

Work begins for UK Health Security Agency to protect the nation

- The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), led by Dr Jenny Harries, launches today
- Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock and UKHSA Chief Executive Dr Jenny Harries will visit Colindale laboratories to mark the occasion
- UK provides £4 million to the World Health Organization's Contingency Fund for Emergencies

Dr Harries and the Health and Social Care Secretary, Matt Hancock, will visit Colindale, north London, to see the work being done to help the UK understand and respond to new variants of the virus causing COVID-19. These laboratories, which have been operating throughout the pandemic under Public Health England (PHE) leadership will transfer to the new UKHSA.

The new agency will work to protect the country from future health threats and ensure the nation can respond to pandemics quickly and at greater scale.

It will also work with global partners, becoming a mainstay of what the Prime Minister and other international leaders have called "a more robust international health architecture that will protect future generations."

The UK has also confirmed a £4 million contribution to the World Health Organization's (WHO) Contingency Fund for Emergencies (CFE). The purpose of the CFE is to give WHO the resources to quickly mount an effective response to disease outbreaks and humanitarian crises in developing countries and stop these health emergencies from spiralling out of control, saving lives.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

This is an important day as we launch the UK Health Security Agency to ensure that we protect the public and prepare for the next pandemic. The team working at UKHSA, expertly led by Dr Jenny Harries, will spend every day focussed on the current and future health threats facing our country so we are always ready for whatever is on the horizon.

Dr Jenny Harries, Chief Executive, UKHSA said:

It is a significant moment as the work of the UK Health Security Agency begins with a specific focus on pandemics and public health threats. We have learned so much from responding to COVID-19 and this is a brilliant opportunity to ensure these lessons can be applied in the future, with the scale and capacity needed to save lives and protect the public.

There is work to do right away as we continue our fight against COVID-19, even with the success of our vaccine programme so far, and the tentative steps we have made on the roadmap to return to normality. UKHSA will work with our regional, national and global partners to tackle this virus while ensuring we are ready to face future health challenges.

The primary focus for UKHSA in its initial phase of operation will be the continued fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

It will bring together the country's cutting-edge health security science capabilities, data analytics and genomic surveillance with at scale testing and contact tracing capability – combining key elements of Public Health England with NHS Test and Trace including the Joint Biosecurity Centre.

Formally established in April 2021, UKHSA will be chaired by Ian Peters, currently Chair of Barts Health NHS Trust and former Chief Executive of British Gas, Managing Director of NatWest Small Business Services, and chairman of several data driven growth technology companies.

The agency will lead on health protection and security activity for England, and will also take over from the PHE and NHS Test and Trace work those organisations already carry out on a UK basis, either as reserved functions or under collaborative arrangements with the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland administrations – for example, the Joint Biosecurity Centre. It will not replace the public health agencies in the other 3 UK countries, but will operate a close collaborative relationship with them.

Public Health England and NHS Test and Trace will continue to operate during the transition to UKHSA.

Fresh wave of grant funding launched as councils are called on to do their bit to continue supporting businesses

- New Restart Grants scheme launched today, providing funding of up to £18,000 to eligible businesses
- call issued to all 314 local authorities across England to deliver new COVID grants to businesses in good time and take a flexible approach to updated restrictions
- joint letter from Small Business Minister Paul Scully and Tourism Minister Nigel Huddleston thanks councils for supporting businesses but highlights urgency of ongoing support

Hard-pressed businesses across the economy will receive fresh support from the new £5 billion [Restart Grants scheme](#) launching today (1 April), as the government on councils to get funds to business owners as soon as possible.

From today, businesses in England in the non-essential retail sector will be eligible for one-off grants of up to £6,000, while businesses in the hospitality, accommodation, leisure, personal care and gym sectors, which are reopening later, will be eligible for one-off grants of up to £18,000. The £5 billion of government funding available through the Restart Grants scheme will be delivered by local authorities.

This is coupled with £425 million of top-up funding for the ongoing Additional Restrictions Grant scheme for councils to distribute to businesses in particularly urgent need of additional support – which could also be businesses who don't necessarily pay business rates like tour operators, B&Bs, caterers, freelancers and wedding service providers.

Minister Scully and Tourism Minister Nigel Huddleston have written to the leaders of 314 councils in England urging them to do all they can to pay out grants money more quickly and ensure businesses in their local authority area get the support they need.

[Letter to all local authorities from Ministers Scully and Huddleston](#) (PDF, 128KB, 2 pages)

It also encourages councils to support pubs and restaurants to open outdoor areas and host outdoor events in a safe and secure manner.

Small Business Minister Paul Scully said:

Government grants have been critical in relieving cash flow pressures and enabling businesses to plan ahead, and I am urging councils to deliver these vital funds to where they are needed as soon as possible.

We have made extraordinary efforts to stand by small business owners. Now we need to press on and continue getting money to them in good time to ensure that our communities are ready to build back better following the pandemic.

In the letter, ministers noted that some local authorities decided on eligibility criteria and application processes for the grant schemes quickly, while others have taken far too long to do so. Councils are being pressed to ensure funds are paid out as quickly as possible to relieve pressure on businesses.

To help get cash out more quickly to those who need it, the ARG funding will be provided to local authorities if existing scheme money has been spent by 30 June 2021.

