

# February interim findings from COVID-19 REACT-1 study published

- Over 85,400 volunteers tested in England between 4 and 13 February 2021 as part of one of the largest COVID-19 studies
- Initial findings from Imperial College London and Ipsos MORI show infections fell by more than two-thirds from the last REACT report, with 1 in 196 people infected
- Infection levels remain high and it is critical everyone continues to follow the rules to help bring down infections even further and reduce pressure on the NHS

The [interim findings from the ninth report of REACT-1](#), one of the country's largest studies into COVID-19 infections in England, have been published today by Imperial College London and Ipsos MORI.

Over 85,400 volunteers were tested in England between 4 and 13 February to examine the levels of infection in the general population. The findings show infections in England have fallen significantly since the last report in January.

These latest findings demonstrate the impact lockdown restrictions are having on reducing infections across the country. Infections still remain high with more people in hospital than at the peak last April and hospital admissions for COVID-19 are at around 1,600 a day. It is vital everyone continues to play their part by staying at home and getting vaccinated when invited.

The main findings from the ninth REACT study show:

- national prevalence fell by two thirds from 1.57% to 0.51%, or 51 per 10,000 infected, compared to the last REACT report from 6 to 22 January
- a halving time of 15 days and an R number of 0.72, based on the prevalence observed at the end of the last report and today's interim findings
- regional prevalence fell in all areas compared to the last REACT report from 6 to 22 January. It was highest in the North West (1.38% to 0.91%) and North East (1.22% to 0.82%). There were substantial falls in prevalence compared to the last report in January in London (2.83% to 0.54%), West Midlands (1.66% to 0.33%), East of England (1.78% to 0.54%), South East (1.61% to 0.30%), East Midlands (1.16% to 0.51%). There was a smaller fall in Yorkshire and the Humber (0.80% to 0.61%)
- prevalence fell substantially across all age groups compared to the last REACT report from 6 to 22 January. Prevalence fell from 0.93% to 0.30% among the over-65s. Highest prevalence is among 18 to 24-year-olds at 0.89% and those aged 5 to 12 at 0.86%
- large household size, living in a deprived neighbourhood, and areas with higher numbers of Asian ethnicity individuals were associated with increased prevalence
- healthcare and care home workers were more likely to test positive

compared to other workers

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

“These findings show encouraging signs infections are now heading in the right direction across the country, but we must not drop our guard.

“Cases and hospital admissions remain high – over 20,000 COVID-19 patients are in hospital – so it is vital we all remain vigilant and follow the rules as our vaccination rollout continues at pace.

“I urge everyone to continue to stay at home – remember hands, face, space – and get your jab when you receive your invite.”

While the vaccine programme continues to expand to protect as many people as possible, with over 15 million people vaccinated, we do not yet know whether being vaccinated stops someone from passing the virus on to others. It will also be some time before the impact of the vaccination programme reduces pressures on hospitals.

It is critical everyone continues to follow the rules, stays at home, reduces contact with others and maintains social distancing – remembering hands, face, space.

Professor Paul Elliott, director of the programme at Imperial, said:

“These encouraging results show that lockdown measures are effectively bringing infections down. It’s reassuring that the reduction in numbers of infections occurred in all ages and in most regions across the country. “While the trends we’ve observed are good news, we need to all work to keep infections down by sticking to the measures which are designed to protect us and our health system.”

Kelly Beaver, Managing Director, Public Affairs at Ipsos MORI, said:

“The reduction in prevalence from our last REACT round is very welcome, particularly the very large reduction in London. But it’s important that we continue following all the measures that the government has set out so that we can continue to see further reductions, and make progress in beating the pandemic.”

This report is the latest from the REACT study which was commissioned by DHSC and carried out by a world-class team of scientists, clinicians and researchers at Imperial College London, Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust and Ipsos MORI.

## **Background information**

Read more information on the [Real-time Assessment of Community Transmission \(REACT\) programme of work](#)

This study falls under pillar 4 of the COVID-19 National Testing Programme, which focuses on mass surveillance in the general population.

See the [REACT-1 studies on GOV.UK](#).

