

Mental health toolkit rolled out across entire Royal Navy fleet

A CD version of digital content has been distributed across the Royal Navy Fleet, Submarine Service, the Royal Marines and Royal Fleet Auxiliary and will be available for those deployed with Carrier Strike Group 2021 as it sets off across the globe. The offline platform will benefit personnel without internet access on operations.

Designed specifically for the defence community, HeadFIT provides round the clock access to self-help tools that can enhance mood, drive and confidence whilst reducing stress levels.

Minister for Defence People & Veterans Johnny Mercer said:

We're committed to ensuring our Armed Forces receive the mental health support they deserve.

By rolling out HeadFIT across the entire Royal Navy fleet, we've taken another vital step in ensuring our people have the tools they need to maintain their mental fitness wherever they are in the world.

HeadFIT builds on an existing suite of measures including increased spending on mental health services, a 24-hour hotline for service personnel and their families and the introduction of mandatory mental health training for all personnel this spring.

The CD, which mirrors the digital HeadFIT App launched online last year, works in personal laptops and computers. It helps personnel maintain good mental health with various techniques including breathing exercises, body posture and mental visualisation.

Using a mix of audio and visual aids, the platform also provides exercises and advice on everything from goal setting to distraction techniques. These proven methods are easily integrated into daily life and help create positive mental health habits.

Second Sea Lord, Vice Admiral Nick Hine said:

It is absolutely critical to me that we prioritise activities to support and improve the mental fitness and resilience of our internationally deployed team.

HeadFIT – as an offline tool – will empower individuals to access expert support services in improving their own mental wellbeing.

Our ambitious Transformation programme is integrating technology and smart ways of working to optimise Human Performance and this is one step in the journey.

HeadFIT, which was developed in partnership with the Royal Foundation's Heads Together campaign, the Ministry of Defence and King's College London, is designed for all defence personnel, whether they are long serving or new recruits, veterans, civilian staff or those in uniform.

Each of the single services and Civil Service have a number of initiatives to support their mental health and fitness and HeadFIT is designed to support the messages in these existing programmes.

[Free rapid tests for all businesses for regular workplace testing](#)

- Workplace testing now available to all businesses, including those with fewer than 50 employees
- Business encouraged to register interest by 31 March to access free workplace testing
- Regular testing will be a vital part of the government's roadmap to cautiously ease restrictions

As part of the government's roadmap to cautiously lift restrictions, businesses of all sizes, including those with fewer than 50 employees, can register from today to order free lateral flow tests for their employees.

Around 1 in 3 people with coronavirus don't have symptoms, which means they could be spreading the virus in workplaces without knowing. Rapid testing detects cases quickly – in under 30 minutes – meaning positive cases can isolate immediately, breaking chains of transmission.

Regular testing could be the difference between a workplace being able to stay open and operational, or needing to close due to a COVID-19 outbreak. It will form a crucial part of the government's plan to gradually and safely ease restrictions as we get back to a more normal life.

So far over 3,500 businesses are signed up to offer workplace testing programmes, and over 14,000 have registered their interest in offering rapid testing, with many already rolling tests out.

Businesses have until 31 March to register for the government's workplace testing scheme, which will remain free until the end of June. All those who can work from home should continue to do so.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock said:

Regular workplace testing is a vital part of our route back to normal life, which is why I'm very pleased that we're now expanding our offer of free workplace testing to businesses of all sizes, including SMEs.

These rapid tests will allow positive cases of Covid-19 to be caught quickly, which is crucial in helping businesses protect their workplaces and employees as we cautiously lift restrictions.

I urge all businesses to register their interest in the programme before 31 March to help break chains of transmission and keep people safe.

Dr Susan Hopkins, COVID-19 Strategic Response Director to PHE and Chief Medical Adviser to NHS Test and Trace:

Around one in three people who have coronavirus never show any symptoms but may still be infectious. This means they could be spreading the virus without realising it.

Rapid testing can help detect asymptomatic cases quickly, preventing the virus from entering workplaces and stopping outbreaks before they occur.

Combined with other protective measures, rapid testing is a vital tool to help us lower infection rates and ensure that they stay low. If you're offered a test, please do take it.

Federation of Small Business Chairman Mike Cherry said:

A workplace testing infrastructure that works for businesses of all sizes as well as consumers is fundamental to bringing the coronavirus under control and ensuring that this current lockdown is the last. It's great to see that the smallest businesses can now apply to set-up testing facilities on their premises.

