

Home Secretary tightens restrictions on GHB following horrific crimes

News story

GHB and related substances will be moved from Class C to Class B, meaning they will be harder to access and result in tougher penalties for possession.



The Home Secretary is tightening restrictions around the drug GHB (gamma-hydroxybutyric acid) and related substances by moving them from Class C to Class B, following recommendations by the independent Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD).

The Home Office will also bring forward legislation around two substances that can be converted to GHB on ingestion – gamma-butyrolactone (GBL) and 1,4-butanediol (1,4-BD). This will mean that those wishing to possess them for legitimate industrial purposes will require a licence.

The stricter measures come after GHB and related substances were found to have been used in horrific crimes, such as those committed by Reynard Sinaga, who was found guilty of 136 counts of rape in trials lasting until December 2019, and serial killer Stephen Port, both of whom used the substance to incapacitate their victims.

The reclassification will mean tougher penalties for those found in unlawful possession of the drugs and ensure victims are better protected from their use by criminals.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

GHB and related substances have been used to commit some truly sickening crimes including murder, sexual assault and robbery.

I will do everything in my power to protect people from harm, which is why I am tightening restrictions around these dangerous substances.

These changes will make the drugs harder to access and introduce tougher penalties for possession.

The Home Secretary asked the ACMD to expedite a review of controls on these drugs in January 2020 after becoming concerned about their use by criminals.

The government will seek to bring forward the necessary legislation when parliamentary time allows.

The government keeps drug control under constant review and we work in consultation with the ACMD to consider any new evidence of misuse, harm and diversion.

We continue to work with law enforcement agencies in the UK and overseas to tackle drugs supply and bear down on the organised crime gangs profiting from illicit drugs supply into and around the UK.

Published 30 March 2021

[Over £30 million government investment to boost batteries and hydrogen vehicles](#)

- £9.4 million of government funding for 22 studies to develop innovative automotive technology, including hydrogen vehicles and a lithium extraction plant
- the first year of £22.6 million commitment by the government-backed Faraday Institution to build on vital research into battery safety and sustainability
- funding supports the government's plan to phase out the sale of new petrol and diesel cars by 2030 and Build Back Greener from the pandemic

Pioneering research into battery technology, the electric vehicle supply chain and hydrogen vehicles is to be backed by over £30 million of government funding, Minister for Investment Gerry Grimstone announced today (Tuesday 30th March).

Twenty two studies will receive a share of £9.4 million, including proposals to build a plant in Cornwall that will extract lithium for use in electric vehicle batteries, a plant to build specialised magnets for electric vehicle motors in Cheshire and lightweight hydrogen storage for cars and vans in Loughborough.

The government-backed Faraday Institution is also committing the first year of a £22.6 million programme to continue its work to further improve the safety, reliability and sustainability of batteries.

This funding comes ahead of the phasing out of the sale of new petrol and diesel cars by 2030, as pledged in the government's 10 Point Plan for a green industrial revolution. Research into alternative ways to power vehicles is a fundamental part of this transition, ensuring the UK remains a world leader in automotive technology and boosting jobs and skills in regions leading the way.

Minister for Investment Gerry Grimstone said:

We have set an ambitious target to phase out the sale of new petrol and diesel cars by 2030. To support that it is crucial we invest in research so we can power ahead with the shift to electric vehicles as we build back greener from the pandemic.

The world leading research announced today showcases the very best of British innovation and it will support all stages of the automotive supply chain to make the switch to electric vehicles – from developing batteries, to exploring how to recycle them.

Investment in battery technology will help motorists and the environment by improving performance and reducing costs of electric vehicles. It is also good for businesses and workers, supporting the creation of new jobs, new industries and the development of technologies to power the automotive and energy revolution in the UK.

