

Public encouraged to register for COVID-19 vaccine trials as 100,000 already sign-up

- Over 100,000 people have signed up for future COVID-19 vaccine clinical trials through the NHS COVID-19 vaccine research registry
- volunteers are helping speed up efforts to find a safe and effective vaccine in the fight against coronavirus
- UK researchers urge more volunteers across all groups to sign-up, especially the over 65s and those from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds

Over 100,000 people have volunteered to take part in COVID-19 vaccine trials, helping to speed up efforts to discover a safe and effective vaccine.

The government is today (Monday 17 August) encouraging more people to join the thousands of volunteers and sign up to the [NHS COVID-19 Vaccine Research Registry](#) to help the NHS in the fight against coronavirus and ensure potential candidates work for everyone.

To enable large-scale vaccine studies to take place across the UK, the aim is to get as many people as possible signed up to the Registry by October.

Researchers particularly welcome people from all parts of society, especially those who are more likely to benefit from a vaccine, including the over 65s, frontline health and social care workers, and those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds.

Clinical studies with a diverse pool of volunteers will help scientists and researchers better understand the effectiveness of each vaccine candidate and will considerably speed up efforts to discover a safe and workable vaccine.

Business Secretary Alok Sharma said:

From John O'Groats to Land's End, everyone has played their part in tackling coronavirus from wearing face coverings to following social distancing guidance.

Scientists and researchers are working day and night to find a vaccine that meets the UK's rigorous regulatory and safety standards, but they need hundreds of thousands of people of all backgrounds and ages to sign-up for studies to speed up this vital research.

I urge everyone to play our part in the fight against coronavirus and join the 100,000 people who have already registered, so we can help save and protect millions of lives.

Chair of the government's Vaccines Taskforce Kate Bingham said:

Protecting those at risk is the only way we will end this pandemic. That's why we are working as quickly as possible to run clinical studies on the most promising vaccines to see whether they offer protection against COVID-19, whilst adhering to the UK's strict safety and regulatory processes. And we need people throughout the UK to sign up to the registry to help us achieve this.

Getting 100,000 volunteers on board is a great start but we need many more people from many different backgrounds that we can call on for future studies if we are to find a vaccine quickly to protect those who need it against coronavirus.

Consultant Respiratory Physician and Director of the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) PRC, Bradford, Dinesh Saralaya said:

The best way to protect us from future outbreaks is to develop effective vaccines. Several vaccine trials are being conducted around the UK in the coming months and it is important that we all sign up to be contacted about them.

I would like to reassure people that research trials and studies are strictly regulated for ethics and safety. They are conducted within the framework of the NIHR, which is the research partner of the NHS, and we take every precaution to safeguard participants taking part. This includes appointments in settings like sports halls close to where people live and work rather than in hospitals.

By working together, we can produce efficient vaccines which are likely to protect all sections of our society from this dreadful virus in future.

18-year-old Mariam Zumeer from Bradford, who was hospitalised after contracting COVID-19, has first-hand experience of the benefits of taking part in clinical trials. During her time in intensive care, she was offered the opportunity to take part in the national [RECOVERY trial](#), which is testing a range of potential treatments for COVID-19. This includes the drug dexamethasone, which was found to be the first drug to be effective when treating those who are critically ill with the virus.

RECOVERY trial volunteer Mariam Zumeer said:

I will always be grateful for being encouraged to sign up. I remember my dad at the time urging me to take part, not just for myself but for the wider community. The result has been really positive for me and I would encourage others to do their bit in helping us all in the fight against coronavirus.

Chief Medical Officer Professor Chris Whitty said:

I'm very grateful to those who have volunteered for researchers to contact them to take part in COVID-19 vaccine studies, via the NHS COVID-19 vaccine research registry. The more people who volunteer to take part the more likely we find an answer to whether any vaccine is effective.

Having 100,000 volunteers in just four weeks shows the selflessness of the public and is testament to the speed of work done by the Vaccines Taskforce, National Institute for Health Research and others to make signing up possible.