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## Government plan to transform Oxford-Cambridge Arc into UK's fastest growing economic region

- Generational plan will unlock the long-term potential of the region, transforming the Arc into a world-class place to live and work sustainably.
- An intention to establish a new single voice for the area – an Arc Growth Body – to drive and support economic growth

An ambitious plan to unleash the economic and cultural potential of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, to transform it into one of the world's premier growth corridors and a world-leader in sustainability, has been announced today (Thursday 18 February) by Housing Minister Rt Hon Christopher Pincher.

The spatial framework plan will help to create thousands of jobs, drive investment, protect and enhance the environment, and provide the infrastructure and beautiful new places needed to make the area – which spans the five counties of Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire, Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire – an even greater place to live and work.

The results, due to be published in 2022, will give communities a chance to shape the long-term future of their area and will help to ensure the benefits of growth are felt across the region.

The intention to establish an Arc Growth Body will also help unleash the area's potential as a global innovation powerhouse by promoting the Arc internationally.

With the right interventions and investment, local analysis suggests that by 2050 economic output could double to over £200 billion.

To realise the full potential of local economies and the Arc as a whole, the government is also considering how further investment could create jobs, support the delivery of more homes, and support local economic growth.

Housing Minister Rt Hon Christopher Pincher MP said:

The Oxford-Cambridge Arc is already home to world-leading economic, cultural and scientific assets.

We know for instance Cambridge's rate of patent applications – a key indicator of innovation – is the highest in the United Kingdom, while nearby Milton Keynes is the fastest growing city in the country.

We want to take this region to the next phase of its renaissance by unlocking its full potential and our plans will drive investment where it is needed and ensure, as growth happens, we create well-designed, inclusive and vibrant places and communities.

The OxCam spatial framework will allow us to plan positively for growth and we look forward to working with our local partners over the coming months to strengthen our vision and approach to the Arc.

Councillor Barry Wood, Chair of The Arc Leaders Group and Leader Cherwell District Council said:

We welcome the continuing commitment from Government to the Oxford to Cambridge Arc through today's announcements.

We look forward to working together with local people and our local partners to deliver an economy that works for all, underpinned by a high-quality natural environment. This will include planning for and enabling development that is truly inclusive and sustainable which delivers real benefits for our communities and environment now and in the future.

The Arc already is home to over 2 million jobs and provides a place to live for over 3.7 million residents.

The Arc's success is key to the United Kingdom's national prosperity, international competitiveness, and ability to meet the challenges and opportunities the country will face over the next century, including climate change and supporting nature recovery technological change fighting COVID-19 and preventing future pandemics.

This regional success will build on the work of the government that has helped millions of people continue to provide for their families as part of its [Plan for Jobs](#) to protect, support and create employment.

The [Oxford to Cambridge \(OxCam\) Arc](#) the name given to a cross-government initiative that supports planning for the future made up of the five counties of Oxfordshire, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire. It includes:

- 3 county councils: Oxfordshire, Northamptonshire and Cambridgeshire.
- 17 district councils: City of Oxford, South Oxfordshire, Vale of the White Horse, West Oxfordshire, Cherwell, Northampton, South Northamptonshire, Daventry, Wellingborough, Kettering, Corby, East Northamptonshire, City of Cambridge, South Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, Fenland and East Cambridgeshire;
- 6 unitary authorities: Buckinghamshire, Milton Keynes, Luton, Bedford, Central Bedfordshire and City of Peterborough;
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority.

The Oxford-Cambridge Arc is a unique place, home to cutting-edge research, globally renowned science, and technology clusters, and some of the most productive towns and cities in the country.

Oxford and Cambridge are world-leading centres of research and innovation. There are ten significant higher education institutions, including Cranfield University, with its world-leading specialisms in automotive and aerospace engineering, the Open University, and the world-leading centres of learning at the University of Oxford and University of Cambridge.

The Arc contains a vibrant natural environment and a rich cultural heritage, and it is home to some of the country's fastest growing and most innovative places.

Cambridge's rate of patent applications – a key indicator of innovation – is the highest in the UK, at over 12 times the national average. Milton Keynes is the fastest growing city in the country. Work on the COVID-19 vaccine, testing and treatment is the latest example of the Arc's unique innovation and business environment leading efforts to tackle a global challenge.

The Arc already is home to over 2 million jobs and provides a place to live for over 3.7 million residents.

