

Nearest testing site now on average under 2 miles away

NHS Test and Trace has maintained its strong start to the year, reaching more than 270,000 people in the latest reporting week with over 2.9 million people tested.

The service continues to reach a high proportion of cases and contacts, with people able to receive a test result more quickly and conveniently. The median distance that people will have travelled for a test is now just 1.9 miles, a record for the service compared with 5.1 miles as recently as September.

Of those who took their tests in-person at either a local or regional test centre or mobile testing unit, nearly all (96.1%) received their results the following day, while the median turnaround time for home test kits was 35 hours.

NHS Test and Trace has successfully reached 86.9% of cases, and 93.6% of their contacts, making a real impact in breaking chains of transmission. Since NHS Test and Trace launched, 90.0% of close contacts for whom communication details were provided have been reached.

Between 4 February and 10 February, 90.1% (155,206) of the contacts identified were reached within 3 days of the confirmed case. The median time taken for contacts to be reached after the positive case which identified them reported symptoms was 78 hours.

The [NHS COVID-19 app](#) has now been updated with the capability to alert users in postcode district areas where there is a variant of concern. This provides additional messaging to users, such as their eligibility for surge testing, and where to find more information.

NHS Test and Trace's test site network continues to expand. With more than 850 test sites in operation, including 484 local test sites, people are travelling a shorter distance than ever before to get a test.

Health Minister Lord Bethell said:

This week NHS Test and Trace has reached 86.9% positive cases and 93.6% contacts of those cases, leading to 270,865 people being told to isolate. Week after week these results continue to have a significant impact and, through the service's consistent performances we are seeing that our efforts are helping to halt the spread of the virus.

The number of rapid tests conducted across the country has continued to increase, ensuring NHS Test and Trace can identify people who are infectious, but not showing symptoms. Around one in

3 people with COVID-19 are asymptomatic which means every positive rapid test helps us break a chain of transmission we wouldn't have otherwise identified. We must ensure the service continues to evolve in order to continue breaking these links in the chain.

Interim Executive Chair of the National Institute for Health Protection Baroness Dido Harding said:

NHS Test and Trace has maintained a strong start to the year and is delivering consistent outputs to ensure the service continues to reach a high proportion of cases and contacts quickly and conveniently. The continued development of the service has been crucial to achieving this.

I am incredibly grateful to everyone involved in NHS Test and Trace who are working non-stop to help us combat the spread of the virus.

Testing

As of 16 February, more than 79 million tests have been processed in the UK in total since testing began, more than any other comparable European country. In total, almost 22.3 million people have now been tested at least once since NHS Test and Trace was launched – that equates to more than a third of all people in England.

In the latest reporting week, 2,400,724 rapid lateral flow device (LFD) tests were conducted, which is 18 times higher than mid-December, with 10,490,011 conducted in total since first introduced. Of the LFD tests conducted in the latest week, 7,548 LFD tests returned a positive result and 81,342 positive results have been reported since they were introduced.

The number of LFD tests has been increasing across all regions for the past 6 weeks, with most in this reporting week conducted in the South West followed by the North West.

Pillar 1 test results made available within 24 hours has increased to 97.4%, compared with last week's percentage of 96.6%. 96.7% of satellite tests were received within 3 days after the day they were taken, compared with 96.0% the previous week.

Tracing

So far, more than 8.8 million cases and contacts have been reached and told to self-isolate by contact tracers.

Tracing performance has remained high with 86.9% of cases and 93.6% of contacts reached last week. The proportion of contacts reached within 24 hours once identified as a contact was consistent with the previous week at 97.9%.

105,764 positive cases were transferred to contact tracers between 4 and 10 February, with 91,920 reached and told to self-isolate.

In total during the week of 4 to 10 February, 270,865 people who had either tested positive or been identified as a recent close contact were reached and told to self-isolate, people who might otherwise have gone on to unknowingly spread the virus.

