

Coronavirus test, track and trace plan launched on Isle of Wight

- Isle of Wight announced as first phase of new 'test, track and trace' programme
- Rollout of NHS COVID-19 App to begin with the island's NHS and council staff tomorrow, with all island residents to get access from Thursday
- Data privacy and security paramount, with National Cyber Security Centre involved in app development
- The app will be complemented by enhanced contact tracing using existing methods online and over the phone

Isle of Wight residents will be the first to be offered access to a new contact tracing app, as part of government action to test, track and trace to minimise the spread of COVID-19 and move towards safely reducing lockdown measures.

Everyone on the island will receive access to the official NHS COVID-19 contact tracing app from this Thursday, with NHS and council staff able to download from 4pm tomorrow, Tuesday 5 May.

Part of a new test, track and trace programme, the app will work together with enhanced contact tracing services and swab testing for those with potential COVID-19 symptoms to help minimise the spread of COVID-19.

Developed by NHSX, the technology arm of the health service, and a team of world-leading scientists and doctors, the app is designed to significantly speed up contact tracing, helping reduce the chance of the virus spreading by enabling us to rapidly identify people most at risk of infection so they can take action to protect themselves, the people they care about and the NHS.

When someone reports symptoms through the app, it will detect any other app users that the person has been in significant contact with over the past few days, including unknown contacts such as someone they may have sat next to on public transport. The app will be able to anonymously alert these contacts and provide advice, including how to get a test to confirm whether or not they do have COVID-19. Users will be able order tests through the app shortly.

For those who may not have access to the app, or the ability to use a smartphone, there will be an option to report symptoms and order tests in other ways. As the integrated service develops, everyone who reports symptoms, including app users, will also be asked to record recent contacts using an online service (or through a telephone interview if they prefer), so that contact tracers can reach all contacts who may be at risk, whether or not those contacts are app users. Contacts will then be alerted either by the app or by email or telephone, advising them to self-isolate or offering public health advice.

As the test, track and trace programme rolls out nationally, expected in mid-May, Public Health England will oversee the deployment of 18,000 additional contact tracers to support the programme.

This first phase is a major step forward in the government's next phase of the coronavirus strategy and will improve understanding of how this new integrated approach to test, track and trace will work for the rest of the population.

NHS and council staff will be emailed a download link on Tuesday afternoon. From Thursday the app will then open for all residents on the Isle of Wight. All households will receive a leaflet with clear instructions on how to download and use the app on Thursday, and a targeted marketing campaign will begin on Friday.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

The Isle of Wight is playing a vital role with this pioneering work to help keep Britain safe. This will pave the way for a nationwide roll-out when the time is right.

Coronavirus is one of the greatest challenges our country has ever faced and this app will play a vital role in getting Britain back on her feet.

The app will help control the spread of coronavirus by alerting people they may have come into contact with it and recommending appropriate action.

This ground-breaking technology, combined with our heroic frontline health and social care staff, and both a nationwide contact tracing testing programme will ensure that we remain in the best position to move toward easing the lockdown.

Matthew Gould, Chief Executive of NHSX, said:

Technology can help us get the country back on its feet.

By launching the NHS COVID-19 app we can reduce transmission of the virus by alerting people who may have been exposed, so they can take action to protect themselves, the people they care about and the NHS.

When combined with testing and enhanced web and phone contact tracing, this will help the country return to normality and beat coronavirus.

Deputy Chief Medical Officer, Professor Jonathan Van Tam, said:

By widespread testing those suspected to be infected with coronavirus, tracing their contacts and where appropriate advising them to self-isolate, we can slow the onward spread of the virus. This new app-based system, developed by technology experts in partnership with clinicians and scientists, will run alongside traditional contact tracing by PHE. If uptake and use is widespread it will give us the greatest room for manoeuvre to ease other social distancing measures.

Dr Yvonne Doyle, Medical Director and Director of Health Protection at Public Health England, said:

Alongside the NHS COVID-19 app, PHE's phone and web-based contact tracing will be a critical part of the government's strategy to get the country back on its feet.

Taking these first steps on the Isle of Wight will help us prepare for a scale up of our contact tracing capacity, with an 18,000 strong team ensuring the contacts of confirmed COVID-19 cases are followed up and given the information they need.

The government has collaborated internationally and learned from examples of best practice across the world, which has informed the development of a bespoke approach that is right for the unique needs of the UK. The app uses similar Bluetooth low energy technology to that employed by Australia, Norway, and Singapore among others.

The privacy and security of users' data is a priority and NHSX has involved experts from the National Cyber Security Centre to advise on best practice through the app's development. Data will only ever be used for NHS care, management, evaluation and research and the NHS will comply fully with the law around its use, including the Data Protection Act.

The Isle of Wight was chosen to trial the project because it has a single NHS trust that covers all NHS services on the island.

Its geography as an island with a sizeable population makes it an ideal place to introduce the NHS COVID-19 app and wider testing service in its initial roll-out period.