With the right interventions and investment, local economic forecasts suggest that by 2050 we would see economic output doubling to over £200 billion. The Arc's success is key to the UK's national prosperity, international competitiveness, and ability to meet the challenges and opportunities we will face as a country over the next century, including climate change and supporting nature recovery, technological change, fighting COVID-19 and preventing future pandemics.

“The Arc” offers a significant opportunity for the government and partners to work together to support the harmonious delivery of improved connectivity, productivity and place-making, whilst ensuring pioneering environmental standards and enhancements are delivered and the government's 25 Year Environment Plan is put into action.

The desirability of the Arc as a place to live, visit, work and invest is in part due to the quality of the local environment, the rich and diverse character of its landscapes, and the resultant high value of the area's natural capital.

## **Spatial framework**

The spatial framework will set a plan and policies with the status of national planning policy. Based on a long-term, strategic approach to planning for growth across the area, it will help to unlock the long-term potential of the area in a sustainable way, improving the Arc as a place to live and work. It will give communities a chance to shape the long-term future of their area and will help to ensure the benefits of growth are felt across the region.

We are today publishing a [policy paper](#), which sets out the approach we intend to take, including:

- a timeline for developing the framework,
- how we will engage communities and work with local partners, and
- the high-level scope of the framework, including the approach it will take to planning for the environment, infrastructure, economic growth, and new homes and place-making.

## **Growth body**

- Capitalising on the globally renowned assets of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc can help to lead the UK's economic recovery. That is why government has today (18 February) announced its intent to establish a Growth Body in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc.
- This will give a clear economic leadership voice to the Arc. This announcement builds on government's support for the region including connecting communities through East West Rail and supporting a long-term plan for sustainable growth with the spatial framework.
- Government will work with local partners to ensure that the Growth Body is tailored to the region's unique opportunities.

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# **Lord Frost CMG appointed as a Minister of State in the Cabinet Office**

Press release

The Queen has been pleased to approve the appointment of Lord Frost CMG as a Minister of State in the Cabinet Office.



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Lord Frost will be a full member of Cabinet. His appointment will take effect from 1 March 2021.

## **Background**

As earlier signalled, Lord Frost will lead the UK's institutional and strategic relationship with the EU and help drive through changes to maximise the opportunities of Brexit, including on international trade and economic issues.

This will include:

- co-ordinating relations with the EU institutions and the 27 member states, working closely with the FCDO and other Departments with an interest;
- working on domestic reform and regulation to maximise on the opportunities of Brexit;
- leading on central coordination and policy resolution on international trade policy, working closely with DIT; and
- becoming the UK Chair of the Partnership Council and the Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee.

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## **[COP26 President visits India to welcome climate leadership](#)**

- Alok Sharma travelled to India in his first visit to Asia as full-time COP26 President
- The COP26 President met India's Prime Minister as well as leaders from government, business and civil society to discuss shared aims

- He welcomed India's renewable power ambitions and visited a rooftop solar plant

COP26 President Designate the Right Honourable Alok Sharma MP travelled to India to strengthen close working ties and discuss taking action on the shared challenge of climate change.

While visiting the country this week Mr Sharma saw firsthand India's ambitious work on renewable energy, and held vital discussions with government leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, businesses and civil society.

He also used this opportunity to build on the positive work India and the UK are doing together ahead of COP26 in Glasgow this November.

Mr Sharma congratulated Prime Minister Modi on his personal leadership on climate action and his recent commitment to deliver 450GW of renewable energy by 2030.

On his two-day visit to Delhi, Mr Sharma also welcomed Prime Minister Modi's global leadership in setting up the International Solar Alliance and the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, which the UK co-chairs.

During his visit Mr Sharma held meetings with leading thinkers and civil society to discuss India's strong approach to tackling climate change and improving global resilience.

He also talked to business leaders, highlighting the opportunities presented by a low carbon economy, and encouraging influential businesses such as Dalmia Cement to promote their efforts to introduce science-based net zero emissions targets.

Speaking at the end of his visit, Alok Sharma said:

I am inspired by the resolve I have seen this week across Indian Government and wider society to tackle the impacts of climate change. This visit has bolstered our already strong partnership with India which is important as we look ahead to COP26.

