

# Leading social media platforms unite to support COVID-19 vaccine drive

- Collaboration comes as all adults aged 18 and over invited to get a jab
- Filters and a range of stickers will be available on Snapchat from today
- Other platforms will host live question and answers with medical experts providing vaccine advice

Leading social media platforms popular with young people including Snapchat, Reddit, TikTok, and YouTube, are supporting the vaccination programme by encouraging their users to get coronavirus (COVID-19) jabs.

The partnerships come as all adults aged 18 and over are invited to receive a vaccine in England as the vaccination programme continues at unprecedented pace and scale.

Snapchat users can use NHS stickers, a filter, and later this month, an augmented reality lens that all read: 'I've had my vaccine' for UK users to share on their accounts.

The platform is also hosting a series of question and answers with medical experts on the Prime Minister's snapchat account. The most recent took place on Saturday 19 June with Dr Kiren Collison, the interim Deputy Medical Director for Primary Care for NHS England, who answered questions from the public about the vaccine.

Snapchat has also expanded its: 'Here For You' feature which provides in-app resources to people looking for more information around health, mental health and wellbeing. When someone searches for 'COVID-19', 'vaccine', 'NHS' and 'vaccination', they will have access to expert NHS resources on the vaccine to make sure they are well informed, build confidence and tackle misinformation.

The activity supports the NHS 'every vaccination gives us hope' campaign encouraging younger people to get their vaccine and join the millions of people who have already received their jabs.

The government met its target of offering a vaccine to the most vulnerable by 15 April and is on track to offer a first dose to all adults by 19 July, 2 weeks earlier than planned. NHS England has extended the offer of a vaccine to all adults.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

With the offer of the vaccine now extended to all adults in England, we are leaving no stone unturned to boost uptake and encourage everyone to get the jab when eligible.

I am delighted that Snapchat, Reddit, TikTok and YouTube – some of

the most influential social media platforms – are coming together to support the biggest and most successful vaccine effort in NHS history.

We're accelerating our vaccine programme on the road to recovery and I urge everyone to come forward for the offer, roll up their sleeves and join the millions that already have the fullest possible protection from 2 doses.

Digital Secretary Oliver Dowden said:

Our vaccine rollout has been a great success story and is now available to all adults.

We have worked closely with social media platforms throughout the pandemic to promote life saving vaccine information, and this new initiative with popular platforms will help drive take-up even higher.

We are also tackling misinformation online through our new Online Safety Bill to make sure people are not bombarded by harmful content.

The community network platform Reddit has hosted 2 live 'ask me anything' sessions on its coronavirus forum, featuring experts such as Dr Amalina Bakri answering questions from Downing Street. Reddit will continue to host question and answers over the coming weeks to help people access factual and reliable information from a range of experts.

TikTok's support for the vaccine rollout includes adding the NHS 'I've had my COVID vaccine' stickers to its library for users to share, and working with Team Halo – a group of scientists using the platform to provide the latest information on vaccines with entertaining and shareable videos.

Vaccines Minister Nadhim Zahawi said:

I'm thrilled that some of the leading social media platforms are joining forces to boost vaccine uptake among younger people. This is another incredible asset to our vaccination programme, which is already saving lives.

The vaccine is our way out of this pandemic and we have made incredible progress so far with more than 4 in 5 adults receiving at least one dose and all adults being invited.

I encourage everyone to get the jab – it could stop you becoming seriously ill and protect your loved ones.

Ed Couchman, UK Regional General Manager at Snapchat, said:

With Snapchat playing a key part of the lives of young people around the world, we're thrilled to collaborate with the government to make sure they have accurate and trusted resources to stay safe, healthy and informed.

As well as creative tools, it's great to be expanding our in-app health and wellbeing support portal with NHS resources about the vaccine and to host question and answer sessions with key government officials from the Prime Minister's official Snap Star account.

As we enter this next phase of the COVID-19 recovery in the UK, we continue to explore new ways we can collaborate with trusted partners and organisations to help support the health and wellbeing of our Snapchat community.

In collaboration with the NHS, YouTube has rolled out a video campaign with the tagline: 'Let's Not Go Back' to remind its core 18 to 34-year-old audience of the importance of being vaccinated through messaging that speaks to their personal experiences from a year in lockdown.

The campaign is running on YouTube, and on national billboards and bus stop advertising, and on social media. Collectively, these information panels have served over 400 billion impressions worldwide.

Ben McOwen Wilson, UK Managing Director at YouTube, said:

We are delighted to have been able to support the NHS with our 'Let's Not Go Back' campaign to encourage young people to get vaccinated. From billboards to bus stops, online and off, we reached young people wherever they are to raise awareness of the key role they have to play.

It has been fantastic to witness the public response to our national initiative and to have seen the rates at which young people have stepped up. We will continue to work to combat the pandemic by using YouTube's extensive reach among young people to help in this critical national effort.

