

# Industry responds to call to arms to build British diagnostics industry at scale

- Government sets specific new challenge to industry to help achieve 100,000 tests a day by end of April
- Business consortium set up to rapidly develop new antibody tests

The UK's top pharmaceutical and diagnostic companies are teaming up to rapidly develop and roll out millions of coronavirus tests in the coming months as part of the next phase of the government's 5-pillar [national testing strategy](#) to identify if people have the virus.

A number of existing suppliers and UK-based global companies have already responded positively to the government's call to action on the testing national effort.

Pharmaceutical giants like AstraZeneca and GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) have been creating new national business collaborations, to help deliver on the government's plan to carry out 100,000 coronavirus tests a day by the end of April.

Their work primarily focuses on tests to identify whether people currently have the virus, and will be targeted on frontline healthcare and other essential workers who have the virus before deploying the tests to the wider population.

New developments from businesses working to scale-up testing programmes include:

- a new testing laboratory to be set up by [AstraZeneca, GSK and Cambridge University](#) to be used for screening for coronavirus testing, with the aim of carrying out 30,000 tests a day by the start of May. The companies are exploring the use of alternative chemical reagents for test kits in order to help overcome current supply shortages
- AstraZeneca and GSK are also providing scientific and technical expertise in automation and robotics to support the government's new national testing centres
- Thermo Fisher has committed to continuing to supply the UK with testing kits to test for the presence of the coronavirus virus and is working to scale up manufacturing at its existing UK sites
- Oxford Nanopore's sequencing technology is being used worldwide, including in multiple labs in the UK, to rapidly sequence the coronavirus and other pathogens that may also be present in a sample. This is supporting epidemiology and scientific understanding of

coronavirus. The company's research and development team is also exploring advanced test options using its DNA/RNA sequencing technology

Health Minister Lord Bethell said:

We are rapidly scaling up the national effort to boost testing capacity for coronavirus to protect the vulnerable, support our NHS and, ultimately, save lives.

I am proud that we have already had an impressive response from companies of different scales and from different sectors coming forward with a commitment to work together, share expertise and resources to establish a large British diagnostics industry which can help us achieve 100,000 tests a day by the end of April.

We will do everything we can to tackle this virus and we are pooling all the resources from our world-leading life sciences industry, top universities and clinical leaders to overcome this together.

As part of the government's [national testing strategy](#), the expertise and resources of the UK's world-leading life sciences industries are being pooled to build a large-scale British diagnostics industry as quickly as possible.

To support this, an [online portal](#) has launched on GOV.UK providing companies with specifications for our most urgent requirements, and the NHS Business Services Authority has set up a new engagement team allowing companies an easier, more focused route to offer their support.

Companies with proposals able to deliver on these specifications quickly and at scale may also be able to access a range of support from government, including accelerated regulatory approval, centralised procurement support if appropriate and, in some cases, development grants.

The government has set up a testing taskforce with over 100 companies and Health Secretary Matt Hancock today set out 4 challenges to industry in a webinar to help build on progress as we scale up our testing capability:

1. To provide additional testing consumables that are in short supply, such as swabs, tubes and components for test kits
2. For universities, research institutes and private companies to donate additional lab testing capacity for coronavirus tests, supported by best practice guidance on specific requirements
3. To develop new technology to diagnose coronavirus quicker than ever before and new methods of delivering tests widely across the UK safely
4. Put forward proposals in support of reliable and accurate antibody testing. These should be scalable, resilient and scientifically robust. Proposals could include a range of ideas for end-to-end solutions or address specific challenges in the supply chain

One such group has already launched to meet the fourth of these challenges. A

business consortium, UK Rapid Test Consortium (UK-RTC), including Oxford University, Abingdon Health, BBI Solutions and CIGA Healthcare has launched, in order to design and develop a new antibody test to determine whether people have developed immunity after contracting the virus.

So far, the antibody tests that have gone through the validation process have not proven accurate enough to be rolled out for public use, which is why the government is also backing efforts to develop a home-grown test.

Only tests that are accurate will be rolled out, to ensure people are not put at risk and we will continue to work closely with UK and international partners to develop a reliable test as soon as possible.

Professor John Newton, the government's adviser on testing, who is co-ordinating the programme, said:

I'm delighted to be overseeing this absolutely crucial project to help us achieve 100,000 tests a day by the end of April.

