

NHS COVID-19 app alerts 1.7 million contacts to stop spread of COVID-19

- Analysis suggests approximately 600,000 cases have been prevented by the app since September
- The app notifies contacts as quickly as 15 minutes after a user inputs a positive test result

Over 1.7 million app users across England and Wales have been advised to isolate by the NHS COVID-19 app following a close contact with someone who goes on to test positive, new data published today shows.

The NHS COVID-19 app has been breaking chains of transmission to protect users and their communities since its launch in September.

The app is the fastest way to notify the public they have been at risk of contracting the virus, sending alerts to close contacts to tell them to isolate as quickly as 15 minutes after an app user enters a positive result into the app.

The app has now been downloaded 21.63 million times, representing 56% of the eligible population aged 16+ with a smartphone and was the second most downloaded free iPhone app on the Apple App Store in 2020.

The more people who download the app the better it works. Research conducted by scientists at The Alan Turing Institute and Oxford University shows for every 1% increase in app users, the number of coronavirus cases in the population can be reduced by 2.3%.

Research by the Turing/Oxford team into the epidemiological impact of the app also points to a causal link between app use and reduced case numbers, with their analysis suggesting the NHS COVID-19 app has prevented 600,000 cases since it was launched.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

The NHS COVID-19 app is an important tool in our pandemic response. We know it has instructed hundreds of thousands of at-risk people to self-isolate since it launched in September – including me – and this analysis shows it has been hugely effective at breaking chains of transmission, preventing an estimated 600,000 cases.

Isolating and knowing when you have been at risk of catching coronavirus is essential to stopping the spread of this virus, and the app is the quickest way to notify you if you are at risk.

I want to thank all those who have played their part by downloading and using the app, and urge those who haven't to take the simple step to protect your communities and loved ones and download it.

The app has been designed with privacy in mind so it tracks the virus not people utilising the latest in data security technology to protect privacy while notifying users when they are at risk.

As well as contact tracing and booking a test the app allows users to check their symptoms via the symptom checker. Coronavirus symptoms have been reported into the app over 1.4 million times in England and Wales since 24 September.

Over 3.1 million test results have been entered into the app across England and Wales, of which 825,388 were positive. This is a combination of both tests booked through the app and test results manually entered into the app. As users are more likely to manually enter a positive test result in order to trigger contact tracing than a negative result, these figures cannot be used to calculate a positivity rate for the NHS COVID-19 app comparable to manual contact tracing.

Baroness Dido Harding said:

There can be no doubt the NHS COVID-19 app is a vital tool in stopping the spread of coronavirus, having sent over 1.7 million notifications to tell people who have been exposed to the virus to self-isolate since launch.

The app, which works as a part of the wider NHS Test and Trace programme in England, helps us to reach more people quickly to protect communities, by notifying contacts as quickly as 15 minutes after a user enters a positive result.

The app continues to protect our essential workers during this lockdown, and will continue to play an important role in the future as we come out of national restrictions.

Director of Product for the NHS COVID-19 app, Gaby Appleton, said:

It is great that over 56% of the eligible population have already downloaded the NHS COVID-19 app.

The more people who download the app the better it works, and now more than ever every new user makes a difference. For every 1% of additional users who download the app, we can potentially reduce the number of cases in the community by up to 2.3%.

If you have already downloaded the app, I would like to thank you for helping to keep your loved ones safe, and please check that you always have the latest version of the app downloaded, as we make ongoing improvements to the app to help keep people even safer.

Figures on the app's wider features show users have checked into a venue over

103 million times. A total of 253 venues were identified as 'at risk' as a result of an outbreak since 10 December, triggering 'warn and inform' alerts to app users who had checked into those venues, protecting app users by letting them know as quickly as possible when they may have been at risk so they can monitor symptoms. A 'warn and inform' notification will only be sent if an outbreak is identified at a venue and is not equivalent to an instruction to isolate.

The app operates on a principle of continual improvement and has had a series of updates since its launch in September 2020, including an update to the risk scoring algorithm to utilise GAEN API Mode 2 which better estimates distance based on Bluetooth signal strength, increasing its accuracy and making this the first contact tracing app worldwide to harness this technology.

Professor Mark Briers of the Alan Turing Institute said:

We have created a world-leading app, the first of its kind to be built on the latest GAEN API Mode 2 technology, which works to break chains of transmission and protect users against the spread of the virus while maintaining privacy and anonymity.

Using the NHS COVID-19 app is the fastest way to know when you have been at risk of catching the virus and our analysis shows when more people download the app they can have a disproportionately positive impact on driving down case numbers in the community.

