

Landmark moment for UK pensions as Bill receives Royal Assent

The Bill, now an Act, will bolster protections for savers and further the government's green agenda by supporting progress towards net zero.

Minister for Pensions, Guy Opperman, said:

This is a historic day for UK pensions, and I'm thrilled that after more than 12 months, amidst all the challenges we've faced, the Bill has now received Royal Assent.

This Act makes our pensions safer, better and greener, as we look to build back better from the pandemic. Its passage will reassure savers that they can, and will, have a retirement they deserve.

The Act will strengthen protections for pension savers by extending the powers of the Pensions Regulator, introducing the power to issue civil penalties of up to £1 million, alongside three new criminal offences.

A tough new sentence has been created – with a maximum penalty of seven years in prison – for bosses who run pension schemes into the ground, or plunder pots to line their own pockets. This will deter employers from making reckless decisions with their defined benefit schemes and strengthen the regulators' powers to take efficient and timely actions to protect members' hard-earned savings.

The introduction of pensions dashboards will hail a digital revolution for savers, creating one single platform to more easily access and review pension pots. Savers will be able to see how much they can expect each month in retirement, and find out how they can improve their retirement prospects.

The Act ensures pensions play their part in our transition to a net zero future through climate risk reporting, and changes to requirements around pension scheme funding to improve financial sustainability.

The Act also legislates for the creation of a new style of pension scheme – Collective Defined Contributions (CDCs). Developed in cooperation with trade unions, CDCs have the potential to increase returns for millions, whilst being more sustainable for both workers and employers.

Additional information:

- Provisions for commencement of all the measures are contained in section 131 of the Act. These timings vary depending on the measure.

Media enquiries for this press release – 020 3267 5144

Follow DWP on:

[The future of health and care](#)

Mr Speaker, I come to the House today to set out our white paper on the future of health and care.

The past year has been the most challenging in the NHS's proud 72-year history.

And the health and care system – as a whole – has risen in the face of great difficulties.

Throughout, people have done incredible things and worked in novel and remarkable ways to deliver for patients.

We, in this House, salute them all.

Not just the nurse who may have had to care for 2, or 3, or 4 times as many patients as he would in normal times.

Not just the surgeon who may have been called to treat patients beyond her normal specialism.

But the managers across health and care who've come together – in teams, as part of a health family, at local and national level.

The public health experts who have been needed more than ever before.

The local authority staff who've embraced change to deliver for their residents.

And, from all, a sense of teamwork that has been inspiring to see.

As a citizen, I care deeply for the whole health and care family, for the values they stand for, and the security they represent.

They're there for us at the best of times – and they're there for us at the worst of times.

As Health Secretary, I see it as my role sometimes to challenge – but most of all to support – the health and care family in their defining mission: of improving the health of the nation – and for caring for those most in need.

I come before the House to present a white paper, based firmly on those values, which I believe are the values our whole nation holds dear.

The white paper is built on more than 2 years of work – with the NHS, local councils and the public.

At its heart, this white paper enables greater integration, reduces bureaucracy and supports the way that the NHS and social care work when they work at their best: together.

It strengthens accountability to this House and, crucially, it takes the lessons we've learned in this pandemic of how the system can rise to meet huge challenges – and frames a legislative basis to support that effort.

My job as Health Secretary is to make the system work for those who work in the system.

To free up, to empower and to harness the mission driven capability of 'Team Health and Care'.

The goal of this white paper is to allow that to happen.

Mr Speaker, before turning to the core measures, I want to answer 2 questions that I know have been on people's minds.

First: are these changes needed?

Even before the pandemic, it was clear reform was needed: to update the law, to improve how the NHS operates and reduce bureaucracy.

Local government and the NHS have told us they want to work together to improve health outcomes for residents.

Clinicians have told us they want to do more than just treat conditions – they want to address the factors that determine people's health and prevent illness in the first place.

And all parts of the system told us they want to embrace modern technology: to innovate, to join up, to share data, to serve people and, ultimately, to be trusted to get on and do all of that so they can improve patient care and save lives.

And we've listened – and these changes reflect what our health and care family have been asking for, building on the NHS's own long-term plan.

The second question: why now?

Now, as we tackle the biggest public health emergency in modern history?

The response to COVID-19 has, in my view, accelerated the pace of collaboration across health and social care, showing what we can do when we work together – flexibly – adopting new technology focused on the needs of the patient and setting aside bureaucratic rules.

The pandemic has also brought home the importance of preventing ill health in the first place, by tackling obesity and taking steps like fluoridation that

will improve the health of the nation.

The pandemic has made the changes in this white paper more, not less, urgent, and it is our role in Parliament to make the legislative changes that are needed.

