

GAD launches 'Making sense of COVID-19' webinar programme

News story

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More than 80 people attended the first 'Making sense of COVID-19' webinar. Teams across the Government Actuary's Department (GAD) have launched the programme which takes place this month. The webinars will look at the pandemic's impact on a range of subjects.

Insight and learning

The first event was about the impact of COVID-19 on commercial insurance. Coming up we will hear from GAD experts on the mortality impact on pension schemes (19 August) and what COVID-19 means for climate change risk management (26 August). We will also be hosting events on a range of topics for all our clients.

The programme has been set up in response to client requests for further insight from GAD. Teams within the department have researched and written the series of talks; working together while continuing to work from home.

Impact of COVID-19

Ian Rogers, the Head of Business Development, devised the webinars programme. He said: "This is a complex and ambitious series of online events. Teams across GAD have worked to create a programme that includes a specific focus on the coronavirus pandemic, as well as looking at the impact of other issues.

"In our 'Making sense of COVID-19' series we've drawn on expertise from across GAD to examine just what effect the pandemic has had so far, and what it could lead to in the future. We've also taken this opportunity to create

webinars on other, standalone topics where we look at the implications of legal judgments and societal changes.” The programme is set to run in August with further online talks planned for the autumn.

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[Restrictions on household gatherings to continue in parts of the north west and West Yorkshire](#)

- Current rules on gatherings in Greater Manchester, Leicester, parts of West Yorkshire and East Lancashire remain in place
- Restrictions on household gatherings to be brought in for Preston from midnight tonight, as the city is added to JBC and PHE’s watch list as an ‘area of intervention’
- Wider restrictions in Leicester, Blackburn and Bradford to continue

The current rules on social gatherings will continue in parts of the North West, West Yorkshire and Leicester, following a review of all local restrictions yesterday by government and local authorities.

The measures were announced last week to urgently tackle an increase in COVID-19 cases in these areas. With the latest data not showing any evidence of a decrease in the number of cases per 100,000 people in the area, the Health Secretary, in close collaboration with local leaders, has agreed that the rules must remain in place. This will help protect local residents, and allow more time for the changes to have an effect, cutting transmission among households.

At the request of the local authority, Preston will be now be added to the list of areas included in the ban on households gathering in each other’s homes and gardens, effective from midnight tonight. Guidance will make clear that people should not be gathering with other households anywhere indoors.

The restrictions on gatherings will be reviewed again next week with any changes to be announced by Friday 14 August.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

The past week has been difficult for many people in Greater Manchester, West Yorkshire and East Lancashire, and I thank everyone in these areas for their patience and willingness to follow the rules.

Yesterday I chaired a meeting of the Local Action Gold Committee, and unfortunately, the data does not yet show a decrease in the transmission of this terrible virus. It means we must keep the current restrictions in place to allow more time for the impact of this ban on indoor gatherings to be felt, and make sure local residents and their loved ones are protected. At the request of the local area we are also extending these restrictions to Preston.

We are constantly examining the data on the prevalence of the virus in these areas, and we will review the measures again next week.

As we continue to see rising rates of the virus across Europe, it is vital we take every precaution to protect our country. I urge everyone in these areas to follow the rules, get yourself a free test as soon as you get any symptoms, and isolate if NHS Test and Trace tells you to.

As part of ensuring a proportionate yet robust response to the virus, where possible, the government will remove individual areas from these measures while maintaining or even strengthening measures in others as necessary – just as has been done in other areas where local measures have been brought in, like Leicestershire.

The ban on indoor gatherings will now apply to:

- Greater Manchester:
 - City of Manchester
 - Trafford
 - Stockport
 - Oldham
 - Bury
 - Wigan
 - Bolton
 - Tameside
 - Rochdale
 - Salford
- Lancashire:
 - Blackburn with Darwen
 - Burnley
 - Hyndburn
 - Pendle
 - Rossendale
 - Preston
- West Yorkshire:
 - Bradford
 - Calderdale
 - Kirklees
- Leicester

This means that people in these areas will continue to not be permitted to mix with other households (apart from those in their support bubble) within

private homes or gardens. People are still able to meet others in groups up to 6 individuals, or 2 households, in outdoor public places.

The measures for Preston will be kept under careful review with potential for even stronger localised measures from the local authority if the new rules on gatherings are not followed by local residents.

As an area of intervention, the city will also benefit from additional oversight, support and localised testing. Local leaders and government also agreed a number of other changes to local restrictions in other areas which are being announced today.

Pools, indoor gyms and other leisure facilities will continue to remain closed in Leicester, Bradford and Blackburn. Shielding will also continue for individuals in Blackburn with Darwen, and Leicester City.

PHE's weekly [surveillance report](#) includes changes to the watch list of local authority areas with higher than average incidences of COVID-19. The changes are:

- Bedford and Swindon added as 'areas of concern'
- following a decrease in cases, Oadby and Wigston will move down from 'enhanced support' to 'area of concern'
- Rotherham is being removed thanks to a considerable drop in cases

[The full surveillance report which includes this week's watchlist and what the different categorisations mean can be read in full here.](#)

Anyone with any symptoms must isolate immediately and get a test for free by going online or ringing 119.