I urge those who have not yet downloaded the app to look at the data and our analysis and see for yourself the benefits using this app can bring to protecting not just yourself, but your families and communities.

Christophe Fraser, Professor of Pathogen Dynamics at the University of Oxford's Nuffield Department of Medicine said:

Our analysis shows that the NHS COVID-19 app is sending exposure notifications to relevant contacts.

Isolating when receiving a notification from the app has and continues to prevent the spread of the virus. We analysed the impact of the 1.7 million notifications sent by the app, and our statistical analysis showed that approximately 600,000 cases were averted.

The impact of the app could be increased by more people using it: for each increase in users of 1% of the population, the number of cases can be driven down by approximately 2.3%. The epidemiological outlook remains concerning, and using the app can contribute to reducing infections until we are all vaccinated.

The app is now also interoperable meaning it is compatible with other contact tracing apps across the UK, protecting users who travel to Scotland, Jersey, Northern Ireland or Gibraltar. As of December, self-isolation support payments have been available to users in England who have been instructed to isolate, without compromising the privacy protecting nature of the app. In Wales NHS COVID-19 app users have been eligible to apply for the SISS since 1 February.

App users will only be notified to isolate if they are assessed to be at risk of having caught the virus so it is essential users comply with self isolation to stop the spread of the virus and protect the NHS.

Wolfgang Emmerich, CEO of Zuhlke UK, said:

The NHS COVID-19 app now runs on tens of millions of phones, making it one of the world's most downloaded medical software products. It provides a powerful, cost-effective and continuously updated instrument to help control the evolving pandemic.

Ronan Harris, MD & VP, Google UK and Ireland, said:

We built this technology with Apple to help public health authorities fight COVID-19. People up and down the country are contributing to this fight, with record numbers choosing to download the app across England and Wales, supporting the NHS as it continues to do heroic work.

Data on the NHS COVID-19 app will be published weekly alongside NHS Test and Trace data from Thursday 18 February.

App download data is from 13 August, venue alert data is from 10 December when the process for venue alerts became semi-automated.

[Find information about the NHS COVID-19 risk scoring algorithm](#)

[Data including methodology](#)

Data on the number of cases prevented is subject to peer review.

[New UK Cyber Security Council to be official governing body on training](#)

and standards

- Government funds new independent body to set standards and define career and learning paths for the cyber security sector
- UK Cyber Security Council to be a simple one-stop shop for information for people looking to enter or further their career
- The Council will actively pursue opportunities to attract more talent and increase diversity in the cyber security workforce

The new DCMS-funded UK Cyber Security Council will provide a single governing voice for the industry to establish the knowledge, skills and experience required for a range of cyber security jobs, bringing it in line with other professions such as law, medicine and engineering.

The Council will boost skilled job prospects around the country by giving budding and existing workers a clear roadmap for building a career in cyber security and focus on increasing the number and diversity of people entering the profession.

The body will work with training providers to accredit courses and qualifications, and give employers the information and confidence they need to recruit effectively to ensure their cyber capability.

Digital Infrastructure Minister Matt Warman makes the announcement on [Safer Internet Day](#) which promotes more responsible use of online technology around the world and comes as the £8.3 billion cyber security sector [continues to grow](#) despite the pandemic and with it the demand for more talent, particularly from underrepresented groups.

Digital Infrastructure Minister Matt Warman said:

The fact we are launching an independent professional body for cyber security shows just how vital this area has become – it makes a huge contribution to our thriving digital economy by safeguarding our critical national infrastructure, commerce and other online spaces.

The UK Cyber Security Council will ensure anyone interested in an exciting career tackling online threats has access to world-class training and guidance. It will also champion diversity and inclusion, driving up standards while helping the nation to build back better and safer.

This latest move comes after a feedback from a 2018 DCMS public consultation looking at the issues facing the profession, which showed overwhelming support for a new body.

Working closely with the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC), the Council will strongly support the Government's £1.9 billion National Cyber Security

Strategy to make the UK the safest place to live and work online.

Chris Ensor, the NCSC's Deputy Director for Cyber Growth, said:

Cyber security is a growing industry in the UK and it's vital for high standards of practice and technical expertise to be at the heart of the profession as it develops.

We look forward to working with the Council to help ensure that future generations of cyber security professionals have the skills and support they need to thrive and make the UK the safest place to live and work online.