It's vital that they are given all the support they need to do so successfully as they focus on staying afloat in extremely changing circumstances. We'd encourage all small firms that would benefit from a testing facility to apply as swiftly as they can.

Confederation of British Industry Chief UK Policy Director Matthew Fell,

said:

Enabling more companies to engage with workplace testing is good news. It will help protect workers and help stifle Covid transmission. Businesses appreciate that regular mass testing can play a vital role in a safe re-opening, helping to build staff confidence and adding a layer of resilience to help firms stay open.

The CBI will continue to work with our members and with government to ensure firms have the knowledge and support they need to engage with testing opportunities. Increasing take-up will be vital if we are to meet the timetable set out in the Prime Minister's roadmap and safely loosen restrictions for summer.

Alongside the roll out of the vaccination programme and following the 'Hands, Face, Space', regular testing is a vital tool to stop transmission as sections of society are reopened.

The expansion of asymptomatic testing is already well underway in larger companies for those who need to leave home for work. Both private and public sector employers have signed up to provide rapid testing at asymptomatic testing sites, along with a self-test option for those that cannot access a workplace testing site. This includes the UK's largest employer – the NHS, those working in adult social care, education staff and a wide range of other sectors.

An [online portal](#) has been launched for businesses to find out more about offering rapid workplace testing. Businesses will be provided with all the information they need to plan and deliver their testing programme, along with promotional materials.

All local authorities in England are now offering rapid lateral flow testing for small businesses if they can't offer rapid workplace testing. Businesses can find their local test site [online](#).

Case study

Odyssey Systems is based in Stockton-on-Tees and has a staff of 28. Although this is a relatively small company, it carries out business critical services across the North East and Yorkshire.

Andrew Middlemiss, Finance Director at Odyssey Systems said: > Our staff work remotely whenever possible, but several roles require a presence in the office or, in the case of installing equipment or delivering remote working solutions, our engineers must attend a client's premises. > > The lateral flow tests offer peace of mind to employees and engineers required to visit clients' premises, and being able to access these tests for free will make a huge difference to our business >

Government launches call for evidence to improve health and wellbeing of women in England

- To mark International Women's Day, the government is launching a 12-week call for evidence to better understand women's experiences of the health and care system
- All women are urged to share their experiences to form the basis of a new Women's Health Strategy
- The strategy will set an ambitious and positive new agenda to improve health and wellbeing and ensure health services are meeting the needs of women

Launching to coincide with International Women's Day, the call for evidence will form the basis of a landmark government-led Women's Health Strategy, to improve the health and wellbeing of women across England and place women's voices at the centre of their care.

By better understanding women's experiences, the government can ensure key parts of the health service are meeting women's needs as they should be.

Matt Hancock, Health and Social Care Secretary, said:

The healthcare system needs to work for everyone, and we must address inequalities which exist within it.

Improving women's health, especially at older ages, is critical for a fair health and care system in the future.

Our new Women's Health Strategy will be a much-needed step forward to improve the health and wellbeing of women across the country.

To build this strategy, we need to hear from those who it directly impacts. I urge all women, and those who have experiences or expertise in women's health, to come forward and share their views with us to inform the future of this important strategy.

The call for evidence has been designed to be user friendly, quick to fill in and easily accessible from people's mobiles. People who live with and care for women, organisations with experience of providing services for women and those with an expertise in women's health are also encouraged to share their views.

Nadine Dorries, Minister for Women's Health, said:

Women's experiences of health care can vary and we want to ensure women are able to access the treatment and services they need.

It's crucial women's voices are at the front and centre of this strategy so we understand their experiences and how to improve their outcomes.

I urge every woman, and anyone who cares for women, to feed into this call for evidence and help shape the future of women's health.