I urge people to continue to sign up. It is important that we have people from different backgrounds and ages as volunteers, so that the vaccines that are developed work for everyone.

A number of trials in the UK are expected to begin this autumn, working with the NHS, research institutions and businesses, helping to develop and manufacture the vaccines.

Launched on 20 July, the NHS COVID-19 Vaccine Research Registry is an online service allowing members of the public to register their interest in COVID-19 vaccine studies and be contacted to participate in future clinical trials.

Vaccines are tested in stages to ensure they are safe and effective. Volunteers who are contacted to take part in trials will be given information about what stage a particular vaccine is at and details of how it has already been tested. They will be able to consider this when deciding to take part and people can withdraw from the registry at any point.

The Registry has been developed by the government, in partnership with the NIHR, NHS Digital, the Scottish and Welsh governments and the Northern Ireland Executive.

About the Vaccine Taskforce

The Vaccine Taskforce (VTF) was set up under the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) in May 2020, to ensure that the UK population has access to clinically effective and safe vaccines as soon as possible, while working with partners to support international access to successful vaccines. This is to place the UK at the forefront of global vaccine research, development, manufacture and distribution.

The Vaccine Taskforce comprises a dedicated team of private sector industry professionals and officials from across government who are working at speed to build a portfolio of promising vaccine candidates that can end the global pandemic. It is chaired by biotech and life sciences expert Kate Bingham, who was appointed by the Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

The Vaccine Taskforce's approach to securing access to vaccines is through:

1. procuring the rights to a diverse range of promising vaccine candidates to spread risk and optimise chances for success;
2. providing funding for clinical studies, diagnostic monitoring and regulatory support to rapidly evaluate vaccines for safety and efficacy; and
3. providing funding and support for manufacturing scale-up and fill and finish at risk so that the UK has vaccines produced at scale and ready for administration should any of these prove successful.

About the NIHR

The [National Institute for Health Research \(NIHR\)](#) is the nation's largest funder of health and care research. The NIHR:

- funds, supports and delivers high quality research that benefits the NHS, public health and social care
- engages and involves patients, carers and the public in order to improve the reach, quality and impact of research
- attracts, trains and supports the best researchers to tackle the complex health and care challenges of the future
- invests in world-class infrastructure and a skilled delivery workforce to translate discoveries into improved treatments and services
- partners with other public funders, charities and industry to maximise the value of research to patients and the economy

The NIHR was established in 2006 to improve the health and wealth of the nation through research and is funded by the Department of Health and Social Care. In addition to its national role, the NIHR supports applied health research for the direct and primary benefit of people in low- and middle-income countries, using UK aid from the UK government.

[Whisky goes green thanks to UK government funding](#)

- £10 million fund announced to help UK distilleries go green and cut emissions by switching to low carbon fuels such as hydrogen
- funding will enable our world-famous distilleries to cut emissions by almost a million tonnes of CO₂ every year – equivalent to taking 100,000 cars off the road
- Hydrogen Advisory Council set up to help other industries follow distilleries in going green

Whisky and spirit lovers the world over will soon be able to enjoy their favourite tipple in the knowledge that they are helping to cut carbon emissions and support new green jobs, thanks to a new UK government scheme

which opened today (17 August 2020).

Kwasi Kwarteng, Minister for Energy and Clean Growth, today announced the opening of the £10 million fund, which is being made available to kick-start green innovation across Scotland's iconic distillery industry. The move gives backing to distilleries across the UK to harness energy sources such as low-carbon hydrogen, biomass and repurposed waste to power their operations.

The funding will help prevent pollution equivalent to emissions from 100,000 cars from entering the atmosphere, contributing towards the UK's legally-binding target to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

Energy and Clean Growth Minister, Kwasi Kwarteng, said:

Our plan to deliver a carbon-neutral future doesn't just mean new jobs in new industries but helping some of our oldest industries to play their part as well.

We want to harness the tremendous innovation of our distilleries so customers can enjoy their favourite tipple in the knowledge they are helping us to tackle climate change.