Dr. Jessica Ashooh, Director of Policy for Reddit said:

Building bridges between policymakers, industry experts, and online communities is central to how we elevate authoritative vaccine information on Reddit.

Our partnership with 10 Downing Street has enabled us to promote quality COVID-19 resources for Redditors in the United Kingdom.

Last year Digital Secretary Oliver Dowden and Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock agreed new measures with social media platforms to limit the spread of false vaccine information and help people find the information they need about any COVID-19 vaccine.

At a virtual roundtable, Facebook, Twitter and Google committed to the principle that no company should profit from or promote false information about COVID-19 vaccines, to respond to flagged content more swiftly, and to work with authorities to promote scientifically accurate messages.

The government has also developed a toolkit with content designed to be shared via WhatsApp and Facebook community groups, as well as Twitter, YouTube and Instagram, to tackle false information about the vaccine.

Earlier this year we announced that Facebook and Instagram are backing a new nationwide social media campaign launched by the government and the NHS for people to show their support for the vaccine roll out. The initiative allows users to update their profiles with a range of specially-designed profile frames and graphics. People can use these to show 'I've had my vaccine' or make a pledge that 'I will get my vaccine'.

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## [Flexible season tickets on sale, saving hundreds of pounds for rail passengers](#)

- #TheFutureIsFlexible as 2 and 3 day-a-week passengers given control over their commute, with potential savings of hundreds of pounds against daily and season tickets
- online 'season ticket calculator' will help passengers find the cheapest option as flexible season tickets go on sale from today (21 June 2021), in use from Monday 28 June
- new 'book with confidence' guarantee on advance tickets allows passengers to rebook journeys or receive rail vouchers without an admin fee if plans change

New national flexible rail tickets, matching modern working habits and saving passengers hundreds of pounds, will be available to commuters across England from next week.

The launch of flexible season tickets is the first step in the reform of the railways, as part of the recently launched [Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail](#).

The paperless tickets will allow travel on any 8 days in a 28-day period, with passengers able to tap smartcards or scan mobiles at the station with no need to select the days of travel in advance.

The change has the potential to save commuters hundreds of pounds, providing greater choice and flexibility.

Commuters can visit an updated [online 'season ticket calculator'](#), which will point people to the best tickets for them based on their journey, working pattern and individual needs, ensuring they get the deal that suits them.

To encourage more passengers to travel by rail, for the rest of this year (until 31 December 2021), train companies will also offer a book with confidence guarantee, allowing people to rebook journeys or receive rail vouchers without an admin fee if their plans change.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

Our railways work best when they are reliable, rapid and affordable.

As we kickstart the biggest reforms to our railways in a generation, flexible season tickets are the first step. They give us greater freedom and choice about how we travel, simpler ticketing and a fairer fare.

With a season ticket calculator to see which option works best for you, and a book with confidence guarantee to make journeys stress-free, the future of fares is flexible.

Kirstie Allsop, TV presenter and consumer champion, said:

As everyone tries to negotiate the balance between the office and working from home, and work out how and where they want to live, this initiative is really helpful.

Using the season ticket calculator will also help people see which option gives them the best possible deal.

Robert Nisbet, Director of Nations and Regions at the Rail Delivery Group, said:

We've worked with government to introduce the new Flexi Season ticket, which goes on sale today, to give commuters the freedom and flexibility to divide their time between home and the office.

The rail industry is helping people travel and book with confidence by providing better journey information, boosting cleaning and helping them change a booked journey fee-free should their circumstances change.

This new national offer also reflects the long-term decline in the use of traditional season tickets, with a change in working practices having been accelerated by the outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19).

Matthew Fell, CBI Chief UK Policy Director, said:

CBI members have told us that hybrid working is likely to be the long-term norm for many firms, with employees splitting their week between home and onsite working.

It is, therefore, essential that public transport networks reflect these new habits.

The introduction of flexible season tickets will help to ensure rail travel remains an affordable and realistic option for commuters, while future-proofing a network which has a key role to play in the UK's decarbonisation ambitions.

Mike Cherry, Chair of the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), said:

FSB has called for more flexibility in season tickets and we welcome this launch today. As small business owners and their staff consider the final stage of the unlock process and start to plan how they operate, we'd encourage them to use this new site to consider their options.