Isle of Wight Council leader Dave Stewart said:

On behalf of the island I am very pleased we can be the first place to use this new digital technology in the country.

I have always been keen to ensure we keep our special community safe from the virus but at the same time explore ways to enable us to get back up on our feet and move forward from it. This scheme offers the tightly controlled approach we need to help us do just

that.

Widespread tracing and testing holds the key to this ambition and if we are able to help the country move forward then the island will also have done its part in helping government in tackling this virus and re building our lives through safe social distancing when the time is right.

I am sure islanders will rise to the challenge and help avoid post lockdown spread of the virus and keep people as safe as possible.

The ambition of test and trace is to enable the UK to start to come out of some elements of lockdown. This will be a gradual process and our experts are considering how best to do this in a way that keeps citizens safe and protects our NHS.

Background information

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and NHSX have created some digital assets to support media coverage of the app launching this week.

[Download an HMG explainer video for social channels.](#)

[Download screenshots of the app without IoW specifics.](#)

[Download shots of app on phone in hand.](#)

Isle of Wight residents will be provided with a range of comprehensive information about what this means for them, including advice on how to access and use this new app. Their safety will be of paramount importance during the programme, and the government and NHS are clear that no-one will be put at risk throughout its duration. For example the current social distancing measures will remain in place.

Maggie Oldham, Chief Executive at Isle of Wight NHS Trust, said:

Our community's response to coronavirus has been fantastic and I want to say thank you for everything they have done to protect the NHS and to save lives.

It is good news for the island that we have been chosen as the first site in the UK for this app, we can protect local people and play an important role in the national effort to beat coronavirus.

Isle of Wight MP Bob Seely said:

My priority is to keep islanders safe. I want us to be able to find and isolate the virus here and make our island safe again. If that can happen first in the country, so much the better.

It's important that we are clear what is happening. I want to reassure islanders that this is not a lifting of lockdown. This first stage is about finding out where the virus is now. This is to protect the NHS and save life.

This is important news for the island. We will be leading the country in terms of using the very latest technology to keep us safe and halt the spread of this wretched coronavirus.

We have a moral duty to protect life now, but we also need to protect life in future. This pilot scheme is an important stage of getting life back to normal in time and I am proud that the island is leading the way.

The app has been designed to give people a simple way to make a difference and to help keep themselves and their families safe. Once someone installs the app, it will start logging the distance between their phone and other phones nearby that also have the app installed using Bluetooth low energy.

This anonymous log of how close people are to each other will be stored securely on their phone. If a user becomes unwell with symptoms of COVID-19, they can choose to allow the app to inform the NHS which, subject to sophisticated risk analysis, will trigger an anonymous alert to those other app users with whom they came into significant contact over the previous few days.

The app will advise the public what action to take if a user has been close to someone who has become symptomatic. The advice on what people should do can be adapted as the context and approach evolves.

Modelling by academics at Oxford University's Big Data Institute shows that the app has the potential to save thousands of lives, and that for every 1 to 2 people who download the app, an infection could be prevented.

[North Wales 'Sofa Singers' founder wins PM award for virtual lockdown choir](#)

Press release

Music teacher from North Wales who set up a global online choir receives Prime Minister Boris Johnson's daily Point of Light award.



A music teacher from North Wales who set up a global online choir to lift people's spirits through isolation will today receive Prime Minister Boris Johnson's daily Point of Light award.

James Sills created 'The Sofa Singers' after seeing images of people singing on balconies in Italy and realising the power of music to bring people together while they have to be socially distant. Over 7000 people from over 50 countries have joined his twice weekly singing groups since they began in March.

In a personal letter to James, the Prime Minister said:

I want to thank you for the brilliant way you have used your gift for music to bring people together from the safety of their sofas.

One of the great hardships in staying at home has been a loss of social contact with others. But your wonderful chorus has helped many to overcome that sense of isolation, while playing their part in the vital mission to protect our NHS and save lives.

Inspired by the spontaneous creativity of the balcony singers in Italy, you have curated a magical moment each week that has seen hundreds of people around the world sit apart, yet sing together as one.

Reacting to the Prime Minister's announcement, James said:

It is a real honour to receive this award and I would like to dedicate it to the thousands of Sofa Singers around the world. It's wonderful to hear how the sessions are helping people to feel more connected and positive at this difficult time. Life is better when we're singing together!

The Prime Minister's UK daily Point of Light award was first launched in April 2014 to recognise outstanding individuals making a difference where they live. James is the 1364th person to be recognised. As Britain unites to fight the spread of coronavirus, the award is focusing exclusively on people serving their community through the pandemic.

[Coronavirus: new website for reporting medicines side-effects and equipment incidents](#)

Press release

A new online reporting site, dedicated to reporting any suspected side effects from medicines, future vaccines and incidents involving medical equipment relating to COVID-19 treatment, has today been launched.