More than 300 local authorities have joined forces with NHS Test and Trace to launch local tracing partnerships, combining specialist local expertise with the data and resources of NHS Test and Trace. These partnerships enable NHS Test and Trace to go further in supporting people who have tested positive for COVID-19 and tracing their recent contacts.

Background information

The [weekly statistics from the 37th week of NHS Test and Trace \(England\)](#) show in the most recent reporting week (4 to 10 February):

- the proportion of contacts reached by tracing service has remained consistent at 93.6%
- 86.9% of people who tested positive and were transferred to the contact-tracing system were reached and asked to provide information about their contacts, compared with 87.3% the previous week
- 96.5% of contacts where communication details were given were reached and told to self-isolate
- 96.1% of in-person test results were received the next day after the test was taken, compared with 97.6% of tests the previous week
- 97.4% of pillar 1 test results were made available within 24 hours, compared with 96.6% the previous week
- 85.4% of in-person test results were received within 24 hours after the test was taken, compared with 86.3% the previous week
- 96.7% of satellite test results were received within 3 days after the day they were taken, compared with 96.0% the previous week

Bradford murderer has sentence increased

A man who murdered a woman and buried her body has had his sentence increased following intervention from the Solicitor General, Rt Hon Michael Ellis QC MP.

Dale Tarbox, 40, had known the victim, Susan Howells, 51, for a number of years before the murder took place. Susan, who was physically disabled and used a Zimmer frame, went to stay with Tarbox and his partner in January 2019.

Following an argument, Tarbox murdered Susan at his home in Bradford on 19 February 2019. He attempted to burn her body, before hiding it in a wheelie bin in his cellar.

Tarbox made sure the property was secure and then moved with his partner to a caravan site in Doncaster. He later returned to the Bradford address with an accomplice, transported the body to Doncaster and buried it behind his caravan.

Susan Howells was declared missing in August 2019, but police found that Tarbox and his partner had been collecting her benefit money. When officers attended the caravan site they found Susan's remains in a shallow grave behind Tarbox's caravan. They also found the wheelie bin in Tarbox's caravan, which contained an incinerator and human hair.

Tarbox was sentenced to life imprisonment with a minimum term of 16 years on 10 December 2020 at Leeds Crown Court. Following a referral to the Court of Appeal by the Solicitor General, on 18 February the sentence was found to be unduly lenient and has been increased to life imprisonment with a minimum term of 18 years.

Commenting on the increase, the Solicitor General said:

Tarbox murdered a vulnerable victim and showed no remorse for his despicable actions. No sentence can repair the damage he caused, but I hope the Court of Appeal's decision today gives some closure to the victim's family.

[Next steps announced for management of marine non-licensable activities in Studland Bay Marine Conservation Zone](#)

News story

Between 28 October and 15 December 2020 the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) held a call for evidence seeking views on the draft Studland Bay Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) marine non-licensable activity assessment.



Approximately 500 responses were received through online surveys or by email, providing valuable information to inform the MMO's decisions on management to ensure the necessary level of protection for the features of Studland Bay MCZ.

The MMO has reviewed all information received and are proposing the next steps for the management of Studland Bay MCZ:

- For mooring, powerboating, sailing, diving and snorkelling, no further restrictions will be implemented at this stage.
- For anchoring, management measures may be required to avoid negative impacts on the site. The MMO will be holding a series of stakeholder events in March 2021 to develop suitable management measures.

All stakeholders who responded to the Studland Bay MCZ call for evidence will be contacted about how they can participate in the planned engagement events. Stakeholder feedback from these events will be crucial for the MMO to develop an approach that ensures the necessary level of environmental protection while minimising impacts on people's use of the sea. If you are interested in getting involved please contact conservation@marinemanagement.org.uk to register your interest.

For more information about the MMO's work in Studland Bay MCZ, including the draft assessment, a summary of the call for evidence and frequently asked questions, please visit the [dedicated pages](#) on GOV.UK.