The council has appointed its inaugural Board of Trustees to guide the organisation as it establishes itself over the coming years. This includes:

- Chair: Dr. Claudia Natanson – a Global Cyber Security expert who was previously CSO at DWP, MD at BT Secure Business Service and CISO at Diageo Plc
- Vice-Chair: Jessica Figueras – Tech market strategist, Chair of NCT, previously Chief Analyst at GlobalData
- Trustee: Carla Baker – Senior Director, Policy & Government Affairs UK & Ireland, Palo Alto Networks
- Treasurer: Mike Watson – Chief Financial Officer, Marston Holdings, previously with Dell, HP and BAE Systems cyber security division

UK Cyber Security Council Chair Dr. Claudia Natanson said:

Having spent many years in cyber security, I'm very aware of the excellent work done by many varied organisations – but I'm also conscious that the time for an umbrella organisation has come in order to drive the profession forward in a unified way.

It's a privilege and a challenge to be part of the leadership of the Council, knowing that the future security and prosperity of the UK depends in part on the Council succeeding in its mission to develop the profession.

The Council will be formally launched on March 31.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

- The council was developed following a 2018 consultation on [Developing the UK cyber security profession](#) which showed strong support for the government's proposals to define objectives for the profession to achieve and to create a new, independent UK Cyber Security Council to coordinate delivery.

- In September 2019, DCMS commissioned a consortium of cyber security professional bodies known as the Cyber Security Alliance to work on establishing the council. The Institution of Engineering and Technology led the consortium that created this new organisation over an approximately 18 month period.
 - The work is part of the government's five year £1.9 billion [National Cyber Security Strategy](#) to make the UK the safest place to live and work online.
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[Public urged to consider work in adult social care](#)

- Launch of new approach to boost vital adult social care workforce
- Short-term staff called on to support care homes and home care services during the pandemic
- 'Care for Others. Make a Difference' advertising recruitment campaign launched to highlight varied, flexible long-term social care career opportunities

The public are being called upon to apply for rewarding short-term and long-term opportunities in the adult social care sector to support care home residents and those being cared for at home.

The impact of the new COVID-19 variant is being felt across the country and additional staff are urgently needed now to support the adult social care workforce where absence rates have more than doubled in recent months due to self-isolation.

Jobseekers, volunteers and people on furlough can now register their interest for short-term opportunities including personal care – helping people to wash and dress – providing wellbeing support, simply collecting and delivering supplies, or helping out with the cooking and cleaning. Exact roles will be based on experience, local need and local authority and care provider discretion.

The 'Care for Others. Make a Difference' campaign also launches this week using television, digital and radio advertising to drive awareness of long-term career opportunities, highlighting the rewarding, varied and flexible roles available across the care sector to help build a sustainable workforce now and for the future. Almost 1.5 million people work in adult social care and there are many opportunities for those looking to make a difference.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

I want to thank carers for all they do to look after our loved

ones. Throughout this pandemic, they have gone above and beyond to protect our parents and grandparents, and to provide them with the support and care they need and we would be truly lost without them.

This exceptional career choice is tough but rewarding, and I would urge anyone who is thinking of a career in care to come forward and join this heroic workforce.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

We are doing everything we can to support the adult social care sector throughout this pandemic and our social care workforce have done an incredible job of helping the most vulnerable in society.

I am urging the public – whether you are a job-seeker, or looking for a new career – to consider working in care. We need short-term support while we face the pandemic and to continue to recruit the right people, with the right values, now and into the future.

Great progress has been made on offering vaccines to all older care home residents and care home staff and this recruitment drive will help us continue to fight this terrible virus.

Minister for Care Helen Whately said:

Since the pandemic began, we've seen thousands of wonderful people step forward to volunteer for the NHS and take part in our truly tremendous national vaccination effort. Today, I'm asking people to step forward to help in social care too.

We need more people who want to play their part in this pandemic to choose social care. There are thousands of opportunities, from short-term roles to long-term careers.

Jobs in the care sector are hard work, but they can also be incredibly rewarding. When you get home from work you know you've made a real difference for the people you care for. I know we can't say thank you to care workers too many times for what they do.

Candidates do not necessarily need previous experience as training is provided to help them become valued members of the social care workforce.

People can find out more about a longer-term career in social care and search for jobs in their area by visiting the [Every Day is Different website](#) and will be directed to the website to register their interest in short-term opportunities.

Tim Hearson, who already works in the adult social care sector as a Senior Autism Practitioner from Bedfordshire, said:

I've been working in care for 4 and a half years. I originally trained to be a surveyor but I felt something was missing and it didn't give me the social interaction I was after so I made the decision to go into adult social care and I've never looked back.

I wake up every morning and go to work knowing I'm going to be making a difference to someone's life, and there's nothing more rewarding than that.