We have already launched from scratch an entire new network of testing labs across the UK and, with the support of industry, we can go even further, both in support of our existing work and in developing new tests.

The government's [national testing strategy](#) is split into 5 pillars:

The first pillar is testing for those with a medical need in Public Health England (PHE) labs and NHS hospitals. These are PCR tests, where a swab sample is taken and analysed in a lab to find out if you have coronavirus. ([2 April Announcement](#)).

- We announced on 18 March that we would aim to increase NHS/PHS testing capacity from 5,000 to 10,000 a day and then 25,000 tests a day ([18 March announcement](#))
- We have already doubled testing to 10,000 tests a day in a fortnight, and we are now working towards 25,000 a day by late April.

In the second pillar of the plan, we have launched a partnership with universities, research institutes and companies to begin rollout of a network of new labs and testing sites across the UK, to provide thousands more PCR swab tests a day for critical key workers, starting with NHS frontline staff and social care workers, so those who test negative for coronavirus can return to work as soon as possible ([27 March announcement](#)).

This involves setting up – from scratch and at pace – a completely new network of testing sites to collect samples and 3 new super labs (Milton Keynes, Alderley Park and Glasgow) to analyse them. This rollout will be across the UK, and involves overcoming huge logistical challenges (people, lab space, equipment, chemicals, data and IT) at enormous speed.

Since the pilot facilities went live on 28 March, more than 20,000 NHS

workers have already been tested at the trial sites, and as the rollout continues we expect to be doing thousands more tests a week.

The third pillar in the government's testing plan is antibody testing: these tests are designed to detect if people have had the virus and are now immune.

Antibody tests offer the hope that people who think they have had the disease will know they are immune. So far, the antibody tests that have gone through the validation process have not proven accurate enough to be rolled out for public use, which is why the government is backing efforts to develop a homegrown test.

The fourth pillar is surveillance. We aim to conduct some of the biggest surveys in the world to find out what proportion of the population have already had the virus. This is done using a high-accuracy antibody test operated by PHE at their Porton Down science campus. We will use these tests to help strengthen our scientific understanding and inform us all on the big choices we have to make about social distancing measures and how we exit from this crisis.

The fifth pillar is the most ambitious. We want to build, in a short space of time, the large-scale diagnostics industry that this country currently lacks. Just as our top-end manufacturers have joined the national effort to build ventilators, so our life sciences companies will do the same for testing. UK pharmaceutical giants, which don't have a tradition of diagnostics, are now working with our world-leading but smaller diagnostics companies to build a large-scale British diagnostics industry at scale. This new national effort for testing will ensure we can get tests for everyone who needs them.

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## [Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak on economic support for the charity sector](#)

Good afternoon.

I'm joined today by Steve Powis, Medical Director of the NHS, and Angela Mclean, Deputy Government Chief Scientific Adviser.

Let me start by reminding everyone about our step-by-step action plan to defeat coronavirus.

At every step of this process, we have followed the latest scientific and medical advice.

Our goal is to slow the spread of the virus and protect the ability of the

NHS to cope.

We've taken unprecedented action to increase NHS capacity, with more beds, more staff and more equipment on the front line.

And we have told people to stay at home, so that we can protect lives and protect the NHS.

Today's daily figures show that:

- 232,708 people in the UK have now been tested for coronavirus
- 60,734 people have tested positive, an increase of 5,492 cases since yesterday
- 19,438 people have been admitted to hospital
- and sadly, of those in hospital, 7,097 have now died – an increase of 938 fatalities since yesterday

Our thoughts are with the families and friends of those who have passed away.

People I'm sure will also want an update on the Prime Minister's health. He is receiving excellent care from the NHS team at St Thomas's.

The latest from the hospital is that the Prime Minister remains in intensive care, where his condition is improving.

I can also tell you that he has been sitting up in bed and engaging positively with the clinical team.

The Prime Minister is not only my colleague, my boss but my friend; my thoughts are with him and his family.

The news about the PM reminds us how indiscriminate this disease is.

Nearly everyone in the country will know someone who has been affected – friends, family, neighbours, colleagues.

This is a terrible virus that respects no boundaries of status or geography or vocation.

But we are not facing it alone.

We are all taking part in a collective national effort to protect the vulnerable and each other, to secure our public services, and to save lives.

This endeavour is underpinned by an important, simple idea – that we depend on each other.

When you need it, when you fall on hard times, we will all, as one society, be there for you.

To take care of you, until you are, once again, ready to take care of yourself and others.