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[£8 million government boost for manufacturers across England to go digital](#)

- SMEs across England to benefit from £8 million to adopt cutting-edge,

digital technology

- projects supported to date include the world's first smart black pudding factory and adopting 3D printing for stop-motion animated puppets
- new funding will help businesses build back better by increasing productivity and reducing emissions

New £8 million government funding for small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) to help them modernise, go digital and create new jobs.

The funding, part of the government's Made Smarter Adoption programme, will support up to 1,000 small and medium sized manufacturers, across the North West, North East, Yorkshire and the Humber and the West Midlands regions, in adopting digital technology.

A pilot of the programme launched in January 2019 in the North West and has already worked with more than 1,000 firms and directly supported over 500 businesses to use digital technology to overcome challenges or access opportunities to grow their business.

The additional funding announced today (18 February 2021) will allow businesses in the North West to continue to access support and, starting in the coming months, for more manufacturers across other parts of England do the same.

The Bury-based Black Pudding Company is already using support from Made Smarter to help create the world's first smart black pudding factory by using automation and digital tools to increase product quality and substantially reduce waste.

Meanwhile, Altrincham-based Mackinnon and Saunders, the stop-motion animators who worked on Postman Pat and collaborated with Hollywood directors Tim Burton, have received support to adopt digital technology such as 3D printing to keep up with bigger, global rivals.

Minister for Investment, Lord Grimstone, said:

The proof is in the pudding and for the companies that have adopted the latest digital technology they are already reaping the rewards.

To help level up the country, we want to ensure businesses have the right tools for the job so that they can build back better and greener from the pandemic.

By supporting adoption of industrial digital technology, such as robotics and automation, additive manufacturing or the Internet of Things, the programme can help level up regions by enabling manufacturers to increase their productivity, create high-skilled well-paid jobs and reduce their emissions.

Chairman, Accenture UK & Ireland, and Made Smarter Commissioner, Olly Benzecry, said:

Having been actively involved in the North West pilot we have seen the power of this scheme to help a broad range of manufacturers exploit industrial digitalisation to increase productivity and employment. It is great to see this approach now being made available more nationally, building on the strong foundation developed and proven in the North West over the past 2 years.

Made Smarter Commissioner and Managing Director of ATEC Engineering Solutions in Salford, Andrea Hough OBE, said:

This support plays a vital role in helping manufacturing SMEs like mine understand the advantages of adopting digital technology. My own firm has seen first hand the importance of digitalisation.

I have supported the pilot programme in the North West since it launched and am pleased that its work will continue and will be rolled out to three new regions to help even more businesses benefit from technology.

Made Smarter Commissioner and Chairman of ICW in Wakefield, Margaret Wood, said:

The rollout of Made Smarter Adoption support is a much needed booster in these changing times. I am happy to see that government is making this investment to enable a new era in manufacturing and to develop the possibilities for a new, digitalised industrial landscape.

By rolling out support across the North of England and the West Midlands, this will help increase regional productivity and innovation, helping to unleash countless possibilities.

Chief Executive of the North East Local Enterprise Partnership, Helen Golightly, said:

Despite the rapid pace of digital adoption during the coronavirus pandemic, many SMEs still need support to introduce new technologies within their businesses that can improve productivity, efficiency and performance.

The Made Smarter Adoption Programme will help businesses in the North East adapt to a new, smarter way of working by embracing digital.

Innovation Lead for the West Midlands Combined Authority, Jamie Elliott, said:

This funding is a step in the right direction. We have 14,500 SME manufacturers in the West Midlands many of which would benefit from access to new technologies, which would both boost the region's economy, help create skilled jobs and contribute towards a cleaner, greener West Midlands.

Rolling out the 'Made Smarter Adoption' programme to additional regions is set to help more manufacturers, with support for firms in the North West continuing.

Other projects that have benefitted from support in the North West include:

- Preston-based, nutrition supplement manufacturer Nutree Life has adopted state-of-the-art automation technology to enable faster and more accurate production whilst improving efficiency. This has helped the firm to meet increased demand and allowed them to double their workforce
- Wirral-based Parity Medical has used their support from Made Smarter to develop a virtual showroom for their specialist medical technology that will reduce sales team travel by 30,000 miles a year and accelerate their demonstration process from two days to just one hour

The government's Made Smarter Adoption programme includes free impartial, expert advice, funded digital internships, access to specialised leadership and management training, as well as match funding for digital transformation projects.