This latest round of studies funded through the Automotive Transformation Fund includes:

- Cornish Lithium – Trelavour Hard Rock Lithium Scoping Study [Cornwall]: Lithium hydroxide is an essential part of vehicle battery production. This study will assess the feasibility of developing a sustainable UK supply chain through the construction of an extraction plant that will produce low-carbon lithium hydroxide from a hard rock source in St Austell.
- Less Common Metals – New UK Magnet Plant [Cheshire]: This study has identified a promising approach to create a new UK magnet plant that will produce high-quality lightweight magnets for motors in electric vehicles
- Haydale Composites Solutions Ltd – Hydrogen storage for vehicles [Loughborough]: Storing hydrogen requires high-strength durable containers for safe operation in vehicles. This project will assess the suitability of Haydale's promising lightweight, low permeability storage tank, which could help to unlock the pathway to hydrogen propulsion

The Faraday institution will use today's funding to explore:

- battery safety, by investigating the root causes of cell failure in

lithium-ion batteries and how this can lead to fires. It will also investigate the environmental consequences of such fires and help develop a consensus around the best method of fighting lithium-ion battery fires

- solid state batteries, which have the long-term potential to deliver improvements in safety and significantly increase the distance an electric vehicle can cover between charges
- recycling and reusing batteries to increase the sustainability of the future automotive supply chain

The Faraday Institution will also examine the use of batteries on the energy grid and for aerospace. Under the Institution's strengthened commercialisation strategy, which has also been launched today, it will identify and target market opportunities, ensuring that the UK remains a competitive global leader in the latest battery technology.

The research announced today through the Advanced Propulsion Centre and the Faraday Institution demonstrates the government's commitment to nurturing innovation in the automotive industry. The government is committed to advance the UK's future transport system through its extensive R&D Roadmap and to increase economy-wide R&D investment to 2.4% of GDP by 2027.

About the Advanced Propulsion Centre

Funding for the 22 studies into the automotive supply chain comes from the Automotive Transformation Fund, delivered through the Advanced Propulsion Centre (APC).

The APC collaborates with UK government, the automotive industry and academia to accelerate the industrialisation of technologies, supporting the transition to deliver net-zero emission vehicles.

Since its foundation in 2013, APC has funded 150 low-carbon projects involving 375 partners, working with companies of all sizes, and has helped to create or safeguard over 50,000 jobs in the UK (APC estimate of person-years equivalent). The technologies developed in these projects are projected to save over 260 million tonnes of CO₂, the equivalent of removing the lifetime emissions from 10.2 million cars.

About the Faraday Institution

Powering Britain's battery revolution, the Faraday Institution is the UK's independent institute for electrochemical energy storage research, skills development, market analysis, and early-stage commercialisation. Bringing together expertise from universities and industry, the Faraday Institution endeavors to make the UK the go-to place for the research and development of new electrical storage technologies for both the automotive and wider relevant sectors.

The first phase of the Faraday Institution is funded by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) as part of UK Research and Innovation, a non-department public body funded by a grant-in-aid from the UK

government. Headquartered at the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus, the Faraday Institution is a registered charity with an independent board of trustees.

Third of UK's biggest companies commit to net zero

- Nearly a third of the UK's largest businesses pledge to eliminate their contribution to carbon emissions by 2050
- together these firms, including AstraZeneca, BT Group, Sainsbury's, and Unilever, represent a total market capital of £650 billion
- UK government urges more businesses to commit to net zero emissions by 2050 and build back greener ahead of UN climate conference COP26 in Glasgow

Almost 1 in 3 of the UK's largest businesses are leading the way in the world's transition to a low carbon economy, committing to align with UK government ambitions and eliminate their contribution to climate change by 2050.

As of today (Tuesday 31 March), 30 of the UK's FTSE 100 companies have signed up to the United Nation's [Race to Zero](#) campaign – the largest ever global alliance committed to achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050 at the latest, backed with science-based targets, with many opting to go even faster. Today's milestone means pledges have doubled in the past 5 months, with companies including AstraZeneca, BT Group, Sainsbury's, and Unilever and in total representing a total market capital of £650 billion.

Globally, more than 2,000 companies of all sizes have joined the UNFCCC Race to Zero so far, and around a third of these are British businesses from across sectors such as transport, technology and finance – putting the UK at the front of the pack internationally.

With the upcoming UN Climate Summit [COP26](#) in Glasgow later this year, the government is today calling on more businesses in the UK and around the world to take urgent action on their carbon emissions by signing-up to Race to Zero and setting out clear pathways to get to net zero.

Business and Energy Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng said:

Businesses wield incredible influence to drive change across society and the economy – we need to harness this power to fight climate change.

UK businesses are already leading the way in cutting carbon

emissions and building back greener – it is fantastic to see so many of our biggest companies already pledging to reach net zero.