This idea has been central to all of our efforts to support people and businesses during this crisis.

We promised to do whatever it takes, and I am striving every day to keep that promise.

But when I say that we all depend on each other, I don't just mean the relationship between individuals, businesses and the state.

One of our greatest strengths as a country is our civil society.

The local charities who provide so much compassion, care and community to the most vulnerable in our country.

You have not been forgotten.

British people, businesses and foundations are already doing their part to support our charity sector.

And today, we in government will do our part, as we build on our plan for the economy with a plan to support our social fabric.

There are nearly 170,000 charities in this country; and the truth is that we will not be able to match every pound of funding they would have received this year.

Charities can already use many of our existing schemes to support people and protect their staff.

All charities are eligible for the job retention scheme, and in line with medical advice, and just like any other employer...

...the right answer for many charities will be to furlough their employees..

But some charities are on the front line of fighting the coronavirus, and others provide critical services and support to vulnerable people and communities.

For them, shutting up shop at this moment would be to contravene their very purpose; their entire reason to exist.

Those charities have never been more needed than they are now; and they've never faced such a sudden fall in their funding.

So today I am announcing £750 million of funding for the charity sector.

£370 million of that funding will support small, local charities working with vulnerable people.

We all know who they are; those small charities in our villages, our market towns, in pockets of our cities...

...the unsung heroes looking after the vulnerable and holding together our social fabric.

In England, this support will be provided through organisations like the National Lottery Communities Fund.

And we will allocate £60 million of this funding through the Barnett formula to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The UK government will also provide £360 million directly to charities providing essential services and supporting vulnerable people, as we battle the coronavirus.

Up to £200 million of those grants will support hospices...

...with the rest going to organisations like St Johns' Ambulance and the Citizens Advice Bureau...

...as well as charities supporting vulnerable children, victims of domestic abuse, or disabled people.

And last night the BBC announced their Big Night In charity appeal on April 23rd...

...and today I can confirm that the government will match pound for pound whatever the public decides to donate...

...starting with at least £20 million to the National Emergencies Trust appeal.

Two short weeks ago I spoke of the need for kindness, decency and the sort of neighbourliness that is at the heart of these charitable and community efforts.

The normally invisible connections between us have, in recent weeks, become more apparent.

For most of us, we spend our lives oblivious to these connections, these bonds, and how our behaviours, however small, can have a dramatic effect on others.

But these bonds are not invisible for our local charities.

For the volunteer keeping victims of domestic violence safe.

For the outreach worker helping a rough sleeper find a bed.

Or for the support worker manning the phones to help stave off the heart wrenching loneliness so many of our elderly relatives and friends will be experiencing right now.

These connections might be hard to see, but they are there, and they are

strengthened by our compassion for others.

Charities embody this like no other organisation.

And their lesson is that the simplest acts have the potential to change lives.

At this time, when many are hurting and tired and confined, we need the gentleness of charities in our lives.

It gives us hope.

It makes us stronger.

And it reminds us: we depend on each other.

Thank you.

### **Concluding peroration – post Q&A**

Today was about supporting charities, who are a critical part of the social fabric of this country.

It builds on the economic plan we've already announced:

To protect people's health and economic security, by supporting public services like our NHS, backing business, and protecting people's jobs and incomes.

And I would conclude by saying this:

Our economic plan, and the plan for charities I have announced today, are built on one simple idea: that we depend on each other.

Thank you.

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## **Chancellor sets out extra £750 million coronavirus funding for frontline charities**

- £750 million pot for frontline charities across the UK – including hospices and those supporting domestic abuse victims
- £360 million direct from government departments and £370 million for smaller charities, including through a grant to the National Lottery Community Fund
- government will match donations to the National Emergencies Trust as

part of the BBC's Big Night In fundraiser later this month – pledging a minimum of £20 million

Charities across the UK will receive a £750 million package of support to ensure they can continue their vital work during the coronavirus outbreak, Chancellor Rishi Sunak announced today (Wednesday 8 April).

Tens of thousands of charities providing vital services will benefit from direct cash grants to ensure they can meet increased demand as a result of the virus as well as continuing their day-to-day activities supporting those in need.

As part of a UK-wide package of support, £360 million will be directly allocated by government departments to charities providing key services and supporting vulnerable people during the crisis.