I firmly believe that powerful action from India will be a catalyst for change, encouraging others to be more ambitious in their approaches to protecting both people and planet.

Mr Sharma also met senior leaders from the Indian Government including Minister of External Affairs, Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, Minister of Power and New and Renewable Energy, RK Singh, Sherpa to the G7 and G20, Suresh Prabhu, and India's lead climate negotiator, Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Prakash Javadekar.

Mr Sharma and Mr Javadekar discussed a number of initiatives being driven forward by India to reduce emissions and adapt to cope with the impacts of



climate change.

Helping communities and countries adapt to the worst effects of climate change by stepping up access to funding and expertise for resilience and adaptation is a priority for the UK COP26 Presidency. During his visit Mr Sharma stressed the need for partners around the world to meet their climate finance commitments.

Mr Sharma visited the India Habitat Center where a UK Development Capital-funded rooftop solar installation is helping to save approximately £20,000 (more than 20 Lakh Rupees) and reduce 300 tons of CO2 emissions per year through a 250 kWp rooftop Photovoltaic plant.

Alok Sharma added:

We want to use COP26 to drive forward a global shift towards renewable energy, and so I'm delighted to have seen this pioneering UK-India climate collaboration in action.

India is showing impressive leadership when it comes to renewable power and I hope other countries will look to this example and think big ahead of COP26. India's expertise will be of tremendous value to global discussions around clean energy transition.

A read-out of the COP26 President's meeting with Prime Minister Modi is available on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

Ends.

**Notes to editors:**

1. As host of COP26, the UK is setting a strong example on climate action, with a legally binding target to cut emissions to net zero by 2050. Between 1990 and 2018, the UK nearly halved emissions whilst growing the economy by 75%, and will cut coal use in the power sector entirely by 2025.
2. The UK has committed to double its International Climate Finance to at least £11.6bn over the next five years, to help developing countries to take action.
3. In November the UK will host the UN climate change conference COP26 in Glasgow, with our partners, Italy. This will provide an opportunity for the world to come together and commit to urgent action.
4. The UK will lead by example during this unprecedented time. Guided by science, the UK will invest in a green recovery which creates sustainable jobs and addresses the urgent and linked challenges of public health, climate change, and biodiversity loss.
5. The UK is committed to working with all countries and joining forces with civil society, companies and people on the frontline of climate change to inspire action ahead of COP26.

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## Second rapid testing pilot starts at Southwark Crown Court

- Government-backed rapid testing pilot to run for four weeks at Southwark court
- Partnership supports national workplace testing programme run by NHS Test and Trace to help protect people most at risk
- Findings will determine how rapid testing could be rolled out to courts and tribunals nationally

From this week, and for the next four weeks, lateral flow tests will be offered to people attending a scheduled hearing at Southwark Crown Court who are not showing any symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19). The test will be offered to all staff, judiciary, jurors, contractors, legal professionals, and professional court users who visit the site. It will not be a public testing facility.

The opening of this rapid testing pilot site follows the [first pilot](#) that started in January 2021 at Manchester Civil Justice Centre (CJC). In the first week of testing at Manchester CJC, more than 160 tests were carried out, which were all negative.

Around one in three people who are infected with COVID-19 have no symptoms, so could be spreading the disease without knowing it. Broadening testing to identify those showing no symptoms will mean finding positive cases more quickly and preventing the spread of infection. Each positive result from a rapid test is one that would not have been found otherwise, helping break chains of transmission in our communities and workplaces and protecting those at highest risk.

As with Manchester, the Southwark pilot will support the NHS Test and Trace national testing programme by providing information on how rapid testing works in different public sector settings. HMCTS will use findings to decide how rapid testing could be rolled out nationally to other courts and tribunals across the country.

Kevin Sadler, Acting CEO of HMCTS, said:

“Justice is essential to all those who need it – from vulnerable victims to families in crisis, witnesses and defendants – and courts and tribunals have been operating throughout the pandemic.

“This second rapid test pilot is in addition to a suite of safety measures already in place to keep court visitors safe.”

Health Minister Lord Bethell said:

“We’ve already come so far since first setting up a national testing programme at an unprecedented pace to help counter COVID-19, but we continue to strive to go further, faster.