But more can be done, and so today I am calling on more fantastic British companies to step up, follow suit and pledge to join the fight against climate change.

Businesses taking action on climate is vitally important in achieving the UK's goals to tackle climate change by 2050, from cutting emissions in their supply chains to opting for sustainable business practices. The government has put in place measures that encourage businesses to reduce their emissions, including last year appointing [Andrew Griffith](#) as Net Zero Business Champion to spur companies to make ambitious climate targets.

UK FTSE100 companies who have signed up to Race to Zero include:

- Vodafone, which has pledged to halve its carbon emissions by 2030, including the emissions emitted via the company's joint ventures, all supply chain purchases and business travel, and eliminate its contribution to emissions by 2040
- Sainsbury's, which has committed £1 billion over the next 20 years to become net zero by 2040. As part of this pledge, the company has also committed to reduce food waste, plastic packaging and water usage as well as increase recycling, biodiversity and healthy and sustainable eating
- AstraZeneca, which has committed to achieving zero carbon emissions from its global operations by 2025 and becoming carbon negative across its entire value chain by 2030. This involves doubling its energy productivity; using 100% renewable energy for power and heat and sustainable product design such as the launch of next-generation respiratory inhalers
- Rolls-Royce, which has committed to halving the greenhouse gas emissions associated with its operations and facilities by 2030. This involved establishing a circular economy approach to their manufacturing process meaning up to 95% of their jet engines can now be recycled
- Barratts, which has committed to achieving net zero by 2040 – the first major housebuilder to do so. The leading housing company has already reduced its carbon emissions by 21% and is in the process of constructing a hydroelectric turbine that will feed enough renewable energy into the national grid to supply over 250 homes annually with their energy needs
- Legal and General, UK financial services provider, which has committed to become net zero across their entire operational footprint from 2030. On top of this, they have announced they will open the UK's first net-zero carbon retirement community by 2030, located in central Bedfordshire and have pledged that all homes built by their housing services will be capable of operating at net zero carbon emissions from 2030
- Aviva, which became the first major insurer worldwide to target Net Zero carbon by 2040. Their pledge includes the commitment to invest £2.5 billion in low carbon and renewable energy infrastructure and power all

their offices with 100% renewable electricity

- Severn Trent, which has committed to delivering a net zero water supply for customers by 2030, and helped publish the Net Zero 2030 roadmap, a major step for the sector. Severn Trent is also ensuring the 2022 Games in Birmingham will be the first ever carbon neutral Commonwealth Games

UK Net Zero Business Champion Andrew Griffith said:

Since firing the starting gun on the year-long road to Glasgow a few months ago, we have seen an accelerating rate of the UK's largest and most successful businesses taking action on climate.

Today's news of 30 of the FTSE100 joining the Race to Zero makes the UK a global leader on tackling emissions with British companies representing a third of those signed up globally. It shows what can be done but, in the months running up to COP26, every board should engage on this vital topic.

UK government is committed to supporting businesses transition to a clean, green economy and helping them put in place environmentally friendly operations, so they are fit for the future.

Through UK government support packages such as the recent [Industrial Decarbonisation Strategy](#) and [North Sea Transition Deal](#) to protect jobs and businesses in transitioning industries, [aligning UK international support for the shift to clean energy](#), and the expansion of the [plug-in electric vehicle grant scheme](#), the government is aiding an orderly transition to a green economy, ensuring the UK maintains its energy security of supply, supports high-value jobs, and safeguards the expertise necessary to achieve a lower carbon future.

Government actions to support businesses ahead of COP26 include the Business Leaders Roundtables chaired by COP President Alok Sharma, the work of UK Net Zero Business Champion Andrew Griffith to help the business community embrace the opportunities of the green industrial revolution, and the Together For Our Planet campaign which celebrates businesses making climate commitments and inspires more to join them.

Since his appointment in November 2020, Andrew Griffith has written to every UK FTSE100 company, engaged directly with 77 of their Chairman or CEOs and presented to thousands of businesses of all sizes at virtual events across the UK. This has contributed to British companies and investors Race to Zero pledges increasing to over 700, representing an increase of 241% in just 6 weeks.

Today's announcement comes ahead of the UK hosting the Business 7 Summit (B7) in May, as part of its G7 Presidency, where committing to action to tackle climate change will be a key focus.