The 6 core-themes included in the call for evidence are:

1. Placing women's voices at the centre of their health and care – how the health and care system engages with and listens to women at the individual level as well as at the system level.
2. Improving the quality and accessibility of information and education on women's health – women having access to high-quality information when they need to make a decision, increasing health literacy, as well as increasing awareness and understanding of women's health conditions among clinicians.
3. Ensuring the health and care system understands and is responsive to women's health and care needs across the life course – supporting women to maximise their health across their lives, and ensuring services are designed to maximise benefits for women.
4. Maximising women's health in the workplace – deepening our understanding of how women's health issues can affect their workforce participation and outcomes, both with regards to female-specific issues such as the menopause, but also conditions that are more prevalent in women such as musculoskeletal conditions, depression or anxiety
5. Ensuring that research, evidence and data support improvements in women's health – inclusion of women and women's health in research and data collection and how that information is used, and driving participation in clinical trials to support improvements in women's health.
6. Understanding and responding to the impacts of COVID-19 on women's health – supporting women through the unique challenges they've faced during the pandemic.

There is strong evidence of the need for greater focus on women's health:

- Although female life expectancy is higher than men in the UK, women on average spend less of their life in good health compared with men. Female life expectancy in this country has been improving more slowly than male life expectancy since the 1980s
- Less is known about conditions that only affect women, including common gynaecological conditions which can have severe impacts on health and wellbeing, but for which there is currently little treatment. A key example of this is endometriosis with the average time for a woman to receive a diagnosis being 7 to 8 years, and with 40% of women needing 10

- or more GP appointments before being referred to a specialist
- There is also evidence that the impact of female-specific health conditions such as heavy menstrual bleeding, endometriosis, pregnancy-related issues and the menopause on women's lives is overlooked. This includes the effect they can have on women's workforce participation, productivity, and outcomes
 - High-quality research and evidence is essential to delivering improvements in women's health, yet studies suggest gender biases in clinical trials and research are contributing to worse health outcomes for women. Although women make up 51% of the population, there is less evidence and data on how conditions affect women differently. A University of Leeds study showed women with a total blockage of a coronary artery were 59% more likely to be misdiagnosed than men, and found that UK women had more than double the rate of death in the 30 days following heart attack compared with men.

Minister for Equalities Kemi Badenoch said:

Women know best when it comes to their health, and every woman in this country should feel heard and respected when it comes to their health. We want women of every age, ethnicity and sexuality, from every walk of life, to respond to our call for evidence so we can develop an ambitious strategy which puts their views at the centre.

Women also face varying health issues over the course of their life. The biggest causes of death for women range from suicide in adolescence, to breast cancer in middle age, and dementia in older age – all of which lead to different interactions with the health service.

Women of all ages and backgrounds are being urged to respond to the call for evidence in order to capture the varying health issues women experience over their lives and the significant differences between women in terms of access to services, experience of services and health outcomes.

The call for evidence seeks to examine experiences of the whole health and care system, including mental health, addiction services and neurological conditions as well as issues relating specifically to women such as gynaecological conditions, menopause and pregnancy and post-natal support.

Extended quotes

Dr Edward Morris, President of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, said:

We're delighted to see the launch of the Women's Health Strategy and welcome the opportunity this provides to improve health outcomes for women and girls from all different communities.

The introduction of a strategy focused on women's health was a key

recommendation in our 'Better for Women' report and it's positive to see the government begin to make this a reality.

For women and girls, we hope this strategy will mean their voices and experiences are listened to and go towards shaping a future health system that works for them.

This strategy has come at a crucial time as we begin the path back to a post-pandemic world.

Dr Geeta Nargund, senior NHS consultant and fertility pioneer, said:

The journey to equality in healthcare requires us to identify the gaps in provision, and so it is fantastic to see the government make this vital first step towards tackling the gender health gap. It is a move that will support the NHS and our entire healthcare system to effectively utilise their resources and deliver the best service it possibly can for women across the UK. We want to make the UK a world leader in women's health and look forward to working with the Department of Health as they strive to achieve this goal.

Mika Simmons, co-chair Ginsberg Women's Health Board, filmmaker and host of The Happy Vagina, said:

Every single woman I speak to, myself included, has experienced either misunderstanding or loss as a direct result of slow or inaccurate diagnosis of their health concerns. I am delighted that this – the gender health gap – which grew out of a severe lack of historical research into women's health issues, is not only finally being acknowledged but that steps are being taken to right size it. I hope this new government drive for thoroughly inclusive data will ensure that all women in the UK, no matter what their background or cultural demographic, will finally have their voices heard and their health needs met, at the highest possible level. We can't change the past but if we work together, I believe we can transform healthcare for women today and for future generations.