Analysis shows that 2 day-a-week commuters buying multiple new flexible season tickets could save, in a year, when compared to the cost of daily tickets, the following:

- over £260 from Woking to London
- over £210 from York to Leeds
- over £60 from Southampton Central to Winchester
- over £170 from Stafford to Birmingham
- over £230 from Liverpool to Manchester

Three day-a-week commuters could save:

- over £230 from St Albans City to London
- over £110 from Bromsgrove to Birmingham
- over £90 from Weston-Super-Mare to Bristol Temple Meads
- over £350 from Chelmsford to Stratford

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# Prime Minister sets out plans to realise and maximise the opportunities of scientific and technological breakthroughs

- New council to set strategy on how science and technology will tackle great societal challenges and transform lives
- Plans set to build on the success of the best UK science throughout the pandemic and beyond to cement UK's position as a science superpower

Prime Minister Boris Johnson has unveiled plans today (Monday 21 June) to ensure the UK's world-leading science and ideas turn into solutions for public good, as part of ambitions to become a global science superpower.

A new National Science and Technology Council will be established and chaired by the Prime Minister. It will provide strategic direction on the use of science and technology as the tools to tackle great societal challenges, level up across the country and boost prosperity around the world.

The Prime Minister has also asked Chief Scientific Adviser Sir Patrick Vallance to head up a new Office for Science and Technology Strategy, based in the Cabinet Office, and take up the role of the new National Technology Adviser, in addition to his current role as the Government's Chief Scientific Adviser and head of the Government Office for Science.

The Office will support the ministerial council and the National Technology Adviser to drive forward the strategy of Whitehall's science and technology priorities from the centre. It will strengthen the government's insight into cutting-edge research and technologies and work across government to put science and technology at the centre of policy and public services. The Office will also identify what is needed to secure and protect the capability in science and technology required in the UK to deliver the government's ambitions.

The UK's successful vaccine and therapeutics programmes has proven how science can deliver real, meaningful benefit to the British people and transform lives around the world, helping to protect people from coronavirus and enable societies to reopen again.

The Prime Minister is tasking the whole of government, working with the new council and office, to take the success of the UK's approach to vaccines and apply it to other priorities – setting bold visions, acting with speed, and taking risks, which can bring high rewards and benefits to the UK, including in developing technology to reach net zero, curing cancer and not only

treating it, and keeping our citizens safe at home and abroad.

One of the first tasks of the Office for Science and Technology Strategy will be to review the technology bets the UK should back and prioritise for strategic advantage.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

From discovery to delivery, our vaccination programme has proven what the UK can achieve at scale and at speed.

With the right direction, pace and backing, we can breathe life into many more scientific and technological breakthroughs that transform the lives of people across the UK and the world.

That's why I'm establishing a new ministerial council and office at the centre of government, so we can realise the limitless possibilities that research and technology has to offer and cement the UK's place as a global science superpower.

Chief Scientific Adviser Sir Patrick Vallance said:

The new Office for Science and Technology Strategy will put science and technology right at the heart of policy-making and strengthen the way we work across government to reinforce the position of the UK as a science superpower. I look forward to working with the National Science and Technology Council to help identify cutting-edge research and technologies that will deliver strategic advantage for the UK.

The government is currently investing £14.9 billion in R&D in 2021-22, meaning government R&D spending is now at its highest level in real terms for four decades.

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## **Secretary of State Oliver Dowden: Protecting journalism in a healthy democracy**

What makes a healthy democracy? The strongest and most progressive countries share lots of qualities, but they have two vital things in common: a free and diverse media and the right to dissent. This week, a vocal Twitter minority went after both.



GB News had barely begun broadcasting when pressure group “Stop Funding Hate” tried to stifle it, piling the pressure on advertisers to boycott Britain’s newest current affairs channel for spreading “hate and division”. It came in a week when we had already witnessed free journalism under assault with the despicable harassment of BBC journalist Nick Watt.

It seems GB News’ biggest crime – or rather “pre-crime”, as it’s called in the dystopian Minority Report when people are proactively punished for wrongs they haven’t committed yet – was to signal that it might not always agree with the media consensus. When he launched the channel, veteran broadcaster Andrew Neil vowed that GB News would not be “an echo chamber for the metropolitan mindset”, and that it would “empower those who feel their concerns have been unheard”.

Rightly so. A free media is one that has a diverse range of opinions and voices – and as I said earlier this week, GB News is a welcome addition to that diversity. We need outlets and commentators who cover the range of the political spectrum; who can speak truth to power; and who are willing to challenge dogma or orthodoxy.

I’ve no doubt plenty of people will disagree with some of the things GB News commentators have to say – just as plenty of people disagree with the things they see and hear on the BBC, Sky News or any other media outlet. But if you don’t like those ideas, switch over – don’t silence. We shouldn’t be blocking people from the conversation simply because we disagree with them.

That is exactly why, when we were developing legislation to boost online safety and tackle social media abuse, I was determined to make sure it couldn’t be used to stifle debate. Every country is grappling with this – but I believe the UK has struck the right balance and carved a path for the rest of the world to follow with our Online Safety bill, which we published in draft form last month.

That bill will protect children online and help stamp out the vile social media abuse, including racism and misogyny. Crucially, though, it also includes strong safeguards for free speech and the freedom of the media.