As well as this, £370 million for small and medium-sized charities, including through a grant to the National Lottery Community Fund for those in England, will support those organisations at the heart of local communities which are making a big difference during the outbreak, including those delivering food, essential medicines and providing financial advice.

The Chancellor also announced the Government will match fund whatever the public decides to donate to the BBC's Big Night In charity appeal on 23 April, starting with a contribution of at least £20 million to the National Emergencies Trust appeal.

Today's announcement builds on previous announcements by the Chancellor to support charities and businesses, including deferring their VAT bills, paying no business rates for their shops next year, and furloughing staff where possible with the Government paying 80% of their wages.

Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak said:

Our charities are playing a crucial role in the national fight against coronavirus, supporting those who are most in need.

It's right we do everything we can to help the sector during this difficult time, which is why we have announced this unprecedented £750 million package of extra funding.

This will ensure our key charities can continue to deliver the services that millions of people up and down the country rely on.

Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden said:

Our brilliant charities are already playing a crucial role in our national effort to fight coronavirus – backed up by an army of volunteers. We're determined to support them and match the generosity being shown by the British people. This package will

make sure those on the front line are able to reach people who need help most, support communities and take pressure off our NHS.

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Matt Hancock said:

The entire charity sector has stepped up as part of our national effort to tackle coronavirus – from helping our NHS heroes to ensuring the most vulnerable among us are cared for properly.

Hospices have suffered a huge challenge to their funding due to the outbreak of coronavirus but at the same time continued to play a vital role in delivering compassionate, quality end-of-life care for many people. I am delighted that this cash boost will provide further financial stability and support them to increase capacity of NHS Services and provide stability as we manage our response to coronavirus.

It's vitally important we all continue to support our fantastic and hardworking hospices and their staff during this unprecedented time, and the whole country is grateful for the incredible work they do.

Charities providing vital services and helping vulnerable people through the current crisis will benefit from the £360 million allocated by government departments. These will include:

- hospices to help increase capacity and give stability to the sector
- St Johns Ambulance to support the NHS
- victims charities, including domestic abuse, to help with potential increase in demand for charities providing these services
- vulnerable children charities, so they can continue delivering services on behalf of local authorities
- Citizens Advice to increase the number of staff providing advice during this difficult time

Departments will now work at pace to identify priority recipients, with the aim for charities to receive money in the coming weeks. The application system for the National Lottery Community Fund grant pot is expected to be operational within a similar period of time.

Where charitable services are devolved the UK Government has applied the Barnett formula in the normal way. We expect the devolved administrations to receive £60 million through the charities pot, and further significant Barnett allocations, dependent on the final proposals funded, through the direct grant pot. We encourage the devolved administrations to use this funding to support charities.

## **Notes**

Reaction from charity sector:

Charlotte Moore, Director of BBC Content said:

“The Big Night In promises to be a fantastic evening of entertainment and we welcome this support. We want to help as many people as possible through this crisis. These funds will be shared by the huge number of smaller charities and projects who are making a vital difference to so many communities up and down the country.”

Tracey Bleakley, CEO from national charity Hospice UK, said:

Hospice UK is delighted that the Government is providing up to £200 million of funding per quarter to hospices to help support the NHS and respond to the COVID-19 emergency.

Hospices are on the frontline of providing care and support to almost a quarter of a million vulnerable people every year at the end of their lives. This unprecedented funding recognises the vital role that hospices play in supporting the NHS in its fight against COVID-19, and means hospices across the country can keep providing beds, specialist clinical care and staffing to relieve pressure on the NHS at this critical moment.

Hospices depend on the generosity of their local communities to care for people and families affected by terminal illness. This incredible government support is very welcome but it's still important that people continue to support their local hospice.

Hospice UK is working with the NHS to disburse this much-needed funding as soon as possible so we can continue to protect the most vulnerable people in our country during this national emergency.

John Herriman, Chief Executive of the National Emergencies Trust, said:

“This is very welcome money that builds on the success of the NET Coronavirus appeal to date and which will give thousands and thousands of people real and much needed help. By working collaboratively with many local grassroots charities and local community foundations we have been able to deliver support quickly, fairly and efficiently to those who need it most. We have seen many, many stories of people who have already received wonderful support, from food deliveries to helping those in isolation. This additional funding means we can do so much more, and we will work in partnership with the sector to ensure support continues to get to where it's needed most.”