Nimco Ali OBE, CEO of The Five Foundation and co-chair of the Ginsberg Women's Health Board, said:

A healthcare that listens to women is one that works for women and girls. I welcome the Department of Health's commitment to placing women's voices at the heart of our healthcare system. This will not only save lives but it will also improve the quality of life for millions of women in this country.

Janet Lindsay, Director at women's health research charity Wellbeing of Women, said:

We are pleased that the government has promised to place women's voices at the heart of its new Women's Health Strategy and to focus on improving care for women and girls.

We know that women make up 51% of the population, account for 47% of the workforce and that they influence the health behaviours of the rest of society. Yet women are struggling to find the information they need to ask the right questions about their health and regularly meet barriers when they attempt to book routine appointments to access basic health needs.

Importantly, the COVID-19 pandemic has further exaggerated these problems and highlighted the additional difficulties that women with disabilities or living in disadvantaged communities are facing. We need to identify solutions that will bridge these gaps and ensure both equality and equitable access to women's health services.

The research landscape is also bleak. Women's health research has not been prioritised, which means there are still important gaps in our knowledge and a lack of effective treatment options across all areas of women's health

As one of the only funders of women's health research, Wellbeing of Women believes that only by ensuring that research, evidence and data support improvements in women's health can we improve outcomes for women. When we get it right for women, everyone benefits.

Rebecca Shoosmith, Chief Executive, Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust, said:

In order to improve health outcomes among women it is vital that we listen to their experiences and make changes that address the problems they face. We welcome this new strategy and its approach, which puts the voices of women firmly at its heart. We look forward to contributing and working with DHSC to ensure the voices of our community are heard.

Dr Asha Kasliwal, President of the Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare (FSRH), said:

The Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare (FSRH) welcomes the call for evidence. I am pleased to see a focus on education and information as well as the aim to place women's voices at the heart of the strategy. I encourage women from all backgrounds to share their experiences of accessing reproductive healthcare.

On average, most women spend almost half of their lives either trying to plan or avoid unplanned pregnancies. This is why an integrated approach to women's health should also place contraceptive access and care in all settings at the heart of a new Women's Health Strategy. This will ensure the health and care system is responsive to women's reproductive healthcare needs across the whole life course. Crucial to achieve this will also be the integration of this strategy with the upcoming national sexual and reproductive health strategy.

There is no women's health without contraceptive care. We look forward to working with the Department of Health and Social Care to ensure that the contraceptive needs of 51% of the population are met via a comprehensive strategy.

Background information

[Download the high-resolution assets](#)

The call for evidence will run for 12 weeks from 8 March.

To amplify this, there will be 10 weeks of activity, including widespread social media with recognisable visual identity, partnerships with female-focused media outlets including interviews, roundtables with the minister and regular engagement with stakeholders.

Government announces funding to safeguard grassroots, elite women's and Championship rugby union

The Rugby Football Union (RFU) will distribute a mixture of funding to the community game, in the form of loans and grants, for all levels of the men's, women's and youth game at grassroots level, providing a lifeline to communities across the country.

Loans and grants will be provided to community clubs, designed to cover essential survival costs due to the lack of spectators and capital works.

Rugby Union has been uniquely affected as a major sport by the coronavirus pandemic over the past year.

It has been precluded by Government regulations to resume at grassroots level since March 2020, under its standard rules as a contact sport. In October 2020, the RFU cancelled Adult Competitive Leagues (Level 3 and below for men,

Level 2 and below for women) for the 2020/21 season.

Whilst the Government granted approval for 15-a-side contact rugby union to return at grassroots level in December 2020, subject to adaptations, the consequent national lockdown announcement in January 2021 to counter the steep rise in coronavirus infection rates prompted this to be suspended.

The sport's revenue streams are also heavily dependent on the Rugby Football Union (RFU) generating 85% of its income from matches and events at Twickenham Stadium, which can then be reinvested back into the grassroots game. The organisation has already made 119 people redundant.

The overall funding package offered to support rugby union includes:

- £22 million of loan funding to support the survival of community club assets
- £17 million of grant and £3 million of loan funding to support survival costs for community clubs
- £1.1 million of grant funding for professional women's rugby including the Premier 15s and covid-19 related costs for the Red Roses' Women's Six Nations campaign
- Up to £5.5 million of loan funding to support the launch of the men's Championship season

Community clubs were invited to make applications for funding to the RFU who will administer the process and will issue further guidance to clubs next week.