There will be a new requirement for social media companies to protect freedom of expression. The largest social media platforms will need to be clear to users about what they allow on their sites, and enforce it consistently. That means they won’t be able to arbitrarily remove content – and if a user feels they have, they’ll have a new right to appeal. Right now if content is removed there is no recourse to review or in many cases even get an explanation as to why material has been taken down. Our bill will enhance the protections in place.

We’ve also got special safeguards for journalistic and “democratically important” content. News publishers’ content won’t be in scope – whether it’s on their own sites or on other online services. Journalists will also benefit from increased protections when they post on social media. The largest platforms will also have to protect political opinions on their sites, even if certain activists or campaign groups don’t agree with them.

Those are the grounds of a functioning democracy. Sadly we can no longer take them for granted. Across the West, our values of tolerance and freedom of expression, for which previous generations have fought and died, increasingly risk being undermined by a small but vocal minority. For them, these are not absolute, but relative, concepts, ready to be bent to silence dissent from their world view. We will not stand by and allow that to happen.

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## Outdoor civil wedding and partnership registrations to be legalised

Press release

Outdoor civil wedding and partnership ceremonies in England and Wales are set to be legalised for the first time – offering greater choice to couples in a boost to the wedding sector.



- Civil ceremonies can take place outside for the first time
- Will support wedding sector and provide greater flexibility to couples
- Comes into force on 1 July

Under current laws for approved premises such as a hotel, the legal wedding or civil partnership ceremony must take place in an approved room or permanent structure. It will now be possible for a couple to have the whole ceremony outside at such a venue.

This change will give more options to couples and the sector in terms of how they celebrate and host the big day by allowing all aspects of weddings to take place outdoors – providing greater flexibility especially during the pandemic when there are important public health considerations to take into account.

On 30 June, a statutory instrument (SI) will be laid to amend the regulations with the change taking effect on 1 July. This follows a commitment made in

2019 to legalise outdoor ceremonies.

Lord Chancellor Robert Buckland QC MP said:

A couple's wedding day is one of the most special times in their lives and this change will allow them to celebrate it the way that they want.

At the same time, this step will support the marriage sector by providing greater choice and helping venues to meet demand for larger ceremonies.

The change will benefit almost 75% of all weddings in England and Wales that are non-religious and which take place on approved premises, along with civil partnerships.

A Law Commission report later this year will present options for further reforms which will then be considered carefully by the Government. Options they are considering include offering couples greater flexibility to form their own ceremonies, allowing the ceremony to take place in a much broader range of locations, and powers to hold weddings remotely in a national emergency.

Notes to editors:

- These changes are being introduced via amendments to the Marriages and Civil Partnerships (Approved Premises) Regulations 2005 to allow legal outdoor civil weddings and civil partnership registrations to take place within the grounds of Approved Premises.
- The Marriages and Civil Partnerships (Approved Premises) (Amendment) Regulations 2021 will come into force on 1st July 2021
- The regulations apply only to Approved Premises – the changes cannot enable outdoor weddings to take place on religious premises. However, those religious premises which are Approved Premises for civil partnership registrations will be allowed to hold civil partnership registrations outdoors, should they wish to do so.
- The legal requirements for approved premises are set out in regulations. For ceremonies in other types of building, there are complex legal requirements dating back more than a century which are fixed by primary legislation.
- In order to hold legal outdoor weddings and civil partnership registrations, a venue must be Approved Premises or must become Approved Premises under the Marriages and Civil Partnerships (Approved Premises) Regulations 2005, as amended.
- Currently, premises which seek approval must comprise a permanent built structure (or permanently moored vessel) with at least one room which is to be approved for civil weddings and civil partnership registration. Under the amended regulations, such premises, if approved, can also use any outdoor areas in the same venue to hold civil weddings and civil

partnership registrations.

- Existing Approved Premises will be permitted to use any outdoor areas in the venue for civil wedding and civil partnership registrations without having to re-apply for approval, subject to certain conditions.
- Ceremonies will now be able to take place fully outdoors or under a partially covered structure if this has at least a 50% open area (the same definition used for the smoking ban and Covid 19 regulations in England and Wales). The location for the ceremony must be assessed to be seemly and dignified. Other requirements for public access and signage must also be met.
- These are time-limited amendments to the regulations to come into force 1 July 2021 until April 2022. A consultation will be undertaken in the Autumn 2021 to consider the practical impacts of this policy in detail and to enable a later amending Statutory Instrument which is not time limited.
- With the exception of Jewish and Quaker weddings, which for historical reasons can already take place outdoors, legal religious weddings will continue to take place in certified places of worship which are also registered for marriage, or churches and chapels of the Church of England or Church in Wales. The Government will legislate to allow religious marriages to take place outdoors when parliamentary time allows.

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