UK High Level Climate Champion for COP26 Nigel Topping said:

With over 15% of the global economy – and now 30% of the FTSE100 – in the Race to Zero, we are close to a critical inflection point, with credible net zero commitments fast becoming the new normal. If they don't join soon, the companies that have so far failed to engage with climate change risk falling behind the curve.

The UK is already seizing the economic opportunities to be gained in leading the green revolution, with 460,000 jobs already based in low carbon businesses and supply chains across the country and low carbon exports already worth billions of pounds each year.

Chief Financial Officer of RightMove Alison Dolan said:

We've put the Net Zero agenda at the heart of everything we do and we're looking forward to working with BEIS to help play our part in driving this forward. We'll be working closely with the Science Based Targets initiative to help the science guide our emission-reduction targets within our business operations, and we're committed to a 1.5C emissions-reduction agenda.

We're also exploring how we can help contribute further by using the reach of our platform to help inform people and promote a culture of emissions awareness.

CEO Rolls Royce Warren East said:

It's great to see industry support growing for the Race to Zero as achieving net zero emissions will require a broad coalition from across society. Rolls-Royce has committed to enabling the industries in which we operate – some of which are among the hardest to abate – achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 and we welcome the government's continued support in helping us achieve that goal.

In the last few months alone, we've taken significant steps including successfully testing 100% sustainable aviation fuels in our current generation of aircraft engines in Derby and our own Spirit of Innovation all-electric test aircraft, which is part funded by UK government, will get into the sky within the coming weeks.

CEO of AstraZeneca Pascal Soriot said:

Climate change is an urgent threat to public health, the environment and the sustainability of the global economy. Science tells us now is the time to act faster to tackle this challenge.

Through our science-led 'Ambition Zero Carbon' strategy, we are investing up to \$1 billion to accelerate our efforts to eliminate carbon emissions from global operations by 2025 and ensure our entire value chain is carbon negative by 2030.

We are taking this bold action, together with our partners, as part of our commitment to support patients, healthcare systems and the planet.

CEO of Vodafone Ahmed Essam said:

We are proud to be a member of The Race to Zero. At the same time as we work to maximise our positive impact on society, we are striving to minimise negative impact on the environment. We are on track for our network to be powered by 100% renewable energy by July this year, eliminating our own emissions by 2030, and achieving net-zero throughout our supply chain globally by 2040.

We're also focused on developing technology that helps others cut emissions. Industry and Government can work together to make a huge difference to the world around us, and I hope more companies join this vitally important campaign.

CEO of Sainsburys Simon Roberts, said:

This year the world will come together for the UN Climate Change Conference and commit to bold action to tackle climate change and we are proud to be a principal partner. We know that we have a vital role to play in reducing carbon emissions and that we must work together to create meaningful and lasting change.

We are starting with our own business and have committed to a bold ambition to become Net Zero in our own operations by 2040 and to reduce carbon emissions across from field to fork by 2030. We look forward to working collaboratively with others to protect the planet for future generations.

CEO of Legal & General Nigel Wilson said:

Legal & General is delighted to join Race to Zero. Climate is not only the most urgent issue but also the biggest investment opportunity of our lifetimes. We can harness the power of business and markets to ensure the transition happens.

All of us must now move from promises and commitments to action and delivery – we have already invested more than £1.4bn of assets into renewable energy and have actionable climate plans in place across

our major business areas including investments, housing and commercial property.

Chief Executive of Barratt Developments David Thomas said:

Barratt has long been focused on creating a positive environmental legacy for future generations, which is why we were the first major housebuilder to set ambitious science-based carbon reduction targets last year. So when the call came to join the Race to Zero in the run up to COP26 it was a straightforward decision for us to join.

Today's announcement forms part of the government's wider goals to support the country's business community to make credible plans to net zero by 2050 or earlier and showcase the UK's place as a global leader in tackling climate change ahead of COP26.