Sports Minister Nigel Huddleston said:

We know that the restrictions on spectators continue to have consequences for many sports, particularly Rugby Union and its clubs from elite through to grassroots level.

That's why we're helping our major spectator sports, with money already benefiting more than 100 organisations, from women's football, to netball, badminton and basketball, and more to follow over the coming weeks as we navigate our roadmap back to normality.

We are continuing to work closely with the RFU on bringing the competitive, full contact community game back as soon as possible. With the real progress we are making through the vaccination programme we are increasingly confident.

Bill Sweeney, Chief Executive of The Rugby Football Union said:

We would like to thank DCMS, Government and Sport England for their enormous support during this very difficult time. Covid has impacted all sports and rugby has faced an incredibly challenging time with many asset owning community clubs across the country

having significant overheads but with no revenues for over a year.

The RFU has undertaken significant restructuring to reduce its cost base. Despite this, with 85% of our income coming from hosting international matches at Twickenham, our revenues have reduced by around £140 million in the last year and we expect a loss of around £30-35 million in this financial year. With significant changes to the way we operate and a difficult restructuring we can weather this challenge however, some of our clubs are not in such a strong position. The Sports Winter Survival Package means that rugby clubs, which play a huge role in their wider communities will also survive and thrive.

We are also incredibly grateful for the £1.1 million funding for the Women's elite game which will help cover the increased Covid related operational costs for both the Red Roses and Allianz Premier 15s and help us reinstate some important initiatives in the club competition that will help drive the women's game forward.

Chair of the independent Board, Sir Ian Cheshire said:

This is another significant confirmation of funding from the Sport Winter Survival Package and will support rugby union at multiple levels as it responds to and recovers from the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

We have worked closely with the RFU in recent months to understand the scale of the impact the pandemic has had across the sport, and know that this funding will help to safeguard thousands of clubs who are on the brink as a result of Covid-19 restrictions.

This is the third tranche of funding to be announced from [the Government's £300 million Sport Winter Survival Package](#) that is focused on helping those major spectator sports severely impacted by coronavirus restrictions survive the winter.

It follows [the Government announcing a major boost for women's sport in February](#), with an initial £2.25 million for women's football, £4.2 million to netball, a combined £4 million for badminton and basketball, and that women's sport would be prioritised for 250,000 free Covid-19 testing kits being made available to elite sports, worth £1.5 million. It was also announced that an initial 19 National League Step 1-2 clubs would be offered loans worth up to £5.4 million.

[The first announcement in January](#) confirmed that Steps 3-6 of the National League system will receive up to £10 million to protect the immediate future of approximately 850 clubs over the winter period.

Submissions for support have been made from individual sports to an [independent decision-making Board](#), supported by Sport England.

The Sport Winter Survival Package is the most generous of any Government for its domestic sport sector in the world. It comes on top of the sector benefiting from more than £1.5 billion worth of business support that has been made available by the Government, including the furlough scheme, business rates relief and business interruption loan scheme that has helped many sports clubs and leisure businesses to survive.

Earlier this week [the Chancellor announced a further £300 million of support](#) that is expected to benefit major summer spectator sports such as cricket, tennis and horse racing, as the path out of lockdown continues and sports stadia initially open at reduced capacities. Further details, including how cash will be distributed, how organisations can apply and timeframes, will be announced by Sport England in the coming weeks.

Grassroots sports and the physical activity sector are also benefiting from £220 million in emergency funding delivered by Sport England, and the recipients of a £100 million National Leisure Recovery Fund to support publicly owned leisure facilities in England during the pandemic are due to be announced in the coming weeks.

Further confirmations of funding from the Sports Winter Survival Package, including additional support for Premiership Rugby, will be made in due course.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

A detailed factsheet on how the Sport Winter Survival Package works and the criteria when assessing applicants has been published by Sport England. [Read it here.](#)

At this week's Budget, the Chancellor also announced that the Government will provide:

- An initial £25 million to support the growth of grassroots football, which will be enough to build around 700 new pitches across the UK;
 - £2.8 million to continue undertaking feasibility work to assess the viability of a UK and Ireland bid for the 2030 FIFA Men's World Cup before Fifa formally opens the process in 2022;
 - £1.2 million to mitigate the financial effects of COVID-19 on the UEFA Women's Euro football competition and deliver a successful tournament in England in 2022, supporting the sport to grow and thrive. This money will go towards extending contracts of the delivery teams, host city resource costs and the opening ceremony.
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Health and Social Care Secretary's statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 5 March 2021

Good afternoon and welcome to Downing Street for today's coronavirus briefing.