There is no better time than now.

Mr Speaker, turning to the measures in detail.

The first set of measures promote integration between different parts of the health and care system, and put the focus of health funding on the health of the population – not just the health of patients.

Health and care have always been part of the same ecosystem.

With an ageing population, with more complex needs, that's never been more true.

And these proposals, Mr Speaker, will make it easier for clinicians, for carers and public health experts to achieve what they already work so hard to do, to operate seamlessly across health and care without being split into artificial silos that keep them apart.

The new approach is based on the concept of population health.

A statutory Integrated Care System will be responsible, in each part of England, for the funding to support the health of their area.

They will provide, not just for the treatments that are needed, but support people to stay healthy in the first place.

In some parts of the country, ICSs are already showing the way, and they will be accountable for outcomes of the health of the population and be held to account by the Care Quality Commission.

Our goal is to integrate decision-making at a local level between the NHS and local authorities as much as is practically possible, and ensure decisions about local health can be taken as locally as possible.

Next, Mr Speaker, we will use legislation to remove bureaucracy that makes sensible decision-making harder, so freeing up the system to innovate and to embrace technology as a better platform to support staff and patient care.

Our proposals preserve the division between funding decisions and provision of care, which has been the cornerstone of efforts to ensure the best value for taxpayers for over 30 years.

But we're setting out a more joined-up approach, built on collaborative relationships, so that more strategic decisions can be taken to shape health and care for decades to come.

At its heart it's about population health: using the collective resources of

the local system, the NHS, local authorities, the voluntary sector and others to improve the health of their area.

Finally, Mr Speaker, the white paper will ensure a system that is accountable.

Ministers have rightly always been accountable to this House for the performance of the NHS – and always will.

Clinical decisions should always be independent.

But when the NHS is the public's top domestic priority, with over £140 billion pounds of taxpayers' money spent each year, and when the quality of our healthcare matters to every single citizen and every single one of our constituents, Mr Speaker, of course the NHS must be accountable to ministers, ministers accountable to Parliament, and Parliament accountable to the people we all serve.

Medical matters are matters for ministers.

The white paper provides a statutory basis for unified national leadership of the NHS, merging 3 different bodies that legally oversee the NHS into one – as NHS England.

NHS England will have clinical and day-to-day operational independence.

But the Secretary of State will be empowered to set direction for the NHS and intervene where necessary.

This white paper can give the public confidence that the system will truly work together to respond to their needs.

Mr Speaker, these legislative measures support reforms already underway in the NHS, and they should be seen in the context of those broader reforms.

And they are by no means the full extent of our ambition for the nation's health.

As we continue to tackle this pandemic, we will also bring forward changes in social care, public health and mental health services.

We are committed to reform the funding of adult social care and we will bring forward proposals this year.

The public health interventions outlined in this white paper sit alongside our proposals to strengthen the public health system, including the creation of the National Institute for Health Protection (NIHP).

And last month, in our mental health white paper, we committed to bringing forward legislation to update the Mental Health Act for the 21st century.

Mr Speaker, this landmark white paper builds on what colleagues in health and care have told us – and we will continue that engagement in the weeks ahead.

It builds on more than that: it builds on this party's commitment to the NHS – from the very beginning.

And eagle-eyed visitors to my office on Victoria Street will have noticed the portrait of Sir Henry Willink, who published the white paper in 1944, from this despatch box, that set out plans for “A National Health Service” that was later implemented by post-war governments.

Throughout its proud 72-year history, successive governments have believed in our health and care system and strengthened it for their times.

I believe the NHS is the finest health service in the world. I believe in the values that underpin it, that we all share responsibility for the health of one another.

Its extraordinary feats this past year are unsurpassed, even in its own proud history.

And, once again, we must support the NHS – and the whole health and care system – with a legislative framework fit for our times, and fit for the future.

A more integrated, more innovative and more responsive system, harnessing the best of modern technology and supporting the vocation and dedication of those who work in it.

This white paper is the next step in that noble endeavour, and I commend this statement to the House.

Use of schools in the May 2021 Elections

If you use assistive technology (such as a screen reader) and need a version of this document in a more accessible format, please email publiccorrespondence@cabinetoffice.gov.uk. Please tell us what format you need. It will help us if you say what assistive technology you use.

A record 3 million people tested by

NHS Test and Trace this reporting week

- More people tested during this reporting week than ever before
- More than a third of the population in England have now been tested at least once since NHS Test and Trace was launched
- Test turnaround times for most testing routes continue to fall, with 97.6% of in-person test results returned the next day after the test was taken

In total, almost 21.8 million people have now been tested at least once since NHS Test and Trace was launched; that equates to a third of all people in England.