Everyone must continue to socially distance and regularly wash their hands to help bring this virus down further so all areas can return to normal as soon as possible.

The 3 definitions for JBC and PHE's watchlist are:

- areas of concern
- areas of enhanced support
- areas of intervention

For 'areas of concern', upper tier local authorities will work with partners, supported by regional PHE and NHS Test and Trace resource, to take additional actions to manage outbreaks and reduce community spread of the virus to more normal levels. Actions taken may include additional targeted testing at high risk areas or groups, for example care homes, enhanced communications around the importance of social distancing, hand hygiene and other preventative measures, and more detailed epidemiological work to understand where clusters of the virus are occurring so that appropriate action can be taken.

On top of this, areas deemed for 'enhanced support' will be provided with increased national support, capacity and oversight, including additional resources deployed to augment the local teams where this is necessary.

Actions taken may include significant additional widespread testing deployed to the upper tier local authorities, national support for local recommendations put in place to manage outbreaks, and detailed engagement with high risk groups and sectors to help increase the effectiveness of testing and tracing in these areas.

In addition, 'areas of intervention' are defined where there is divergence from the lockdown measures in place in the rest of England because of the significance of the spread of COVID-19. There are a range of non-pharmaceutical interventions available to local and national leaders, from extensive communications, expanded testing, to restrictions on businesses and gatherings

See the contain framework for more information.

[Working with our customers during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak](#)



Contacting the VOA

The best way to contact us is through the [Contact Form](#), which also has links to useful self-help guidance. We have significantly built our capacity to manage electronic queries and using this channel will help ensure your query is managed by the appropriate team as quickly as possible.

We provide a range of reasonable adjustments to customers where they are required. Customers can let us know through the Contact Form or ask a friend or family member to complete on their behalf. If you need to return any forms or documents to us please send them electronically, rather than by post.

Telephone support

We have reopened a limited telephone service between 9.30am–2.30pm, Monday to Friday. Please only call us if you are unable to use the Contact Form or find the information you are looking for on our website. You may receive a quicker full response through using the Contact Form.

Property inspections

We have restarted property inspections for domestic and non-domestic properties. We will only carry out a physical inspection if it is safe to do so and we cannot gather the information we need electronically. We will contact customers beforehand to run through a risk assessment and ensure the inspection is carried out as safely as possible for our customers and the inspector. We will also follow social distancing guidelines and other safety measures throughout the appointment.

Other face-to-face appointments

Inspections for Fair Rent work are still paused and we continue to gather the information we need through other routes in order to progress cases. Our Rent Officers are also making greater use of information available electronically rather than making visits to gather rental information.

We are unable to accommodate requests to view hard copy rental information we hold, such as Rent and Lease Details, Forms of Return and proposal forms.

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Last updated 21 September 2020 [+ show all updates](#)

1. 21 September 2020

An update on the VOA's telephone support hours.

2. 7 August 2020

First published.

[Research study into long-term health impacts of COVID-19 launched in the UK](#)

This announcement was made on 5 July 2020.

- major new UK study into long-term physical and mental health implications of COVID-19 launched in UK
- world-leading study backed by £8.4 million of funding
- results will support development of new measures to treat NHS patients with coronavirus

One of the world's largest comprehensive research studies into the long-term health impacts of coronavirus on hospitalised patients has been launched in the UK, the Health and Social Care Secretary, Matt Hancock has announced.

Around 10,000 patients are expected to take part in the ground-breaking new study, which has been awarded £8.4 million by the government, through UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR).

Led by the NIHR Leicester Biomedical Research Centre, a partnership between the University of Leicester and the University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust, the [post-hospitalisation COVID-19 \(PHOSP-COVID\) study](#) will draw on expertise from a consortium of leading researchers and doctors from across the UK.

They will assess and publish findings on the impact of COVID-19 on patient health and their recovery. This includes looking at possible ways to help improve the mental health of patients hospitalised with coronavirus, and how individual characteristics influence recovery, such as gender or ethnicity.

Patients on the study from across the UK will be assessed using techniques such as advanced imaging, data collection and analysis of blood and lung samples, creating a comprehensive picture of the impact COVID-19 has on longer-term health outcomes.

The findings will support the development of new strategies for clinical and rehabilitation care, including personalised treatments based on the particular disease characteristics that a patient shows, to improve their long-term health.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

As we continue our fight against this global pandemic, we are learning more and more about the impact the disease can have not only on immediate health, but longer-term physical and mental health too.

This world-leading study is another fantastic contribution from the UK's world-leading life sciences and research sector. It will also help to ensure future treatment can be tailored as much as possible to the person.

Chief Medical Officer and Head of NIHR, Professor Chris Whitty said:

As well as the immediate health impacts of the virus it is also important to look at the longer-term impacts on health, which may be significant.

We have rightly focused on mortality, and what the UK can do straight away to protect lives but we should also look at how COVID-19 impacts on the health of people after they have recovered from the immediate disease.