In 2019, the UK distilleries industry grew by 20%, demonstrating the opportunity for the sector to be at the heart of a clean and resilient recovery.

The funding has been welcomed by trade bodies in both Scotland and Northern Ireland, which are home to the vast majority of the UK's world famous distilleries.

Dagmar Droogsma, Director of Industry at the Scotch Whisky Association, said:

The Scotch Whisky industry welcomed the new Green Distilling Fund announced in the March Budget as an important step on our sustainability journey. The use of innovative technology is among several approaches that the industry could adopt as it works towards net zero by 2045, as outlined in our recent net zero report.

This Fund will provide us with the opportunity to put forward bids for demonstration projects for so-far untested technologies, helping the Scotch Whisky industry play its part in reaching Scotland's emissions targets.

Michael Bell, Executive Director of the Northern Ireland Food and Drink Association, said:

Greening is essential to our industry's future and this is to be welcomed. Interestingly, in the last five years I've seen more

distilleries in Northern Ireland than in the last 50.

It's good to see the Government investing in food and drink businesses.

Notes to editors

- the Green Distilleries Competition supports the government's approach for a clean, resilient recovery across the UK to support the creation of new jobs in the distillery sector.
 - the funding is supported by the £505 million BEIS Energy Innovation Portfolio which aims to accelerate the commercialisation of innovative, cheap, clean and reliable energy technologies, enabling the UK to meet its net zero commitment.
 - more details, including information on how distilleries can express interest in the funding, can be found on the [Green Distilleries Competition page](#)
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Government campaign launches to get children 'back to school safely'

Schools have received Public Health England endorsed guidance on protective measures they should implement to be as safe as possible and reduce the risk of transmission of coronavirus.

Measures such as staggered break times, increased hygiene and handwashing, and children remaining in consistent groups will all contribute to minimising risks, while allowing schools to get back to doing what they do best – teaching.

The campaign, which forms part of the government's wider Stay Alert campaign, will show teachers welcoming their students back into school, experiencing all the benefits that entails.

Newspaper, digital, radio and billboard adverts will showcase a range of new creative approaches to engage parents and students in returning to school.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

The government is committed to doing everything necessary to deliver on our national priority of all students returning to schools and colleges in September.

All children deserve to be back in school as it is the best place for their education and wellbeing. I know families are growing more

confident that schools and colleges are ready and waiting to get back to teaching, with the right protective measures in place.

As the start of term approaches, now is the time for families to think about the practicalities of returning to school in September, whether that's reassuring themselves that school is the best place for their child to be, or planning the school run to avoid public transport where possible.

Chief Medical Officer Professor Chris Whitty said:

Education is essential for a child's development so it is crucial we get children safely back to school in September.

A number of important risk reduction measures have been put in place to help students and teachers return to school with confidence.

Newspaper and billboard advertising will be launched from tomorrow, with radio and digital adverts live from Monday 24 August and running until early September, alongside wider engagement with the teaching profession and local communications.

The latest ONS statistics show there is growing confidence among parents that their children will return to school in September, testament to the hard work of school staff putting in place safety measures.

The launch of the campaign comes as the government delivers over £40 million in funding for local transport authorities to create alternative dedicated school transport to alleviate pressure on public transport. New guidance to support local authorities to manage capacity and reduce risk on school transport was published this week.

Over £700 million has also been provided or pledged to bus and light rail operators during the pandemic, to keep services running despite reduced capacity.

Students and staff who have the option to walk or cycle to get to school are encouraged to do so. The government recently announced £2 billion of investment to increase active travel, as well as publishing its [new Cycling and Walking Plan](#).

Parents are encouraged to visit gov.uk/backtoschool for information and practical guidance to help them plan for their children's return to school.

Leaflets explaining more about the safety measures in place will be made available over the coming days.