I'm joined by Dr Susan Hopkins, from Public Health England and NHS Test and Trace.

Today, I've got an update on progress in our battle against coronavirus, some new evidence of the effectiveness of the vaccines, an update on the cases of the Brazilian variant of concern and extra funding to support mental health in schools.

Because, of course, on Monday that marks our first step in our opening up after this lockdown.

Next week, classrooms will be buzzing with activity once more. I know parents across England will be delighted and relieved that all children are going back to school.

Also, from Monday, I'm just so pleased that we're able to reopen care homes to visitors.

We've put in place a really careful policy so each care home resident will be able to register a single regular visitor, who'll be tested and wear PPE.

I know this really matters to hundreds of thousands of people with a loved one in a care home.

And I'm really glad that we can make this step.

So, first, let's turn to the latest coronavirus data.

This data shows this progress we've made, including more evidence on the impact of the vaccine in saving lives.

First slide please.

Here, you can see the number of cases of COVID-19.

I'm pleased to say that the cases are still falling.

The average daily number of cases is now 6,685 – the lowest since late September and the weekly case rate across the UK is now 84 per 100,000.

The latest figures from the ONS, which were published earlier today, reported a further significant decline. They show that in England 1 in 220 people have

coronavirus, a fall from 1 in 145 last week.

This is all encouraging news and it should give us all confidence that we can safely take the steps we're taking on Monday.

Next slide please.

Slide 2 shows the hospital admissions with COVID and it shows that they are falling too.

There are still 12,136 people in hospital in the UK with COVID.

That's still too high, but the average number of new admissions to hospital is 900, the lowest since October.

Next slide please.

Thankfully, the number of deaths with COVID are also declining steeply.

The average number of deaths per day is 248, also the lowest since October.

And here, the decline is in fact accelerating.

The halving time of the number of deaths has come down from 19 days – so the number of deaths each day – last month, to halving every 11 days now.

Not only that, there are now fewer people dying of all causes in care homes than is normal for this time of year.

Taken together, these 3 slides show that we're heading in the right direction, although there is further to go. And what we can also see in the data, across the whole UK, is that the vaccine programme is working to protect the NHS and saving lives.

Next slide please.

The best way to see this is by looking at how fast cases, hospital admissions and deaths are falling.

The number of cases have been falling, in a fairly even way, since around the middle of January, by a quarter every week. Just a little bit more in the past few days.

It's not been completely smooth.

A week ago, I stood here and we said that we were worried that the fall in cases was slowing down.

Thankfully, as you can see in the chart, that now looks more like a temporary blip.

Which is good news for us all.

Next slide please.

Now let's turn to the number of hospital admissions.

Again, this is falling steadily, at around a quarter every week.

But there are early signs that this fall is getting a bit faster.

In fact, the 29% fall in the last week is the fastest fall in hospital admissions at any point in the entire pandemic.

Final slide please.

But where you can really see the effect of the vaccine is in the fall of the number of deaths.

The number of deaths is falling faster and faster.

And now deaths are falling by over a third every week. And in fact in the last week have fallen by 41%.

Faster than before.

The Chief Medical Officer told us weeks ago that you'd first see the effect of the vaccine in fewer people dying, and then in reduced hospitalisations.

And I believe that that is exactly what's happening.

What this all shows is that the link from cases to hospitalisations and then to deaths, that have been unbreakable before the vaccine – that link is now breaking. The vaccine is protecting the NHS and saving lives and that right across the country, this country's plan is working.

And as well as this real-world data, I want to share the results of a study by the University of Bristol which clearly shows the difference our vaccination programme is making.

The study looked at all patients over 80 who were admitted with serious respiratory disease in Bristol.

The results showed a single dose of both the Pfizer or Oxford/AstraZeneca jab offers around 80% protection against hospitalisation after at least 2 weeks even amongst the most frail, and those with underlying medical conditions.

Again, as with the data that were published last week, the effect was slightly stronger in the Oxford jab than with Pfizer. What this corroborates is that what we have seen over the past couple of weeks is that vaccines work. And they're the best way of securing our freedom.