The new and tailored [Yellow Card COVID-19 reporting site](#) makes it quicker and simpler for healthcare professionals, patients and carers to report side-effects or incidents.

The site has been developed as part of the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency's (MHRA) work to protect the public through enhanced COVID-19 vigilance and in preparation for large-scale use of potential new or repurposed medicines, medical devices, diagnostic tests and future vaccines.

In our commitment to ensuring that the medicines and medical devices that people use are safe, we will use the COVID-19 Yellow Card reports to monitor the safety of healthcare products being used in COVID-19 treatment. In doing so there will be rapid identification of new or emerging risks, which might not have been previously known about and will take appropriate regulatory action, where necessary.

Dr June Raine, MHRA Chief Executive said:

“While our aim is to ensure that potentially lifesaving COVID-19 treatments and medical equipment reach

patients as quickly as possible, patient safety is our highest priority.

“I encourage healthcare professionals and patients to use our new dedicated site to report problems with medical equipment, including ventilators or testing kits, as well as any suspected side effects from medicines used to combat COVID-19.”

To make a report or find out more about the Yellow Card COVID-19 reporting site please visit: coronavirus-yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk

Published 4 May 2020

[Border force seize cocaine worth £4.86 million at Harwich](#)

News story

Border Force officers at Harwich International Port have prevented an attempt to smuggle approximately 54 kilos of cocaine into the UK.



On Thursday (30 April), officers at the port stopped an Irish-registered lorry carrying a load of frozen food which had just arrived on a ferry from the Hook of Holland. They noticed anomalies in the trailer doors and conducted a search. Inside the trailer they found 47 wrapped packages concealed in metal lined containers.

The contents of some of the packages were tested and proved positive for cocaine. The drugs had a potential street value in excess of £4.86 million.

Chris Philp, Minister for Immigration Compliance said:

This was a fantastic bit of work from the team. They have succeeded in taking a large amount of cocaine off our streets, where it can

cause significant harm to both individuals and communities.

Every year Border Force officers seize Class A drugs worth hundreds of millions of pounds. Working with law enforcement colleagues like the National Crime Agency we will do all we can to stop drug traffickers and bring them to justice.

A British man was arrested and the investigation passed to the NCA. He was interviewed and released under investigation.

Jacque Beer, NCA Branch Commander said:

This seizure shows that organised criminal networks involved in international drug trafficking continue to pose a threat to the UK, even with the restrictions brought about by the coronavirus pandemic.

Working with partners like Border Force we will continue to use all the tools at our disposal to disrupt and dismantle crime groups involved in drug distribution.

Border Force officers use hi-tech search equipment to combat immigration crime and detect banned and restricted goods that smugglers attempt to bring into the country.

They use an array of search techniques including sniffer dogs, carbon dioxide detectors, heartbeat monitors and scanners – as well as visual searches – to find well-hidden stowaways, illegal drugs, firearms and tobacco which would otherwise end up causing harm to local people, businesses and communities.

Anyone with information about activity they suspect may be linked to smuggling should call Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111 or [online](#).

Published 4 May 2020

£5.4 million to support legal advice sector during the COVID-19 pandemic

The money will be distributed to those most in need through not for profit organisations and Law Centres across England and Wales.

We are already seeing an increase in people seeking advice for social welfare cases during the coronavirus outbreak and this is expected to further

increase demand from the legal support sector.

This funding will therefore help organisations to continue to provide vital legal advice throughout the pandemic, increase capacity, and deliver services remotely.

Justice Minister, Alex Chalk said:

Law Centres and charities in the advice sector play a vital role in helping people access justice and resolve their legal problems. That is why they should be supported to continue to operate safely and effectively during the Covid-19 pandemic

This additional £5.4 million support fund will help do just that – giving providers the support they need to boost remote capability and help as many people as possible during these challenging times.

Funding allocated to the Community Justice Fund will be administered by the Access to Justice Foundation and the Law Centres Network will oversee funding earmarked for law centres.

This is in addition to a recently signed grant agreement to provide more than £3.1m in funding to organisations that support unrepresented defendants in the courts, known as Litigants in Person.

Specialist legal advice providers focuses mainly on areas of social welfare law, for example housing, debt, employment, discrimination and special educational needs.

Chief Executive, The Access to Justice Foundation, Ruth Daniel said:

We are delighted with this support for specialist social welfare legal advice agencies who are providing essential help to people and communities at this difficult time. The Community Justice Fund will work in partnership with the sector to support organisations with their response to the current challenges they are facing and aims to help the sector to emerge from it stronger and more resilient than it was before the crisis.

The Law Centres Network, Chair, Helen Rogers said:

We thank the government for this vital support, which will allow Law Centres to continue to defend people's homes, lives and livelihoods. The pandemic's uneven impact is a grim reminder of the deep inequality in our society that affects every aspect of life. This support recognises the key role of legal assistance in reducing inequality and bringing justice for all.