

# UK Health Security Agency to have strengthened sequencing and surveillance capabilities

The government's priorities for UKHSA were set out in the [agency's first remit letter](#).

UKHSA's top priority is taking forward the fight against coronavirus (COVID-19) and ensuring that we are prepared against other future external health threats.

In order to deliver this, the government has confirmed that, to support part of its remit, the agency will have increased genomic sequencing and surveillance capabilities.

UKHSA will plan for the next phases of the pandemic, ensuring COVID-19 related activities are operating effectively to manage the transmission and impact of the virus. The agency will also help support wider key lessons learned from the pandemic to keep our nation safe, both now and in the future.

Science and research will be at the core of UKHSA. It will bring together world-leading public health science, cutting-edge capabilities in data analytics and genomic surveillance, and at-scale testing and contact tracing to respond appropriately to all potential health hazards.

The organisation will play a crucial role in global health security, providing public health leadership at international, national and local levels, and working to reduce health inequalities.

Key strands of work will include:

- developing surveillance and modelling capabilities to inform action at national and local levels to protect the country's health
- increasing the country's world-leading genomic capabilities to respond rapidly to emerging threats through establishment of a [New Variant Assessment Platform \(NVAP\)](#)
- supporting and delivering clinical guidance and communications tailored to the needs of different populations and areas
- providing agile testing services at scale with rapid and effective contact tracing services, working in partnership with local authorities

Dr Jenny Harries, CEO of UKHSA, said:

The country's new health security agency will learn the scientific insights from COVID-19 and continuously be preparing for future health threats.

We will also have a key role in helping the government identify and implement lessons learned from the management of this pandemic, both during the remaining stages and beyond.

UKHSA will be a global leader, innovating to help stop a wide array of potential health hazards. The agency will contribute to a post-pandemic health system that is built back better, fairer and more resilient, both for the UK and globally.

Domestic work will include:

- immunisations: supporting current and future Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) vaccines strategies
- antimicrobial resistance (AMR): supporting the government's goal to slow the growth of AMR both at home and abroad through delivery of the UK action plan for AMR 2019 to 2024
- sexual health: providing scientific expertise to inform the development of the government's Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy and support the commitment to eliminate HIV transmission by 2030
- environmental harms: supporting the cross-government Clean Air Strategy by leading a national programme of evidence collation and communications work

The agency will continue its existing infrastructural programmes of scientific work. It will be key in contributing to the 'levelling up' agenda through a rigorous focus on reducing inequalities in the way different communities experience and are impacted by infectious disease and health threats, targeting action towards disproportionately affected groups.

In addition, UKHSA will be a leading voice on the global stage to protect the public's health from all external threats.