Seeing the people I care for progress every day is such a wonderful feeling and I always leave work with a smile on my face. For anyone considering a role in adult social care, go for it.

Professor Deborah Sturdy OBE, Chief Nurse for Adult Social Care, said:

I know from my own experience how wonderful and rewarding a career in social care can be.

I have worked with some incredible people and by joining the adult social care sector you will meet incredible people and improve lives – including your own.

We need people who care about others to come forward and seize these opportunities.

Sir David Pearson, Chair of the Social Care Sector COVID-19 Support Task Force, said:

Since starting as a social worker in Nottingham in the early 80s, I have been fortunate to work with great teams, services and leaders in healthcare.

Social care works as a crucial springboard for wellbeing and the commitment and care of the people who work within it are the most important ingredients for success.

Being part of this has been a privilege and a pleasure and the 'Care for Others. Make a difference' national campaign is a great chance for others to get as much out of a career in adult social care as I have.

Joint Chief Social Worker for Adults, Mark Harvey and Fran Leddra, said:

We have both worked in social care all our lives. It is a fantastic profession and a career that we have never regretted being a part of. The pandemic has spotlighted the profession and shown how critical and important it is. We are in awe of the sheer dedication, commitment and professionalism that the workforce

continues to show, making a difference to people's lives every single day.

We hope that this campaign inspires you to join our skilled and talented workforce and help to support the lives of people across the country now and far beyond the pandemic.

For the short-term scheme, for individuals who have registered their interest online, the Department of Health and Social Care will pass their registration details onto their local authority and local adult social care service providers. Care providers will then contact candidates directly. Further information on access to training, DBS checks and vaccines will be provided when candidates are contacted.

Training, including in infection prevention controls and use of personal protective equipment (PPE), will be provided as well as vaccinations in line with key worker status and the priority vaccine scheme.

The government has already provided £120 million to help local authorities support care providers to fill staffing gaps caused by the pandemic, which was announced in January.

[Download the campaign images](#)

[Download the campaign adverts](#) (30-second TV and 15-second YouTube)

[Register your interest in providing support in the short-term](#)

People can find out more about a career in social care and search for jobs in their area by visiting [Every Day is Different](#).

[Surge testing to be deployed in areas around Manchester in connection to new variants](#)

News story

Further targeted areas will have additional testing made available to control and suppress the spread of COVID-19 variants.



Working in partnership with the local authority, additional surge testing and sequencing is being deployed to targeted areas around Manchester in M14 4, M14 7, M15 5, M15 6, M16 7 and M16 8 where a COVID-19 variant has been found.

Surge testing is in addition to existing extensive testing, and in combination with following the lockdown rules and remembering Hands Face Space, will help to monitor and suppress the spread of the virus.

Positive cases will be sequenced for genomic data to help understand COVID-19 variants and their spread within these areas.

People living in this targeted area with these locations are strongly encouraged to take a COVID-19 test this week, whether they are showing symptoms or not.

People with symptoms should book a test in the usual way.

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

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[Impact of Covid-19 on food fraud incidence](#)

News story

Members of the Government Chemist team collaborated in the publication of an article on the impact of Covid-19 in the numbers of food fraud incidents



The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are being felt across the world and it is reasonable to expect that they have the potential to impact on the vulnerability of the global food supply chain to food fraud. Recent reports suggest the potential for increased food fraud in global food supply chains due to the impact of COVID-19.

The [Food Authenticity Network \(FAN\)](#) and Mérieux Nutrisciences have collaborated to undertake a detailed assessment of the data to establish whether food fraud incidents are indeed increasing. [Selvarani Elahi](#), Deputy Government Chemist and Executive Director of the Food Authenticity Network contributed to the article published in the [Institute of Food Science and Technology journal](#).

The analysis conducted identified a small increase in official food fraud alerts since the onset of the pandemic (19 more official reports) and a more significant increase in the number of media reports (81 more media reports) in January to June 2020 compared to the same period in 2019).

It is not clear how significant the observed increases are considering the availability of a relatively small number of global official food fraud alerts and the variability in the type of data available from different countries and sources, making it difficult to undertake statistical comparisons.

The Food Authenticity Network, in consultation with its members concluded that the conditions created by the pandemic have increased food fraud vulnerability but that there was insufficient evidence of 'dramatic' increases in specific COVID-19-related food fraud incidents. This study supports that conclusion.

However, it is likely that the true impact of COVID-19 on the incidence of global food fraud will not be known until full resumption of regulatory surveillance world-wide and at this point, it is possible that more evidence concerning pandemic-related factors may emerge.

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