“Lateral flow tests hold the key to the next phase of our ambition to see rapid testing available to people across the country.

“I’m delighted that HM Courts & Tribunals Service are working with us to use the latest technology in Southwark Crown Court, and I look forward to seeing the fruits of their labour, both in helping target the virus locally, and helping find ways to roll this technology out further.”

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

“The innovation and evolution of NHS Test and Trace continues to improve our detection of positive cases and I am incredibly proud of the speed at which we have been able to roll out these initiatives to protect more people more quickly. This is a national effort and a partnership of public and private sectors is instrumental in our response to this virus.

“Around one in three people with COVID-19 don’t display symptoms, meaning you can infect others unknowingly. This rapid testing programme with HM Courts & Tribunals Service is one of many that will inform our understanding of how rapid asymptomatic testing can be operationalised in the real world to protect those at high risk, find the virus and help us go back to as normal a way of life as possible.”

All Southwark Crown Court users will be given the opportunity to book a test slot. Users will be asked to register their details on the NHS portal using their smartphone or a registered device. The tests being carried out are lateral flow devices. Specially trained staff who manage the testing site will supervise the tests and process the results.

Lateral flow tests used by the UK Government go through a rigorous evaluation by the country’s leading scientists. Tests detect cases with high levels of virus, making them effective in finding infectious individuals who aren’t showing any symptoms and are the most likely to transmit the disease.

The tests are voluntary and detect the presence or absence of coronavirus by applying a swab or saliva sample to the device’s absorbent pad. The sample runs along the surface of the pad, showing at the end a visual positive or negative result dependent on the presence of the virus.

Once the test has been taken, NHS Test and Trace will send results by text or email after about 30 minutes. If the test gives a positive result, the court user will be required to leave the court, return home quickly and directly, and follow NHS advice on self-isolating. Court users are encouraged to contact us, and to let us know as soon as possible if a positive test result is received.

There are practical issues to resolve before any wider roll out of testing in courts and tribunals occurs – not least space, staffing and supply of

equipment. We will provide updates as soon as our plans evolve.

Every building we operate – including our [Nightingale courts](#) – meet the government’s COVID-secure guidelines, and public health experts have confirmed our arrangements remain sufficient to deal with the new strain of the virus.

**For media enquiries about the mass testing programme please contact the DHSC media centre.**

1. England only – Anyone testing positive for the virus in England will be contacted by NHS Test and Trace to help them trace their contacts. This will help people to identify who they may have been in close contact with, protecting others from further transmission. Close contacts of those testing positive will also hear from NHS Test and Trace, asking them to stay at home for 10 days to prevent them from unknowingly spreading the virus.
2. See further information on rapid workplace testing [here](#)
3. See latest testing statistics [here](#)
4. Lateral flow tests used by the UK government go through a rigorous evaluation by the country’s leading scientists.
5. LFDs detect cases with high levels of virus, making them effective in finding individuals who are the most likely to transmit the disease, including those not showing symptoms.
6. Rapid testing has a different, but crucial role to play in the fight against coronavirus, and should not be directly compared to lab-based PCR tests which are available for anyone with coronavirus symptoms. They complement PCR testing (which identifies almost all cases including those with very low viral loads and has capacity to process over 800,000 tests a day) by returning a result almost immediately within 30 minutes and finding positive cases with high levels of virus that are easy to transmit to others.
7. Extensive clinical evaluation from Public Health England and the University of Oxford research shows lateral flow tests are specific and sensitive enough to be deployed for mass testing, including for asymptomatic people. The Oxford University and Public Health evaluation is available [here](#)
8. Rapid testing in the workplace, using lateral flow tests, aims to help protect those at highest risk and provide vital information to help inform further rollout of the rapid testing technology in future. Organisations signed up to workplace testing already include Royal Mail, Tate & Lyle Sugars, Primula, Moy Park, Octopus Energy, Apetito, and DVLA.
9. Hundreds of thousands of these tests are already being carried out every day, with the majority taking place at dedicated test sites for people without symptoms, which can be found in a range of community settings such as universities, schools, care homes and workplaces.
10. Please see words from Chief Medical Adviser for NHS Test and Trace, Susan Hopkins on lateral flow tests: [10 January](#) and [8 December](#)