As of midnight last night 21.3 million people have been vaccinated.

I can tell you that we have vaccinated two fifths of the entire adult population of the United Kingdom.

Yesterday, I was in Scotland, seeing the combined teamwork of NHS Scotland, Scottish local authorities and the armed forces, delivering jabs in Hamilton.

They were all working together as one, towards a common goal. Protecting us all.

As anyone who has been to a vaccination centre will know, the joy on people's faces when they get the jab is unbelievably uplifting.

And more and more people will be getting this feeling of protection over the next few weeks and months.

We're on course to hit our target of offering a first dose to everyone who's 50 or over, or part of an at-risk group, by 15 of April.

And all adults by the end of July.

The vaccine roll-out has allowed us to set out our roadmap for how we'll carefully lift some of the restrictions that we've all endured for far too long.

And as we do this, we'll be drawing on the huge testing infrastructure that is now in place.

We are now testing 2.8 million people a week.

The roadmap is built on the principle of replacing the protection that comes from lockdown with the protection that comes from vaccines and regular testing.

So, as we open up – for instance, care homes as I mentioned a moment ago, to visitors – that will come with regular testing for visitors.

And as schools and colleges return we will be giving teachers, staff, parents, secondary and college students and their households access to rapid regular testing twice a week in term time and in holidays.

And I urge all those and the households of those who are going back to school or to college next week to take up this offer

One of the most dangerous things about this virus – one of those dangerous things – is that around one third of those who get it don't get any symptoms at all and yet can still pass the disease on to others.

That's why it's so important that all of us follow the social distancing and take the precautions that we know we must.

So rapid, regular testing is a critical part of our response.

And we can do so much more because of the huge capacity we've built up in NHS Test and Trace.

I would urge you if you're eligible to participate in one of these regular testing programmes like I do, because that is how we will keep this virus under control as we continue to roll out the vaccine

For more information on how you can get a test, go to [gov.uk/coronavirus](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus).

I'd urge everyone who's eligible to get that regular testing.

Now, I know that this pandemic has been an anxious time for so many young people.

Growing up, after all, is tough enough at the best of times.

But during these difficult times, it's even tougher.

Home schooling, being unable to see your friends, sport cancelled, and being stuck at home.

I know just how much people are looking forward to going back to school, seeing friends in a classroom not just on Zoom.

Monday will be a long-awaited day for many.

But for some it'll be a moment of unease and anxiety too.

We need to help young people to get through this and get their life going again.

And give them the help and support that they need.

We've worked hard throughout the pandemic to make sure mental health services are open. And we've set up 24/7 support for those in need.

I'm delighted to announce today that we'll be allocating an extra £79 million to boost mental health support for children and young people.

Almost 3 million children and young people will benefit from more mental health support teams, and those mental health support teams in schools will be working hard to ensure people get access to the support and care that they need.

And we'll be expanding access to mental health services in the community too.

I'd like to end with some good news on our work to tackle new variants.

Thanks to the brilliant team who've been working so hard over the past week, we've now successfully identified the sixth case of the variant of concern first identified in Manaus in Brazil.

Using the latest technology, and the dogged determination of our testing and tracing scheme, we've successfully identified the person in question.

The best evidence is that this person in question stayed at home and that there's no sign that there's been any onward transmission.

But as a precaution, we're putting more testing in Croydon, where they live, to minimise the risk of spread.

This positive outcome was only possible because of the huge genome sequencing capacity that we now have in this country and our test and trace team, so we

could identify these cases, track them down and contact them.

It shows how important this capacity we've built is, and how important it is to be transparent whenever new variants are found.

Because whether it's here at home or around the world, testing, sequencing and being transparent about what you find helps stop the spread of this disease – and in particular these variants of concern which are so worrying – and protects lives.

I'm really delighted at the work the team have done this week. They've worked absolutely flat out since these 6 cases were first identified on Friday and found the 6 positive cases, even though the form wasn't filled in quite right.

So Susan is going to say a little bit more about this in a moment but my summary is:

Things are moving in the right direction.

These are challenging times.

But thanks to the vaccine, we're making progress.

But we're not there yet.

So, as we go down the road to recovery, it's vital everybody plays their part, follows the rules and when their call comes, get your jab.