£5 million for social prescribing to tackle the impact of COVID-19

- Social prescribing to help tackle loneliness, improve wellbeing and recovery from COVID-19
- £5 million funding to support local community partnerships, encourage innovation and improve evidence base for social prescribing
- Projects include football to support mental health, art for dementia, improving green spaces and singing to improve the effects of COVID-19

The National Academy for Social Prescribing has been awarded £5 million in funding to support people to stay connected and maintain their health and wellbeing following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Working with partners, including the Arts Council England, Natural England, Money and Pensions Service, NHS Charities Together, Sport England and NHS England, the academy will support a range of local community activities.

The funding will connect people to initiatives in their local communities to improve their mental health and wellbeing in response to the impact of COVID-19, including improved green spaces, singing and physical activities as well as access to tailored debt advice.

The academy is working with organisations to develop projects including:

- football: Newcastle United Foundation 'Be a Game Changer' programme and '12th Man' programme which work to support men with mental health issues
- Art by Post: created under lockdown, the Southbank Centre sends free creative activity booklets to people across the UK who are living with dementia and other chronic health conditions
- improved green spaces: link workers refer and connect people to their local wildlife and wider activities including food growing, healthy cooking, wildlife gardening, environmental art and crafts, music workshops, and beekeeping
- singing: English National Opera (ENO) have partnered with Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust to devise an integrated 6-week pilot programme of singing, breathing and wellbeing aimed at supporting and enhancing the recovery of COVID-19 survivors
- money advice – the Money and Pensions Service and Mental Health UK have created a Money Support Pack for people who need support with their mental health as a result of COVID-19

Minister for Health Jo Churchill said:

This new funding is hugely important, as it will allow us to build on the merits of social prescribing and encourage innovation in

local projects, as well as supporting people to remain connected with their local community, reduce loneliness and improve their wellbeing.

GPs and social prescribing link workers have been working incredibly hard to support their patients through this challenging time. As we begin to support the move out of lockdown, social prescribing will be key to tackling health inequalities and helping people recover and rebuild their lives.

Welcoming the funding, Chief Executive Officer of the National Academy for Social Prescribing, James Sanderson, said:

Now more than ever, the pandemic has shown the value of social prescribing in helping people to stay connected, feel supported and to maintain their wellbeing.

The National Academy for Social Prescribing has an ambitious agenda to support people to live the best life they can by accessing support in their local communities based on what matters to them. We will be working with key partners across national and local government, the NHS, and the voluntary and community sector to build the support structures necessary to enable social prescribing to thrive.

The partnership work with football clubs will help build on initiatives such as the Newcastle United Foundation 'Be a Game Changer' programme, which has already supported over 2,000 men, typically over 40 years old, who traditionally avoid NHS services, may have been impacted by COVID-19 and are most at risk of suicide.

The foundation supports fans to talk about their mental health, get involved in walking football, engage in support groups and learn lifestyle advice through the '12th Man' programme. Social prescribing link workers in GP practices will refer people to these initiatives so that more people can benefit.

Steve Beharall, Newcastle United Foundation, said:

Working with the academy and social prescribing link workers will enable us to reach more people, to help communities recover from COVID. We'll be sharing our 'Game Changer' learning with other football clubs, to support men's mental health.

The academy is also partnering with the Southbank Centre on a new initiative, Art by Post, which was created under lockdown and sends free creative activity booklets to people across the UK who are living with dementia and other chronic health conditions.

The Art by Post project aims to boost wellbeing and reduce feelings of social isolation. Social prescribing link workers have played a key role in identifying the people in their communities who would benefit from taking part and connecting them with the scheme. The project has so far reached over 1,800 people across the UK, from Aberdeen to Truro, and with people aged 18 to 103 joining in alongside friends, family members and carers.

Alexandra Brierley, Director of Creative Learning at the Southbank Centre, said:

Working with social prescribing link workers through NASP enables us to connect with the people who are most isolated by the current social distancing measures, and it's been a privilege to see the artworks and poems that the participants have shared with us. We can't wait to share these unique creations which will form a special exhibition at the Southbank Centre when we reopen.

The funding will also be used to help people to benefit from green spaces. Working with Natural England, link workers will be able to refer and connect people to their local wildlife and wider activities.