Of those people who took their tests in-person, at either a local or regional test centre, nearly all (97.6%) received their results the following day, while the median turnaround time for home test kits was just 35 hours.

Not only are people able to receive a test result more quickly and conveniently, but the service continues to reach a high proportion of cases and contacts.

NHS Test and Trace has successfully reached 87.0% of the people who received a positive test result, and 93.5% of their contacts, making a real impact in breaking chains of transmission. In total during the week of 28 January to 3 February, 377,391 people who had either tested positive or been identified as a recent close contact were reached and told to self-isolate, people who might otherwise have gone on to unknowingly spread the virus.

Between 28 January and 3 February, 264,577 people were identified as recent close contacts, with 96.5% of those with communication details provided reached and told to self-isolate. Since Test and Trace launched 89.8% of close contacts for whom communication details were provided have been reached.

During 28 January to 3 February, 90.2% (217,148) of contacts that were reached were reached within 3 days of the case that reported them taking their test, while the median time taken for contacts to be reached from the case that identified them reporting their first observed symptoms was 78 hours.

The NHS COVID-19 app has now been updated with the capability to alert users in postcode district areas where there is a variant of concern to provide additional messaging to users, for example that they may be eligible for surge testing, even if they don't have symptoms and where to find more information.

NHS Test and Trace's test site network continues to expand. With more than 850 test sites in operation, including 484 local test sites, people are travelling a shorter distance than ever before to get a test. The median distance travelled for a test is just 2.0 miles, a record for the service, compared to 5.1 miles as recently as September.

NHS Test and Trace has also delivered its best median turnaround times for home test kit results since the service launched last May, with a median turnaround time of 34 hours. The service is ensuring that those who are required to take a COVID-19 test are able to access one without visiting a test centre and meeting demand despite the current weather conditions.

More than 300 local authorities have joined forces with NHS Test and Trace to launch local tracing partnerships, combining specialist local expertise with the data and resources of NHS Test and Trace. These partnerships enable NHS Test and Trace to go further in supporting people who have tested positive for COVID-19 and tracing their recent contacts.

Health Minister Lord Bethell said:

More people than ever before have had a COVID-19 test this week and have also received their test result quickly and conveniently despite the demands on the service. These numbers are hugely impressive and have an enormous impact on the spread of the virus.

This week NHS Test and Trace have identified 149,317 positive cases and 264,577 contacts of those cases, leading to 377,391 people being told to isolate. This continues to have a significant impact on breaking the chains of transmission.

The number of LFD tests conducted across the country has continued to increase at pace, ensuring NHS Test and Trace can identify people who are infectious, but not showing symptoms. Around one in 3 people with COVID-19 don't display symptoms. This means every positive LFD test helps us break a chain of transmission we wouldn't have identified otherwise.

Interim Executive Chair of the National Institute for Health Protection, Baroness Dido Harding, said:

We are continuing to deliver effective results at speed, and it is a continuation of the programme's strong start to the year. More than a third of the English population has now been tested for COVID-19 at least once which is crucial in halting the spread of the virus.

I am incredibly grateful to everyone involved in NHS Test and Trace who are working non-stop to help us combat the spread of the virus.

Testing

As of 9 February, more than 75 million tests have been processed in the UK in total since testing began, more than any other comparable European country.

In the latest reporting week, 2,372,358 lateral flow device (LFD) tests have

been carried out, which is 17 times higher than those conducted in mid December. The number of LFD tests has been increasing across all regions for the past month, with most in this reporting week conducted in the South West followed by the North West.

Pillar 1 test results made available within 24 hours has increased to 96.6%, compared with last week's percentage of 95.1%. 96.0% of satellite tests were received within 3 days after the day they were taken, compared with 96.5% the previous week.

Over the past months, the government has put in place the largest network of diagnostic testing facilities created in British history. NHS Test and Trace currently has the capacity to carry out more than 790,000 tests per day, compared to 2,000 just 9 months ago.

Tracing

So far, more than 8.6 million cases and contacts have been reached and told to self-isolate by contact tracers.

Tracing performance has remained high with 87.0% of cases and 93.5% of contacts reached last week. The proportion of contacts reached within 24 hours once identified as a contact was consistent with the previous week at 98.0%.

149,317 positive cases were transferred to contact tracers between 28 January and 3 February, with 129,880 reached and told to self-isolate.