FTSE100 companies

List of FTSE100 companies in the Race to Zero as of 23 March:

1. AstraZeneca plc
2. Aviva plc
3. Barratt Developments
4. Berkeley Group Holdings
5. British Land
6. BT Group plc
7. Burberry Group plc
8. Croda International
9. Diageo plc
10. Entain
11. GlaxoSmithKline plc
12. Intern'l Consolidated Airlines Group
13. Intertek
14. JD Sports
15. Land Securities
16. Legal & General Group plc
17. London Stock Exchange Group plc
18. Phoenix Group
19. Reckitt Benckiser
20. Rightmove
21. Rolls Royce Holdings plc
22. J Sainsbury plc
23. Schroders
24. Severn Trent
25. SSE plc
26. Tesco plc
27. Unilever plc
28. United Utilities

29. Vodafone Group plc

30. WPP plc

In November 2020, the Prime Minister appointed Andrew Griffith MP as the UK's Net Zero Business Champion to support the country's business community to make credible plans to net zero by 2050 or earlier. In his role Mr Griffith works closely with Business Secretary, Kwasi Kwarteng and COP26 President Alok Sharma to encourage as many UK businesses as possible to commit to net zero targets, harnessing the potential of British firms as they launch new products, attract new investment and create new jobs.

The FTSE 100 is an index composed of the 100 largest companies listed on the London Stock Exchange (LSE). These are often referred to as 'blue chip' companies, and the index is seen as a good indication of the performance of major companies listed in the UK.

Race to Zero

The brand '[Together for our Planet](#)' was unveiled in November 2020, marking the one year to COP26 milestone. Together for our Planet campaign aims to engage the whole country in the conversation around climate change in the run-up to COP26, inviting businesses from every corner of the UK to join us in the Race to Zero.

As well as recruiting the UK's biggest companies to join the Race to Zero, the government has also launched a new campaign to encourage small businesses across the country join the fight against climate change and go greener.

Race To Zero is a global initiative, backed by science-based targets, to commit businesses, cities, regions, investors and universities to achieve net zero emissions by 2050 at the very latest.

Spearheaded by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), it rallies together leadership and support from businesses, cities, regions, investors for a healthy, resilient, zero carbon recovery.

The initiative is led by the High-Level Climate Champions for Climate Action – Nigel Topping and Gonzalo Muñoz.

To be accepted into the Race to Zero, company leaders must pledge to reach net-zero by 2050, in line with global efforts to limit warming to 1.5C. Companies are also asked to publish a 5 to 10 year plan of how they will achieve their Net Zero target, as well as to sign up to Science Based Targets as a way of monitoring and assessing progress.

UNFCCC's Race to Zero mobilizes a coalition of leading net zero initiatives, representing 23 regions, 471 cities, 569 universities, 85 investors and over 1,600 companies, alone making up over 12% of the global economy.

These 'real economy' actors join 120 countries in the largest ever alliance committed to achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050 at the latest.

COP26 and G7

The COP26 President has already brought together a set of international COP26 Business Leaders which meets quarterly to accelerate private sector commitment to the zero-carbon economy across sectors, and across supply chains.

The [B7](#) is the business side of the G7 process, representing the business world of the G7 countries. The objective of the B7 is contributing to the G7 agenda, providing the point of view of business on major economic issues, addressing recommendations and proposals.

The UK is hosting the Business 7 Summit (B7) in May 2021, as part of its G7 Presidency. Committing to action to tackle climate change will be a key focus for the May summit.

[Sir Lenny Henry urges Black Britons to take COVID-19 vaccine](#)

- Actor Chiwetel Ejiofor, actor Thandie Newton, radio personality Trevor Nelson, musician KSI and author Malorie Blackman, among the signatories on Sir Lenny Henry's open letter
- Short film based on the letter by BAFTA award-winning director Amma Asante stars Adrian Lester, David Harewood, and Bridgerton's Adjoa Andoh, and will be aired across Sky, BT Sport, Viacom, Discovery, A&E and ROK and Channel 5 tonight from 8pm
- Letter comes as 30 million people have had their first dose of the vaccine – over half the UK's adult population

12 Years a Slave actor and Oscar nominee Chiwetel Ejiofor, author Malorie Blackman, actor Thandie Newton, football pundit Garth Crooks, performer George the Poet and musician KSI, radio personality Trevor Nelson and Bridgerton star Adjoa Andoh are among those who have put their names to the letter which encourages Black adults in the UK to make informed decisions about the vaccine and protect themselves and the people they care for by getting vaccinated when their turn comes.