SME manufacturers in the North West can continue to access Made Smarter Adoption support.

More information about Made Smarter Adoption support in the North East, the West Midlands and Yorkshire and the Humber will be made available in the coming months as local partners gear up to work with SMEs to help them take advantage of digital technology.

Alongside support for adoption, government is also investing £147 million through a Manufacturing Made Smarter Challenge to drive innovation in new digital solutions for manufacturers.

Made Smarter is a national movement to drive growth amongst UK makers and advance the UK economy. Backed by world-renowned businesses and the UK government, it will improve the development and adoption of emerging technologies, making a real, everyday difference to people from the boardroom to the factory floor.

Made Smarter was formed following a nationwide review into UK manufacturing that recommended 3 key changes: more ambitious leadership, more innovation in developing new technologies, and faster implementation and adoption of those technologies. It will be boosting the digital skills of industry leaders, bringing businesses and research development together to develop new technology, and helping makers embrace new digital tools. In doing so, we'll inspire the next industrial revolution and make the UK a leader in digital technologies.

For more information, visit madesmarter.uk.

[Report by OSCE Chief Observer Ambassador Varga: UK response](#)

Thank you Madam Chairperson. Thank you Ambassador Varga for sharing your report with the Permanent Council and providing a detailed insight into the activities of your Mission. We are very grateful for the vital work you and your team of observers carry out to provide the international community with impartial and transparent reporting, particularly given the additional challenges posed by COVID-19.

Unfortunately, your ability to monitor continues to be severely restricted. Your mission remains present at only two checkpoints along over 400 kilometres of the Ukraine-Russia state border, outside of Ukrainian government control. This is far from the comprehensive border monitoring foreseen under the Minsk agreements.

The challenges faced by your mission are further compounded by unacceptable restrictions placed upon your freedom of movement. Your report outlines that these restrictions create “blind spots” at the two check points and limit your ability to observe persons in military-style outfits in vehicles, ambulances crossing the border during night hours, trains at Gukovo border crossing point and to assess whether vehicles are crossing into Ukraine or not – to name just a few issues. You are also still prohibited from using binoculars, cameras and other observation tools.

Despite these restrictions, the Mission continues to provide useful insight to the international community, including to inform us about the so-called “humanitarian convoys”. From its deployment in July 2014 until 2 February this year, the Mission has reported 99 Russian convoys. In the reporting period, the Mission observed three separate Russian Federation convoys crossing into Ukraine via the Donetsk border checkpoint. These so-called humanitarian convoys cross without Ukraine’s permission and therefore violate its sovereignty. The UK once again calls on Russia to cease this practice and to facilitate the safe delivery of international aid based on an agreed international mechanism, as foreseen under the Minsk agreements.

This is just one example of how Russia has shown a blatant lack of respect for the Ukraine-Russia border. Between 17 September and 31 December 2020, the SMM observed on two occasions at least five vehicles in areas near the international border outside government control in Donetsk region, where there are no border facilities. One instance was on 16 October 2020 when two convoys met in an area close to the border near Manych. 22 people were seen unloading cargo from the vehicles, after which one vehicle was seen driving towards a compound in central Donetsk city and the other to exit Ukraine. SMM

reports have repeatedly indicated that further violations would be revealed if the Observer Mission was allowed to comprehensively monitor along the full stretch of the Ukraine-Russia State border.

We will continue to support the work of this Mission, including by calling for an end to unnecessary limitations on your operations and supporting a longer mandate extension period. We join our international partners in calling again for an expansion of the Mission to the entirety of the uncontrolled section of the border. If Russia has nothing to hide, it should have no objection to this.

Finally, the UK reiterates our unwavering support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders, including its territorial waters.