Tourism Minister Nigel Huddleston said:

Small businesses are the backbone of our tourism sector and a major part of what makes the UK a world-class destination. These vital funds will make a huge difference to businesses in our brilliant hospitality, accommodation and leisure sectors as we build back better from the pandemic.

I urge councils to work at pace to distribute these grants and look forward to seeing their impact in communities across the country.

Mike Cherry, National Chair at the Federation of Small Businesses, said:

During this crisis billions of pounds worth of grants have been made available to businesses that desperately need it, yet, frustratingly, so much of it is still yet to be allocated.

It's good that the government is making it clear to local authorities that ARG grants are genuinely discretionary, and that the priority is to get this support delivered. Whether that's to home-based businesses, direct or indirect suppliers to retail, leisure and hospitality, tourism, or others that need support, lots of small firms are in need and it's vital that this money gets to them.

Local authorities urgently need to get these grants distributed, to support businesses and jobs in their local area.

The launch of the Restart Grants scheme is the latest in a series of measures introduced since March 2020 to provide direct funding to businesses which have been disrupted or required to close.

The total provided to councils to give to businesses directly is now more than £25 billion. This is part of the unprecedented support package of over £352 billion delivered by the government to protect jobs and livelihoods, including the extended furlough and self-employed income support schemes, government-backed loans, VAT and business rates relief and a ban on commercial evictions.

Businesses can [check their eligibility for the Restart Grant here](#).

The Restart Grants scheme was announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Budget on 3 March 2021.

The amount paid to eligible businesses under the Restart Grants scheme is dependent on rateable value.

[Restart Grant funding allocated to local authorities to support businesses](#)

Allocations from the latest £425 million ARG top-up will be provided to local authorities if existing funds have been spent by 30 June 2021.

The 314 councils in England distributing the grants are those responsible for collecting business rates.

Businesses can receive ARG funding alongside Restart Grants funding if they are eligible and their council deems them to be in urgent need of additional support.

The ARG is designed to provide support to businesses in acute need and is not constrained solely to businesses that have had to remain closed. Businesses such as freelancers, market traders, close contact service providers like wedding hairdressers and makeup artists without a fixed premises, tour operators and B&Bs are all further examples of business types in scope for these grants.

[MAIB safety digest 1/2021 published](#)

News story

A collection of lessons learned from marine accidents.



The latest collection of cases (volume 1 of 2021) detailing accidents involving vessels from the merchant, fishing and recreational sectors is now available to download [here](#).

Published 1 April 2021

[1 May 2021: Update to the Patent](#)

Cooperation Treaty (PCT) fees

News story

The Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) fee structure changed on 1 May 2021.



The Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) fee structure changed on 1 May 2021 and is now as follows.

Transmittal Fee:

Search Fee:

International Fee:

- for the first 30 sheets: £1,028
- for each sheet over 30: £12

Restoration for Restoration of Priority: £150

Reductions for E – FILING

- electronic filing (not being in character coded format): £155
- electronic filing (being in character coded format): £232

Fees for preparation of Priority Document:

Published 1 April 2021

Last updated 1 May 2021 [+ show all updates](#)

1. 1 May 2021

A new fee structure for PCT applications is in effect from today 1 May 2021.

2. 1 April 2021

First published.

Universal Credit claimants TAP into employment

Later this month, DWP Train and Progress (TaP), a new DWP initiative aimed at increasing access to training opportunities for claimants, will see an extension to the length of time people can receive Universal Credit while undertaking work-focused study.

Initially available for six months, the amount of time Universal Credit claimants can take part in full-time training will extend to up to 12 weeks throughout Great Britain – up from the current 8 weeks.

The change will ensure those receiving UC and in the intensive work search group can take advantage of sector-specific training from digital skills to social care and engineering while receiving the financial support they need.

It includes access to the Level 3 adult offer, with the Department for Work and Pensions today announcing it will go even further and increase this to 16 weeks for those enrolled on L3 Skills Bootcamps.

Minister for Employment, Mims Davies MP, said:

A lack of relevant skills can hold people back from landing a job, so we're helping people to progress by opening up a wider choice of training opportunities and qualifications for those on Universal Credit to be part of.

This new flexibility will really help jobseekers across the country to boost their chances of finding fresh roles, particularly in growing sectors, and builds on the UK Government's Plan for Jobs which is already helping people gain the skills needed to thrive in new employment.

Director of the Institute for Employment Studies, Tony Wilson, said:

"This is welcome news from the government. Even while employment has fallen overall during this crisis, our research has shown that it has continued to rise in areas like professional services, technology and healthcare.

We need to be doing a lot more to help those out of work to get the skills that they need to prepare for and take up these new jobs, and today's announcement will play an important part in that – by ensuring that more of those on Universal Credit can continue to get

financial support while they train.

The increased flexibility is aimed at better aligning government support, providing a vital link between jobcentres and careers services, with access to the provision agreed between jobseekers and their Work Coach.

The move comes as the UK government launches almost [400 additional free qualifications](#) as part of the UK government's Lifetime Skills Guarantee, and follows the announcement earlier this week of a further 13,500 Work Coaches in Jobcentres across the country.

To find out more information talk to your Work Coach.

Media enquiries for this press release – 020 3267 5144

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