This UKRI and NIHR funded study is one of the first steps in doing

this.

UK Research and Innovation Chief Executive, Professor Ottoline Leyser, said:

We have much to learn about the long-term health impacts of COVID-19 and its management in hospital, including the effects of debilitating lung and heart conditions, fatigue, trauma and the mental health and wellbeing of patients.

UKRI is collaborating with NIHR to fund one of the world's largest studies to track the long-term effects of the virus after hospital treatment, recognising that for many people survival may be just the start of a long road to recovery.

This study will support the development of better care and rehabilitation and, we hope, improve the lives of survivors.

This study is one of a number of COVID-19 studies that have been given urgent public health research status by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC).

Symptoms of COVID-19 have varied among those who have tested positive: some have displayed no symptoms, while others have developed severe pneumonia and, tragically, have even lost their lives.

For those who were hospitalised and have since been discharged, it is not yet clear what their medical, psychological and rehabilitation needs will be to enable them to make as full a recovery as possible.

The recruitment process for patients has been designed to ensure the best representation of those hospitalised with coronavirus, with a team of experts that have worked extensively on optimising inclusion and recruitment of underrepresented groups. The patients are expected to start being recruited by the end of July.

Chris Brightling, Professor of Respiratory Medicine at the University of Leicester, Consultant Respiratory Physician at Leicester's Hospitals and Chief Investigator said:

As we emerge from the first wave of the pandemic, we have new insights into the acute phase of this disease but very little information about patients' long-term needs.

It is vitally important that we rapidly gather evidence on the longer-term consequences of contracting severe COVID-19 so we can develop and test new treatment strategies for them and other people affected by future waves of the disease.

This follows the announcement yesterday (4 July 2020) of a [new revolutionary](#)

[on-demand recovery service](#) to be launched for tens of thousands of people suffering from the long-term effects of coronavirus.

The [PHOSP-COVID study](#) is widely supported across the NIHR infrastructure, including the Translational Research Collaborations for respiratory, mental health, cardiovascular, dementia, and diet, exercise and nutrition, and many of the NIHR Biomedical Research Centres, which are set up to translate lab-based scientific breakthroughs into potential new treatments, diagnostics and medical technologies.

The [University of Leicester](#) is led by discovery and innovation – an international centre for excellence renowned for research, teaching and broadening access to higher education. It is among the top 25 universities in the Times Higher Education REF Research Power rankings with 75% of research adjudged to be internationally excellent with wide-ranging impacts on society, health, culture, and the environment. The university is home to just over 20,000 students and approximately 4,000 staff.

The NIHR Leicester Biomedical Research Centre (BRC) is a partnership between University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust, the University of Leicester and Loughborough University. It is funded by the NIHR.

The [NIHR Leicester BRC](#) undertakes translational clinical research in priority areas of high disease burden and clinical need. These include cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease, and lifestyle, obesity and physical activity. There is also a cross-cutting theme for precision medicine. The BRC harnesses the power of experimental science to explore and develop ways to help prevent and treat chronic disease. It brings together 70 highly skilled researchers, 30 of which are at the forefront of clinical services delivery. By having scientists working closely with clinicians, the BRC can deliver research that is relevant to patients and the professionals who treat them.

To ensure rapid and wide-scale sharing of results, the award terms and conditions include that awardees:

The NIHR is the nation's largest funder of health and care research. It:

- 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 DHSC. 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.

VPI Immingham OCGT Project granted development consent

Press release

Today, Friday 7 August 2020, the application for the proposed VPI Immingham Open Cycle Gas Turbine (OCGT) has been granted development consent by the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.



Development consent has been given for the construction and operation of a new Open Cycle Gas Turbine ('OCGT') Power Station of up to 299 megawatts ('MW') gross output and associated development including gas and electrical connections.

The development is located at and adjacent to the existing VPI Immingham Power Station, Rosper Road, Immingham DN40 3DZ.

The application was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate by VPI Immingham B Limited on the 11 April 2019 and accepted for examination on 9 May 2019. Following an examination during which the Applicant, Statutory Consultees and Interested Parties were given the opportunity to provide evidence to the Examining Authority, a recommendation was made to the Secretary of State on 7 May 2020.

The Planning Inspectorate's Chief Executive, Sarah Richards said:

This is the 93rd nationally significant infrastructure project and the 58th energy project to have been examined by the Planning Inspectorate. The Planning Inspectorate has again demonstrated its ability to examine Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) within timescales laid down in the Planning Act 2008

providing developers and investors with the confidence to build and improve the infrastructure this country needs to secure future economic growth.

The decision, the recommendation made by the Examining Authority to the Secretary of State and the evidence considered by the Examining Authority in reaching its recommendation is publicly available on the [National Infrastructure Planning website](#).

ENDS

Journalists wanting further information should contact the Planning Inspectorate Press Office, on: 0303 444 5004 or 0303 444 5005 or email: Press.office@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

Notes to editors:

The Planning Inspectorate, [National Infrastructure Programme of Projects](#) details the proposals which are anticipated to be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate as applications in the coming months.

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