Sir Lenny's letter, supported by the NHS, has also been turned into a powerful short film, directed by BAFTA award winner Amma Asante, which features Lenny alongside Adrian Lester, David Harewood, Naomie Ackie, Rt Rev Rose Hudson Wilkin, Bishop of Dover and Adjoa Andoh. The film will be aired

across Sky, BT Sport, Viacom, Discovery, A&E and ROK between 8pm and 9.30pm.

Sir Lenny Henry said:

I felt it was important to do my bit and so I wrote this letter to Black Britain asking people not to get left behind, to not continue to be disproportionately impacted and to trust the facts from our doctors, professors and scientists, not just in the UK but across the world, including the Caribbean and Africa.

I hear and understand the concerns which people of all backgrounds are wrestling with, but which are particularly concerning in Black communities. I want people to be safe, I don't want people to die or end up in hospital because of COVID-19. So I'm saying, when your turn comes, take the jab.

I want to thank everyone who has signed the letter and dear friends who took part in Amma's beautiful film.

More than 30 million people have now received their first COVID-19 vaccine dose, meaning over half of the UK's adult population have been vaccinated and will soon develop strong protection from serious illness, saving lives and significantly reducing pressures on the NHS.

Television veteran Sir Lenny says he understands the concerns of many in the Black community but tells them he does not want their concerns about the jab to leave them disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

An Office for National Statistics (ONS) survey taken from 13 January to 7 February shows that less than half (49%) of Black or Black British adults reported that they were likely to have the vaccine and NHS data shows that only 466,000 Black or Black British adults have had a first dose of the vaccine so far.

Amma Asante, who directed the film, said:

Creating something for the community I come from was important to me, particularly on a health issue that is as life and death as coronavirus.

I wanted to make a film that acknowledges the concerns of Black people while sharpening the lens on why the vaccine is so important, and why we deserve to have our lives and the lives of our loved ones protected.

I hope the film can contribute to making a difference.

Professor Kevin Fenton, London's Regional Director for Public Health England, said:

We know our Black communities have been among the hardest hit during this pandemic, but we also know there are some among us who are less likely to come forward for the life-saving vaccine.

We can all play a role in encouraging our friends and family to take it up when offered, whether that's answering questions or concerns they may have, pointing them towards information and advice from trusted sources, sharing our own experiences of getting the vaccine or declining to pass on myths and misinformation circulating on social media.

Getting back to normal life in the UK will mean every one of us joining the over 30 million people across the UK who have already taken up the vaccine. So I am fully behind Sir Lenny's call to our Black communities. Let's all do our bit, keep our loved ones safe and end this pandemic sooner rather than later.

People who have received a letter inviting them for a jab can log on to the [national booking service](#) and choose from 1,700 vaccination sites. Anyone unable to book online can call 119 free of charge, anytime between 7am and 11pm 7 days a week.

[Find more information on the COVID-19 vaccine.](#)

Signatories to the letter have come from across the spectrum of British society. From the business world, signatories include Karen Blackett OBE, Ric Lewis, Sonita Alleyne OBE, Eric Collins, and Wilfred Jones. Names from the arts and entertainment include Malorie Blackman, Lemn Sissay, Roy Williams, Reni Eddo-Lodge, George The Poet and KSI and from sport – Garth Crooks and Chris Hughton. Names from science and medicine have also supported the campaign, including Professor Kevin Fenton and Dame Donna Kinnair.

Baroness Valerie Amos, Baroness Doreen Lawrence and Trevor Phillips have also added their names.

The government is working with the NHS, local authorities, charities and faith leaders to provide advice and public health information in over 13 languages to people from all communities and backgrounds to ensure they come forward for the vaccine.

Background information

ONS statistics on vaccine uptake in the over-70s published on 29 March indicate that 58.8% and 68.7% of those who identify as Black African and Black Caribbean have had the first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine in this age group respectively.

Among adults aged 16 to 29 years, 17% reported hesitancy towards the coronavirus vaccine, compared with 1% of adults aged 80 years and over, according to the latest ONS data. This was the highest of all age groups. The data also indicates that less than half (49%) of Black or Black British

adults reported that they were likely to have the vaccine; higher proportions were reported among White (85%) and mixed ethnicity (80%) groups.

Analysis showed that mortality rates for deaths involving COVID-19 was highest among males of Black ethnic background at 255.7 deaths per 100,000 population and 119.8 for black women. The figures are lowest for White men at 87.0 deaths per 100,000.