For example, Grozone in Northwich, Cheshire is a 2-acre community garden, wildlife and horticultural therapy project that delivers a wide variety of wellbeing and learning opportunities to people of all ages, abilities and disabilities. The welcoming, supportive and tranquil natural space has benefited over 1,500 people with activities include food growing, healthy cooking, wildlife gardening, environmental art and crafts, music workshops, and beekeeping.

Marian Spain, CEO Natural England, said:

COVID-19 has highlighted the importance for people to have easy access to high-quality green space close to where they live for their mental health and wellbeing. We are seeing more or more evidence of the good that does for us all. We've seen a resurgence in the use of urban parks, beaches and nature reserves by people of all ages and backgrounds who we should welcome and embrace.

So, I'm absolutely delighted that Natural England are working with the National Academy to help people connect with nature and to make sure that everybody can access the outdoors, wherever they live, as part of a truly green recovery.

Other innovative projects include English National Opera (ENO) partnership with Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust, who are developing a social prescribing intervention that will provide crucial support to people recovering from COVID-19. Working closely with Imperial College Healthcare, the ENO has devised and developed an integrated 6-week pilot programme of singing, breathing and wellbeing aimed at supporting and enhancing the

recovery of COVID-19 survivors.

Imperial College Healthcare already uses singing as part of an improvement in care aimed specifically at people with COPD and chronic respiratory issues, often related to smoking and asthma. ENO Breathe is being developed as an improvement in care specifically for patients recovering from COVID-19, particularly those who are suffering from breathlessness and the anxiety this can produce. It is the first programme of its kind being developed for these patients.

The academy is already working with the Money and Pensions Service and Mental Health UK to create a Money Support Pack for people who need support with their mental health, as a result of COVID. Social prescribing link workers are sharing this resource with anyone who needs help to manage their money.

Caroline Siarkiewicz, Chief Executive of the Money and Pensions Service, said:

Financial, physical and mental health are all deeply connected. We're looking forward to working with NASP, to ensure that social prescribing link workers can connect people to local money advice and guidance services, to improve financial wellbeing as a core part of COVID support.

Alongside the array of innovative projects, the help provided by social prescribing link workers has been vital, particularly as the pandemic and the lifting of lockdown has had an impact on those who are already vulnerable, affecting their wellbeing and support networks more so than normal. Working remotely or by providing support through social distancing, link workers continue to manage existing social prescribing caseloads as well as supporting those who need it most. They have been:

- conducting welfare telephone and/or video calls
- connecting people to statutory and community support to meet social and emotional needs
- supporting voluntary organisations and community groups to develop virtual support offer and creative solutions for people who lack digital skills or access
- supporting patients to use digital platforms to stay connected

The National Academy for Social Prescribing funds and supports innovative local community partnerships, improving evidence, share good practice and raise the profile of social prescribing link workers (SPLW), who work as part of the NHS, to connect people to community support in their local areas.

Social prescribing is a core part of the NHS approach to delivering targeted Personalised Care and is currently being expanded across England and the National Academy for Social Prescribing is a new independent organisation, launched in October 2019, to promote social prescribing and create a 'social revolution in wellbeing'.

The practice, known as 'social prescribing', has been shown to improve patients' quality of life, health and wellbeing by treating them holistically, recognising that health is affected by a range of social, economic and environmental factors.

[Updated guidance was issued to GPs](#) that outlines how social prescribing link workers (SPLW) are uniquely placed to work closely with GPs, local authorities, health and care professionals and voluntary sector partners to coordinate support for these people while they are self-isolating.

Link workers are being supported by NHS England through an enhanced virtual online national and regional support offer, with complimentary refreshed guidance to understand their role during COVID-19 and addressing implementation barriers.

[Statement on our earlier announcement, 15 August 2020](#)

News story

Regarding Ofqual's earlier statement of 15 August 2020.



Earlier today we published information about mock exam results in appeals. This policy is being reviewed by the Ofqual Board and further information will be published in due course.

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