Background information

The [weekly statistics from the 36th week of NHS Test and Trace \(England\)](#) show in the most recent week of operations (28 January to 3 February):

- the proportion of contacts reached by tracing service has remained consistent at 93.5%
- 87.0% of people who tested positive and were transferred to the contact-tracing system were reached and asked to provide information about their contacts, compared with 87.2% the previous week
- 96.5% of contacts where communication details were given were reached and told to self-isolate, compared with 96.6% the previous week
- 97.6% of in-person test results were received the next day after the test was taken, compared with 97.2% of tests the previous week
- 96.6% of pillar 1 test results were made available within 24 hours, compared with 95.1% the previous week
- 86.2% of in-person test results were received within 24 hours after the test was taken, compared with 82.7% the previous week
- 96.0% of satellite test results were received within 3 days after the day they were taken, compared with 96.5% the previous week

Last month, the government announced an additional £20 million to local authorities to cover the cost of the Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme, to ensure people continue to have access to the support they need to stay at

home and reduce the transmission of COVID-19. This includes an additional £10 million to enable local authorities to continue making discretionary payments to people who fall outside the scope of the main scheme, but who will still face hardship if required to self-isolate.

[NHS COVID-19 app stats will be published weekly from 18 February on the NHS website](#)

The [methodology used to calculate the impact that testing, tracing and self-isolation could be having on transmission](#), referred to in the [NHS Test and Trace business plan](#), has been published.

[Tim Richards announced as new chair of the British Film Institute](#)

Tim Richards has been appointed as the next Chair of the BFI, Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden has announced today.

Oliver Dowden has confirmed that Richards will take up the position as Chair from Tuesday 16th February and will serve a term of up to 3 years.

Since Richards founded Vue International in 1999, the cinema operator has expanded to 225 multiplex cinemas across Europe and Taiwan attracting over 100 million customers a year to screenings. He joined the BFI as a Governor in 2013 and has held positions on many industry boards since 2007.

Oliver Dowden, Culture Secretary, said:

The BFI showcases the great creativity and innovation of the UK's hugely successful screen sectors, which are already bouncing back strongly. I know Tim will be a brilliant champion for the industry and his extensive experience will help ensure the BFI plays an important role in our cultural and economic recovery.

Tim Richards, BFI Chair Designate, said:

I am honoured and thrilled to have been asked to chair the BFI, especially at such a crucial time for the arts and cultural sector. British film and television have always had a unique power to inspire people globally and I am confident that Britain's talent and creativity will help lead the screen industries to a great future.

Ben Roberts, BFI Chief Executive, said:

It's great news that Tim Richards will be the BFI's new Chair. Having been on the BFI Board for 7 years, Tim is already under the skin of our organisation, and has been an incredible supporter and champion of the work we do across film culture. His experience and knowledge of the business of film, particularly across exhibition but also across skills and education, will be enormously valuable to the BFI and I am very much looking forward to working closely with him as he steers us into our next exciting chapter.

The appointment process for the BFI chair is made in accordance with the Cabinet Office's Code for Public Appointments and is regulated by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments' (OCPAs).

Official figures recently released by the BFI revealed strong signs of economic recovery in UK film and high-end TV production, including a £1.19 billion upturn in production spend for film and high-end TV in the last three months of 2020. Restarting film and TV activity has been made possible by the Government's £500 million Film and TV Production Restart Scheme, which has already supported more than 170 productions across the UK.

The BFI has also awarded more than £16 million in grant support to over 200 independent cinemas from the Culture Recovery Fund on behalf of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. More grant applications from independent cinemas are also currently being assessed. At the start of the year, cinemas were able to apply for another £14 million in grants as part of the second round of the Culture Recovery Fund. The new round of funding is in addition to the £30 million already being allocated by the BFI.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

In 1999, Tim Richards left Warner Bros. Studio in Los Angeles to found Vue International, which has grown into a leading international cinema operator with 225 multiplex cinemas in nine countries in Europe and in Taiwan. Over the course of the past 30 years in cinema exhibition, Tim has developed extensive international experience in all major markets globally. In December 2020, Variety Magazine named Tim as one of the 500 most influential business leaders shaping the global \$2 trillion entertainment industry. The Hollywood Reporter named Tim as one of the top five entertainment innovators of the Year and The Independent newspaper named Tim as one of the "20 Most Influential People in Film".

All appointments are made on merit and political activity plays no part in the selection process. There is a requirement for appointees to publicly declare any political activity. No political activity has been declared by Tim Richards.

About the BFI

The BFI is the UK's lead organisation for film, television and the moving image. It is a cultural charity that:

- Curates and presents the greatest international public programme of world cinema for audiences; in cinemas, at festivals and online
- Cares for the BFI National Archive – the most significant film and television archive in the world
- Actively seeks out and supports the next generation of filmmakers
- Works with Government and industry to make the UK the most creatively exciting and prosperous place to make film internationally

Founded in 1933, the BFI is a registered charity governed by Royal Charter.