

# New campaign encourages the nation to keep going and stay at home

- Government launches new national campaign encouraging people to keep going and stay at home
- The new advertising reminds people everything they're doing is helping stop the spread of the virus
- As set out in the roadmap, lockdown will begin to lift but it emphasises the need for caution to keep the virus under control

While transmission rates decline, vaccines continue to be rolled out and the [roadmap out of lockdown](#) has been published, the heartening new campaign is encouraging people to 'keep going'. It acknowledges how difficult lockdown has been but highlights its effectiveness with falling infection rates and successful vaccine roll-out.

The campaign will run across TV, radio, out-of-home advertising and on social media, reminding people that everything they've done – working from home, washing their hands, wearing a mask, maintaining social distancing and video calling – is helping stop the spread of COVID-19 and new variants, edging us closer to coming out of lockdown. Every small act is making a big difference and it is important that everyone keeps doing what they're doing. It aired for the first time on ITV at 7:15pm on Wednesday 24 February.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

The British resolve during this pandemic has been astounding. We've all pulled together to help each other out.

I know it's been a long year but we can't let up now. Everything we're doing is bringing us one step closer to beating this virus.

The vaccine roll-out is going extremely well and is saving lives – but it is not the only way we will reduce infection rates and be able to get back to normality.

So let's keep going. I encourage everyone to keep playing their part and stay at home – keep washing your hands, wearing a mask and maintaining a social distance which will ensure that, together, we beat this.

Chief Medical Officer Professor Chris Whitty said:

Infection rates are falling, but they still remain very high and the impact of COVID-19 is still putting pressure on hospitals across the country.

Vaccines give clear hope for the future, but for now we must all continue to play our part in protecting the NHS and saving lives.

This week, the Prime Minister has set out 4 stages of the roadmap – the first of which will involve reopening schools and allowing outdoor recreation with one other person from 8 March. However, even at this point, the stay at home order remains in place and people can still only legally leave their house for a very limited number of reasons. The stay at home message will, at the earliest, end on 29 March where people will be urged to stay local and keep taking individual decisions around their risk exposure.

The vast majority of people are staying at home and as a result, the number of COVID-19 cases is falling. However, infection levels remain high and the impact of the second wave is still being seen in hospitals across the country with over 1,000 people admitted to hospital every day. It is critical everyone continues to stay at home and follow the rules to help bring down infections even further and reduce pressure on the NHS.

The message is clear: stay at home. However, if you do have to go outside you must:

- keep 2 metres away from everyone
- wear a face mask covering the nose and mouth, when indoors
- keep washing your hands

[See guidance on coronavirus on GOV.UK](#)

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## **SMC response to the government's plan for 2021 exams and catch-up**

News story

The government needs to ensure teacher graded exams are fair and to think beyond summer schools in coronavirus education recovery plan, says SMC



**Sammy Wright, Social Mobility Commissioner Lead for Schools and Higher Education, said:**

“This week the government is taking the first tentative steps towards addressing the educational impact of coronavirus on schools and colleges, but there is a lot more that needs to be done. COVID-19 has exacerbated the existing inequalities, and disadvantaged students will continue to fall behind without more sustained support.”

**Addressing unconscious bias when teachers grade exams**

“We welcome the fact that students will receive grades that have been awarded and determined by their teachers, with pupils only assessed on what they have been taught in 2021. Nonetheless the detail is important: we must address potential unconscious bias to fairly mediate the impact on disadvantaged students.

“We hope that the range of evidence the Department for Education called upon, and the freedom given to teachers, indicates a willingness to think of grades as an indicator rather than a decider of ability and potential. This is vital in allowing fair progression to the next stage of education.

“The absence of an algorithm to standardise grades is understandable after last year’s debacle. It was badly designed. But algorithm is an important way to ensure fairness. In having nothing this year, we have no check on the overall distribution of grades, which could hurt disadvantaged students the most. This makes it even more important to mitigate potential negative impacts on progression by providing extra support for pupils aged 16-19.”