Data also shows that people from ethnic minorities are more likely to test positive from COVID-19 compared with White ethnic groups. An ONS report puts this down in part to the jobs and housing among ethnic minority communities but says this does not completely explain the disparity. Black people in Britain were also significantly more likely to die of the disease according to ONS figures than White people.

The latest weekly NHS data on vaccination uptake by ethnicity shows that over 466,000 and 24,000 Black or Black British adults have taken the first and second COVID-19 vaccine doses respectively.

Sir Lenny Henry's letter in full

Dear mums, dads, grandparents, uncles, aunties, brothers, sisters, nephew, nieces, daughters, sons and cousins,

We love you!

We know we don't say it often enough and sometimes we have our disagreements, like all families do, but wherever you are we love you from the bottom of our hearts and we know you love us.

And we want to see you again. COVID-19 has kept us apart for far too long. We want to hug you, we want to celebrate with you, we want to go out for dinner with you, we want to worship with you, we want to go and watch football and cricket with you, we want to beat you at video games – in the same room so we can see the look on your face when we do.

But in order to do all that – we all need to take the COVID-19 jab. It's all of us in this together.

Things will slowly get back to normal. Well what people are calling the new normal. The reality is the new normal may mean needing a vaccine to do many of the things we now take for granted.

Because we love you – we want you to be safe and we don't want you to be left out or left behind. While other communities are rushing to get the vaccine and millions have already been vaccinated, some Black people in our community are being more cautious.

You have legitimate worries and concerns, we hear that. We know change needs to happen and that it's hard to trust some institutions and authorities.

But we're asking you to trust the facts about the vaccine from our own

professors, doctors, scientists involved in the vaccine's development, GPs, not just in the UK but across the world including the Caribbean and Africa. Many of whom are our relatives, many of whom have made the ultimate sacrifice to protect the people of this country from this pandemic.

And the thousands who volunteered to be part of the vaccine trials so that we know it's safe and works for people of all ethnicities.

Don't let their sacrifice be in vain. Don't let your understandable fears be what holds you back. Don't let your concerns be the thing that widens racial inequality in our society. Don't let Black people continue to be disproportionately impacted by this terrible disease. Many in our community say they do not want to take the vaccine, much more than other groups. But the fact is we have been disproportionately affected by the virus, many of our loved ones have died. Don't let coronavirus cost even more Black lives.

We love you. We don't want you to get sick. We don't want you to die.

We know you love us too so please hear us and when your turn comes, take the jab.

And once you do, tell cousin Mo to do the same (is he really my cousin?)

Let's do this together.

Thank you.

Lenny

Signatories to the letter

- Dr Maggie Aderin Pocock, MBE
- Sir David Adjaye, OBE, architect
- Naomi Ackie, actor
- Sonita Alleyne, OBE, Master, Jesus College, Cambridge
- Baroness Valerie Amos, Master, University College Oxford
- Amma Asante, MBE, writer/director
- Adjoa Andoh, actor
- Zeinab Badawi, Journalist, Chair, Royal African Society
- Karen Blackett, OBE, GroupM UK CEO, WPP Country Manager
- Malorie Blackman, OBE, writer
- I. Stephanie Boyce, Deputy Vice President, Law Society
- Dr Margaret Casely-Hayford, CBE, Lawyer, Chair, Shakespeare's Globe, Chancellor, Coventry University
- Dr Nira Chamberlain FIMA FORS CSci PhD HonDSc, President of the Institute of Mathematics and its Applications
- Eric Collins, CEO, Impact X Capital
- Garth Crooks, OBE, ex-footballer/football pundit
- Professor Patricia Daley, Vice Principal at Jesus College, Oxford
- Reni Eddo-Lodge, aournalist and Author
- Chiwetel Ejiofor, CBE, actor
- Wilfred Emmanuel-Jones, MBE, The Black Farmer