Dawn Austwick OBE, Chief Executive, National Lottery Community Fund, said:

“I've been inspired by how charities and voluntary groups have stepped up to support people and communities through this crisis. So this support from Government is welcome, we look forward to working alongside Government and others to ensure these new funds have the biggest possible impact in communities.”

Ruth Davison, Chief Executive of Comic Relief, said:

“The incredible support for the Big Night In means we will be able to provide vital funding to smaller charities across the UK who are working around the clock to help keep people fed, safe and supported throughout the pandemic.”

Sir John Low, Chief Executive of the Charities Aid Foundation (CAF), said:

The Charities Aid Foundation knows only too well that charities on the front line are facing incredible demands for their services just as income is squeezed. This set of measures from the Treasury will offer important and welcome support for civil society at this very difficult time for us all.

Recognising the humbling generosity of the British public right now is so vital as we rally together in the face of such a national challenge.

Charities at the front line and all those working to support our society need help to perform their vital function bringing people together at this time of enormous challenge. They will need this type of support now and into the future as we come out of this crisis.

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## **Businessman fined for breaches of environmental permit**

Businessman Philip Eardley, sole director of A Morrey Distribution Limited (AMD), faces a bill of £84,000 for failing to comply with an enforcement notice requiring him to submit a Fire Prevention Plan for a former permitted site at Garner Street, Stoke-on-Trent.

The 69-year-old of The Holborn, Madeley, near Crewe, was yesterday fined £1,000 for failing to comply with an enforcement notice and ordered to pay £50,000 in prosecution costs. In addition, Philip Eardley must pay a confiscation order of £33,000. That sum is to be paid as compensation to the Environment Agency and will go towards making the site safe. A default prison sentence of 12 to 18 months could be triggered if he does not pay.

Philip Eardley had pleaded guilty to 4 offences in June 2017. A Morrey Distribution Limited also entered guilty pleas to 4 similar charges of breaching permit conditions, contrary to the Environmental Permitting (England & Wales) Regulations 2010 between November 2014 and April 2016. The sentencing hearing took place remotely at Stoke-on-Trent Crown Court using

Skype conferencing facilities due to current Covid-19 restrictions.

There was no separate penalty for offences committed by the company due to its financial status.

Proceedings were brought by the Environment Agency and the court heard that AMDL had been granted an environmental permit to store Refuse Derived Fuel (RDF) on a temporary basis at the Garner Street site. During 11 inspections between 2014 and 2016 Environment Agency officers noted that bales of RDF were being stockpiled over the limits allowed by the permit. In total, approximately 18,000 tonnes of waste was deposited and stored in 3 different buildings across the site. Some of the RDF bales were degrading and leaching a black liquid and giving off a foul odour. Concerns were raised by the Environment Agency. However, Philip Eardley failed to carry out any action to reduce the risk of fire at the site, even after a suspension notice was issued. The environmental permit was later revoked.

The RDF bales presented an ongoing risk of self-combustion, with potentially very serious consequences given the site's proximity to the A500 D-road and the west coast main railway line.

In passing sentence His Honour Judge Glenn noted that breaches had occurred very shortly after the environmental permit had been issued by the Environment Agency. He stated that Philip Eardley had been 'utterly stupid' to have entered into an arrangement with a third party to accept the bales without a proper written agreement between the parties. Credit was given for early guilty pleas entered in 2017 by AMDL and Philip Eardley. HHJ Glenn acknowledged that all parties had genuinely attempted to find a solution that would enable the site to be cleared of all waste and that this had delayed the conclusion of criminal proceedings.

Speaking after the case, Adam Lines from the Environment Agency said:

Eardley showed no consideration for the environment and the local community by operating a large scale waste site – beyond the level of the permit – at the former Twyford's site. There was a very serious risk of fire at this facility which would have had grave implications for the surrounding areas. His actions undermined legitimate businesses and that of the wider local economy.

The Environment Agency takes waste crime very seriously and we will use all powers available to us to pursue those who flout the regulations. We gave Mr Eardley every opportunity to comply with those regulations but he ultimately took no action. Our safeguarding responsibilities gave us little choice but to suspend operations at the site and pursue a prosecution.

The Environment Agency is now facilitating the sale of the site so that it can be cleared.

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# Claims and elections call for evidence

## – update

- Only go outside for food, health reasons or work (but only if you cannot work from home)
- If you go out, stay 2 metres (6ft) away from other people at all times
- Wash your hands as soon as you get home

Do not meet others, even friends or family.

You can spread the virus even if you don't have symptoms.