**Summer schools are not the only solution to help catch-up**

“The catch-up programme is a good start for supporting students and bridging inequalities. Summer schools could be valuable too. We call on the government to ensure that the summer schools create active, enriching, social experiences to re-engage young people with education and help them aspire to a brighter future.

“But we counsel against thinking that summer schools are the only solution and will continue to ask the government to:

- Initially prioritise those in 16-19 education, who are at critical

transition moments in life

- Introduce a 16-19 Student Premium, which allows schools to invest in both whole-school and targeted interventions for disadvantaged learners
- Provide interventions for disadvantaged learners
- Increase funding for teaching time that can be delivered during the regular schedule
- Provide additional maintenance grants to those entering HR or higher technical qualifications, who need more time to complete their degree.”

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## [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Additional testing to be deployed in Ealing](#)

Press release

Additional testing and sequencing will be made available in Ealing to control and suppress the potential spread of a COVID-19 variant.



Working in partnership with the London Borough of Ealing, additional testing and genomic sequencing is being deployed within the borough, where a small number of additional cases of the COVID-19 variant first identified in South Africa have been found.

The increased testing, in combination with the current lockdown rules and following Hands Face Space advice, will help to monitor and suppress the spread of the virus. Positive cases will be sequenced for genomic data to help increase our understanding of COVID-19 variants and their spread.

People living in Ealing are strongly encouraged to take a COVID-19 test when offered.

People with symptoms should book a free test online or by phone to get tested at a testing site or [have a testing kit sent home](#).

Those without symptoms should [visit their local authority website](#) for more information.

## Background information

- Surge testing in response to the case in W7 has now been completed.
- Further additional testing and sequencing is being extended in response to a small number of additional confirmed cases of the variant first identified in South Africa, which are not believed to be linked to international travel. Cases have been identified in Acton, Greenford, Southall and West Ealing.
- Symptomatic testing will still be PCR testing.
- Asymptomatic testing will use lateral flow devices (LFD). Any positive LFD tests will require secondary testing via PCR so these cases can have genomic sequencing.

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## [Education Secretary speaks at launch of digital learning review](#)

It is a great pleasure to be joining you today (25 February).

As many of you may know, last summer I asked Sir Michael (Barber) to lead a [review of digital teaching and learning in higher education](#). This was as a direct result of how the pandemic had forced all our schools, colleges and universities to swiftly shift to remote teaching.

Thanks to the incredible efforts that have been made and you all have made. All our learners, whether at school, college or university, have been able to continue with their studies even when they were not able to have in person teaching. I want to take the opportunity to thank you all for this incredible response. I know adapting to it has been really challenging.

But something positive has come out of it. Technology has come into its own and is one of the few causes of celebration in an otherwise grim pandemic. Over the past year we've seen nothing short of a revolution in the way people learn.

I thought it was vital that we did not squander the lessons we can take from that and that we make the most of it in the future.

Before I go any further, I would like to thank you, Sir Michael, for the wisdom you have brought to bear on such an important subject. It is going to serve us well as we rebuild after Covid and support the HE sector to realise the opportunities presented by digital teaching and learning in the future.

It also gives me an opportunity to thank you for your leadership and guidance of the Office for Students (OfS) over the past 3 years. I have enormously valued this, and I'm sure I'm not alone in being better informed because of your insight and advice. I am pleased that our paths will continue to cross in your next role, as you bring your focus on deliverology back to the heart of Government.

As I said, the pandemic has led to a revolution in teaching and learning and the review shows us there have been numerous examples of innovation and creativity with students.

For example, simulations like the ones at Teesside University where radiography students conducted remote experiments using a simulation tool that was built in their School of Health and Life science.

Or the digital labs used by The Open University which connect students to the instruments, data and equipment they need for practical experiments and analysis over the internet. All this creative enterprise is not going to suddenly fizzle out once we move on from Covid. It will be crucial as we build back better.

Government expects higher education providers to ensure all students, regardless of background, can access their studies remotely. We know that investment in digital technology, services and skills can raise standards right across the country.

