how they can use slurry and other manures during autumn and winter to meet agronomic needs. This guidance will provide more clarity and has been developed with farmers and farming bodies.

Farmers will be further supported through new slurry storage grants as of this year, helping meet the Farming Rules for Water and reducing dependence on artificial fertilisers by storing organic nutrients until needed or for onward processing.

Alongside these measures, further details of the Sustainable Farming Incentive have also been published today. Given current fertiliser prices, the priority must be to pioneer new technologies to manufacture more organic-based fertiliser products, and rediscover techniques such as using nitrogen fixing legumes and clovers as an alternative to fertiliser.

The Sustainable Farming Incentive will help farmers move towards sustainable farming practices over time, supporting farmers to build the health and fertility of their soil and to reduce soil erosion which are essential for sustainable food production, helping to bolster food security and the longer term resilience of the sector.

The Government will pay farmers to help them with the costs of sowing nitrogen fixing plants and green manures in their crops or in advance of their crops to substitute some of their fertiliser requirements for the coming season and reduce their dependence on manufactured fertilisers linked to the price of gas.

An industry fertiliser roundtable will also be chaired by the Farming Minister, Victoria Prentis to continue to work on these issues, identify solutions and better understand the impact of current pressures on farmers. The group will meet for the first time this week. In addition, Defra is extending the membership of its longstanding Market Monitoring Group, which involves industry expertise to understand trends in markets.

Environment Secretary, George Eustice, said:

The significant rise in the cost of fertiliser is a reminder that we need to reduce our dependence on manufacturing processes dependent on gas. Many of the challenges we face in agriculture will require a fusion of new technology with conventional principles of good farm husbandry. The measures we have announced today are not the whole solution but will help farmers manage their nitrogen needs in the year ahead.

Over the course of the agricultural transition, legacy EU subsidies on land ownership or tenure are being phased out and replaced with a system that helps farmers invest in their businesses. The Farming Equipment and Technology Fund has recently been almost trebled to over £48 million, and last October the Government launched the Farming Innovation Programme to help farmers and growers boost R&D. A further £20.5 million of these R&D grants has been announced today which will help fund projects aimed at increasing productivity. Projects could include tackling a crop pest or disease that is affecting productivity or a business may work in partnership with researchers to breed new crop species which are more resilient to a changing climate.

Mark Tufnell, President of the Country Land and Business Association said:

Whilst we welcome today's announcements, it is important to recognise the sheer scale of the challenges ahead in the UK's food production.

The exceptionally high price of fertiliser can be mitigated only to a degree by high commodity prices. Some farmers may choose not to spread fertiliser at all this year. But if prices continued to stay at this all-time-high then government will need to urgently consider ways of increasing and diversifying domestic fertiliser production. We hope this will be a central focus of the round table DEFRA has rightly called.

We welcome the news that DEFRA has accepted the industry's advice to allow the continued use of urea within an accreditation scheme, audited by Red Tractor. This gives farmers a greater degree of choice when purchasing fertiliser.

The announcement of payment rates for the Sustainable Farming Incentive, and additional guidance on the compatibility of the scheme with Countryside Stewardship, goes some way to explaining to farmers the impact of the agricultural transition on their own

businesses.

Soil Association Farming Director Liz Bowles said:

We welcome the commitment from ministers to accelerate the reduction in our reliance on artificial nitrogen fertiliser and invest in soil health.

It's vital that we act differently to our post war response in the 1940s by prioritising climate and nature alongside food security. The ongoing damage being done to soils, wildlife, and climate poses the biggest threat to food security and nature-friendly, agroecological farming provides the best path to ensuring long-term resilience.

The transition needed cannot happen overnight, and a step-change in funding for farmer-led research and peer-to-peer learning will be essential. This will help farmers gain the confidence needed to recycle nutrients from livestock or nitrogen-fixing crops like clover in more complex rotations.

We must build on and accelerate the plans to help farmers work with nature that have been set out in the Environmental Land Management schemes – and we look forward to hearing more detail on the upcoming organic standard and the higher level payments for improving soil health.

UK pledges £286 million of lifesaving aid for Afghanistan

- UK pledges an additional £286 million of emergency aid for vital lifesaving assistance in Afghanistan.
- Funding comes as the UK co-hosts an international pledging conference tomorrow (31 March) to support the UN's largest ever humanitarian appeal.

- UN estimates around 10 million children across Afghanistan urgently need humanitarian assistance to survive.

The UK is set to commit a further £286 million of emergency UK aid to the Afghan people to provide life-saving food and emergency health support.

The new money is announced ahead of the UN Afghanistan Conference tomorrow (31 March), which will bring together international allies to raise vital funds for humanitarian aid, as well as protect women and girls and support stability in the region.

The UN is seeking to raise more than \$4bn – its largest ever appeal for a single country. The UN estimates that around 10 million children across Afghanistan urgently need humanitarian assistance to survive.

Alongside emergency humanitarian aid, the new UK funds will support basic services such as improving access to health care, and helping farmers overcome the impact of drought.

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said:

The UK is rallying countries in support of the Afghan people and helping lead the way in providing life-sustaining food, shelter and medical supplies. Together with allies and partners, we can do more and will do more to help Afghanistan.

The new UK funding will be channelled through UN partners and trusted NGOs. No funding will go directly to the Taliban. Since October, UK aid to Afghanistan is already supporting more than 60 hospitals, providing health services for more than 300,000 people, ensuring 4.47 million people get emergency food assistance through the World Food Programme, and providing 6.1 million people with emergency health, water, protection, shelter, food, and education support through the UN Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund.

During the conference, the Foreign Secretary will also commit to putting women and girls at the heart of the UK's response, stressing the Taliban must engage constructively to protect their rights and urgently reverse the decision to prevent girls attending secondary school.

FCDO Minister of State, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon said:

The people of Afghanistan deserve the right not only to survive, but to thrive and live in freedom. Our humanitarian aid supports the most vulnerable, including girls and women as well as marginalised religious minorities.

I'm proud the UK is co-hosting this conference with the United Nations, Qatar and Germany, to strengthen the international response which has already saved lives this winter.

The UK doubled its aid to Afghanistan in the 2021-22 financial year to £286 million. We are matching the 2021-22 commitment this financial year by pledging £286 million again.

The UK continues to work with international partners to ensure aid agencies can deliver desperately needed aid to those most in need.