

Use of schools in the May 2021 Elections

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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.

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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.

Government announces £20 million SME Brexit Support Fund

- Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster announces £20 million SME Brexit Support Fund to help small businesses with changes to trade rules with the EU;
- Traders will be able to apply for a grant of up to £2,000 to pay for practical support for importing and exporting;
- Fund will help businesses to prepare for the implementation of import controls which come into force from April and July.

Today (Thursday 11 February), the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster Michael Gove has announced a £20 million SME Brexit Support Fund to support small and medium sized businesses (SMEs) adjust to new customs, rules of

origin, and VAT rules when trading with the EU.

SMEs who trade only with the EU and are therefore new to importing and exporting processes will be encouraged to apply for grants of up to £2,000 for each trader to pay for practical support including training and professional advice to ensure they can continue trading effectively with the EU.

This announcement follows extensive engagement with individual businesses, leading business organisations and trade associations from across all parts of the UK, including through the Brexit Business Taskforce. Chaired by Michael Gove the weekly meetings provided an opportunity to identify challenges and find solutions to outstanding issues. To provide SMEs with additional support, the fund will be administered through the pre-existing Customs Grant Scheme and will open for applications next month.

It has been set up to support businesses prepare for the new import controls coming into force from April and July, as set out in the [Border Operating Model](#). Having taken back control of our borders, we made the pragmatic decision to introduce new import controls in three stages up to 1 July 2021 to allow traders and hauliers time to adjust to new processes. This means businesses do not have to complete new import declarations for up to six months, unless they are moving controlled goods.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster said:

The Government has listened carefully to the issues raised by the business community through the Brexit Business Taskforce and that's why we are bringing forward this financial support to help small businesses adapt to the changes to our trading relationship with the EU.

This new targeted funding will see small businesses get more of the practical support they need to adjust to the new processes and prepare for further changes as we implement our own import controls in April and July.

Together we will seize new opportunities available to a fully independent global trading United Kingdom.

Members of the Brexit Business Taskforce have welcomed the additional support.

Mike Cherry, National Chair at the Federation of Small Businesses, said:

Today's announcement is very significant. Small businesses, often with few cash reserves, are for the first time facing complex new customs processes, VAT requirements and rules of origin. While many have come to FSB for help, we have been asking for proper financial assistance of this scale, so that a cash-strapped small business

can afford to buy-in expertise, training and practical support. The new fund will make a significant difference, and we are pleased that Ministers have really engaged with us on this, and come up with an excellent response.

Allie Rennison, Head of Trade Policy at the Institute of Directors said:

This support package delivers on the IoD's longstanding campaign to help SMEs access the professional advice needed in managing a suite of changes arising from Brexit.

Smaller firms simply cannot manage many of the processes themselves and require experts across a range of areas to assist with trade continuity, and we commend this government for responding to our call.

The government is also announcing that Logistics UK will be joining the Brexit Business Taskforce as standing members from today. Logistics UK's constructive engagement and advocacy in tackling issues relating to the end of the transition period has been vital in supporting hauliers, traders and their supply chains adjust to our new relationship with the EU.

David Wells, Chief Executive of Logistics UK said:

Logistics UK welcomes the additional support that is being put in place to help SMEs make sure they can adapt and succeed in the new trading environment. These issues directly impact the operations and livelihoods of our members who carry their produce into the EU and have to be confident that the correct paperwork is in place.

I'm delighted that the government has recognised the importance of Logistics to our economy, and the critical role it plays in our future trading relationships with the EU, by inviting Logistics UK to represent the sector on the Brexit Business Taskforce, alongside the other major business groups in the UK. Logistics UK has been at the forefront of helping government to keep Britain trading and I look forward to continuing our challenging and constructive dialogue focused on securing the best possible outcome for the whole sector and the economy.

In the last week we have seen overall freight flows between GB and the EU reach 98% when compared to the same time last year. There is still no disruption at ports and compliance with new rules remains high thanks to the continued efforts of hauliers and UK traders.

In addition to this new support, the government is:

- Meeting businesses from specific sectors across all parts of the UK

weekly through the Brexit Business Taskforce chaired by Michael Gove. The latest meeting focussed specifically on businesses in Wales;

- Establishing the Seafood Exports Working Group, meeting twice a week to troubleshoot issues raised by the industry; and a newly established Scottish Seafood Exports Task Force;
- Offering support to businesses moving goods between Great Britain and Northern Ireland through its Trader Support Service;
- Providing numerous [helplines](#) which businesses can contact if they need further information;
- This includes managing dedicated HMRC exporting telephone and online helplines; The number is 0300 322 9434 and businesses can also speak to an adviser online at tax.service.gov.uk;
- Running regular [webinars](#) with policy specialists;
- Providing the [Brexit Checker Tool](#) on GOV.UK which gives businesses a personalised list of actions that they need to take;
- Offering face-to-face support for exporters in delivered via a network of around 300 International Trade Advisers (ITAs);
- Leading a specific taskforce working with businesses across Northern Ireland and Great Britain on issues related to the Northern Ireland Protocol; and
- Operating a range of other support schemes including a guarantee scheme aimed at SMEs which means the government can provide an 80% guarantee on financial support from lenders to help with general exporting costs, up to the value of £25 million.

[Change of Her Majesty's Ambassador to Tajikistan: Tim Jones](#)

Press release

Mr Tim Jones has been appointed Her Majesty's Ambassador to the Republic of Tajikistan in succession to Mr Matthew Lawson.



Mr Tim Jones has been appointed Her Majesty's Ambassador to the Republic of

Tajikistan in succession to Mr Matthew Lawson who will be transferring to another Diplomatic Service appointment. Mr Jones will take up his appointment during September 2021.

Full name: Timothy Aidan Marschall Jones

Married to: Dr Christin Marschall Jones

Children: Two

Dates	Role
2013 to 2020	Berlin, First Secretary Economics, later Senior Economic Policy Advisor
2008 to 2013	Brussels, Principal Advisor, EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator, later Global Issues and Counter-Terrorism, European External Action Service
2006 to 2008	Lille, Consul General
2003 to 2006	FCO, Head of Operations, IT Strategy Unit
2003	FCO, Rapid Deployment Team Coordinator, Consular Division
1999 to 2002	Yerevan, Her Majesty's Ambassador
1996 to 1999	Tehran, Deputy Head of Mission, later Chargé d'Affaires
1994 to 1995	Mostar, Press and Liaison Officer, WEU Police Mission, EU Administration
1992 to 1994	FCO, Permanent Under Secretary's Department
1988 to 1992	The Hague, Second Secretary
1987 to 1988	Vienna, Member of the British Delegation to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe
1984 to 1986	FCO, Assistant Desk Officer, Western Europe Department

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