But not everyone has the tools to take advantage of this which is why we have worked closely with the OfS to make sure that there are hardship funds for universities to support disadvantaged students, including with the purchase of IT equipment.

This includes an additional £70m of hardship funding being made available this financial year – £50m announced this month and £20m in December. This is on top of the £256m of funding higher education providers are able draw on this academic year towards student hardship funds.

This pivot to remote learning and the technology that makes it possible has an even bigger role to play as we build back better.

Last autumn the Prime Minister announced the Lifelong Loan Entitlement as part of the Lifetime Skills Guarantee.

This is going to turbocharge a truly flexible skills system, so people can build up learning over time. Online and blended learning will play an important role.

The Lifetime Skills Guarantee will revolutionise our education system. It will be as easy to enrol for a certificate in cybersecurity as it is to get a degree in biology; as easy for a forty-five-year-old retail worker to retrain as it is for the 18-year-old to head off to university.

We will establish a flexible lifelong loan entitlement that brings colleges and universities closer together, ending the decades-old bias against

technical education.

We know that many learners need to access courses in a more flexible way, to fit study around work, family and personal commitments, and to retrain as both their circumstances and the economy changes. By investing properly in high-quality courses that lead directly to good jobs, the Lifetime Skills Guarantee will transform the opportunities available for young and old alike.

I want to end the dominance of the three-year bachelor's degree in higher education. Whether it's a degree apprenticeship, a Higher National Diploma or a set of modules in engineering and business, for many people there are simply better ways of studying.

Many of our degrees are absolutely fantastic but they should never be the default.

Instead of pushing young people on to dead-end courses that give them nothing but a mountain of debt, we need universities and colleges to work together to address the gaps in our labour market, and create the valuable and technical courses our society needs. I know that they are up for this challenge – indeed, many are already embracing it and already delivering on it.

The Lifetime Skills Guarantee is how we will make this dream a reality, get people into the jobs they aspire to and Build Back Better from this pandemic.

The final point I'd like to make today is about technology's ability to expand our horizons. It is not just about enabling a student studying at home in Runcorn to go on a virtual field trip to the Atlas mountains, it can just as easily bring the student in North Africa here to enjoy the benefits of a British education from their own home.

Education exports such as transnational education make an important contribution to the UK economy as well as helping to build global relationships and education partnerships. Transnational education strengthens the UK's soft power, and will open up opportunities for greater collaboration and the exchange of knowledge.

Online learning has the potential to transform our international offer. Rather than simply delivering degrees on site, in future universities will be able to provide a much wider and more innovative portfolio. We may, perhaps, see degrees in which an international student studies remotely for two years, before completing their degree with an in-person experience year on a UK campus. This sort of change would revolutionise demand, at a stroke bringing a UK degree in reach of the emerging middle classes of India and South East Asia.

Earlier this month we published our [updated International Education Strategy](#), at the heart of which is our new, flagship, Turing Scheme.

[The Turing Scheme](#) exemplifies the best of post-Brexit Britain: modern, outward-looking and global in reach. Freed from the bloated, bureaucratic constraints of Erasmus+ – a scheme that would have cost us around £600m per year to run or £2bn net over the programme. We have been able to broaden our

imaginations from the small confines of Europe. Seeing Turing as a truly global scheme.

Our universities will now be able to create opportunities not just among our friends and neighbours on the continent, but across the globe; to America's world-renowned institutions and the vibrant, dynamic universities of India and South-East Asia.

And unlike Erasmus, whose benefits went mainly to the middle-classes, the Turing scheme will actively seek out those from less well-off backgrounds to take up opportunities that can transform their lives.

Thanks to the wizardry of technology this is an enormously exciting time for those who learn and those who teach. We mustn't hesitate to seize the opportunities it presents with both hands and I know you have no intention of slowing up a revolution that has been unfolding over the past year. And I want to thank you for what you have been doing and for the endeavours that you're about to embark upon.

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## **UN Human Rights Council 46: Enhanced Interactive Dialogue with the High Commissioner on Belarus**

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