- Ekow Eshun, writer and broadcaster
 - Professor Kevin Fenton, London's Regional Director for Public Health England
 - Simon Frederick, TV director and photographer
 - George the Poet, spoken-word artist, poet
 - Patricia Hamzahee, advisor, investor, philanthropist
 - David Harewood, MBE, actor
 - Kobna Holdbrook-Smith, MBE, actor
 - Rev Rose Hudson Wilkin, Bishop of Dover MBE
 - Chris Hughton, Football Manager at Nottingham Forest Football Club
 - Dame Vivian Hunt
 - Adrian Joseph, OBE, Managing Director, Group AI and Data Solutions at BT
 - Kanya King, CBE, Founder MOBO Awards
 - Dame Donna Kinnair, Chief Executive and General Secretary of the Royal College of Nursing
 - Wol Kolade, Managing Partner at Livingbridge
 - Carol Lake
 - KSI (Olajide Olatunji), musician, YouTuber
 - Baroness Doreen Lawrence
 - Adrian Lester, CBE, actor
 - Darren Lewis, Assistant Editor, Daily Mirror
 - Denise Lewis, OBE, Olympic heptathlon gold medallist, TV Sports Presenter
 - Ric Lewis, Executive Chairman, Tristan Capital Partners, Founder Black Heart Foundation
 - Trevor Nelson, MBE, radio personality
 - Thandie Newton, OBE, actor
 - Dr Sandie Okoro, Senior Vice President and Group General Counsel, World Bank
 - Sir Kenneth Olisa, Lord-Lieutenant of Greater London
 - David Olusoga, OBE, historian and broadcaster
 - Trevor Phillips, OBE, writer, broadcaster, businessman
 - Professor Cynthia Pine, CBE, Professor of Dental Public Health, Queen Mary University of London
 - Marvin Rees, Mayor of Bristol
 - Dr Nicola Rollock, Distinguished Fellow, Faculty of Education at University of Cambridge
 - Tom Shropshire, General Counsel, Diageo
 - Lemn Sissay, MBE, author, poet and broadcaster
 - Tevin Tobun, CEO and Founder of GV Group
 - Alex Wheatle MBE, novelist
 - Dame Sharon White, Chair of John Lewis Partnership
 - Charlene White, TV news anchor, ITV
 - Roy Williams, OBE, playwright
 - Marcia Willis Stewart QC, Director, Birnberg Pierce
 - Lord Simon Woolley, Founder and Director of Operation Black Vote
 - Gary Younge, Professor, Manchester University and journalist
-

Government reintroduces confirmatory PCR testing

As set out in the government's Roadmap, our national journey out of lockdown is reliant on us being able to control variants of concern.

To increase our preparedness and heighten our defences against new variants, we have backed new technology, known 'genotype assay testing', which could halve the time it takes to identify if a positive COVID-19 test contains a variant of concern. This will allow positive cases to be traced sooner and stop the spread of variants on UK soil.

Genotype assay testing is compatible only with PCR tests and in order to detect the maximum number of cases with variants, the government is reintroducing confirmatory PCR testing for positive LFD test results in England. Confirmatory tests are used to validate the result of the initial rapid test.

The reintroduction of confirmatory testing will also bring domestic testing requirements in line with the strengthened regime in place for international arrivals. The heightened border controls, introduced in February, are already helping to reduce the possible spread of variants in the UK, with passengers required to quarantine when arriving from 'red list' locations and self-isolate at home when travelling from 'amber list' destinations.

[Recent analysis](#) by NHS Test and Trace shows lateral flow tests (LFD) have a specificity of at least 99.9%. This means that for every 1,000 lateral flow tests carried out, there is fewer than one false positive result.

Despite this, at times of low prevalence, the probability of a false positive from an LFD is higher, so we are mitigating this by asking people to confirm a positive LFD result with a PCR test.

Contact tracing will continue to be triggered by a positive LFD result in assisted settings, but will be stopped automatically after receipt of a negative confirmatory PCR test, if the PCR was taken within the 2 days following the positive LFD result. NHS Test and Trace has introduced new operational improvements that will automatically inform anyone self-isolating from a positive LFD and their contacts to stop isolating if the confirmatory PCR is taken within two days and is negative.

This means we can reintroduce confirmatory PCR for supervised testing without losing the benefits of rapid contact tracing, and freeing people and their contacts from self-isolation in the instance of a false positive.

It remains essential that anyone who gets a positive result from an LFD result self-isolates immediately, as must other members of their household, while they get a confirmatory PCR test.

In the coming weeks the NHS Covid19 app, which shows the outcome of a test

result, will be able to overturn a positive LFD result if the result changes following a confirmatory PCR.