

Surge testing to be deployed in further areas in connection to new variants

Press release

More areas will have additional testing made available to control and suppress the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) variants.



Working in partnership with local authorities, additional surge testing and sequencing is being deployed to targeted areas around Worcestershire WR3, an area in Sefton PR9, and areas in Bristol and South Gloucestershire, where coronavirus (COVID-19) variants have been found.

Surge testing is in addition to existing extensive testing, and in combination with following the lockdown rules and remembering hands-face-space, will help to monitor and suppress the spread of the virus. Positive cases will be sequenced for genomic data to help understand coronavirus (COVID-19) variants and their spread within these areas.

People living in targeted areas with these locations are strongly encouraged to take a coronavirus (COVID-19) test this week, whether they are showing symptoms or not. People with symptoms should book a test in the usual way. People without symptoms should visit their local authority website for more information.

Surge testing in Kent ME15 which began on Monday is now complete. Council websites will be updated with more information as soon as it is available.

Published 6 February 2021

Smartphone technology in bid to revolutionise early detection of kidney disease

Patients with diabetes and high blood pressure are benefiting from pioneering artificial intelligence (AI) that turns a smartphone camera into a clinical-grade tool to detect early kidney disease.

NHSX, the digital transformation arm of the NHS, is supporting Healthy.io to offer 500,000 patients technology-supported home-testing kits over the next 3 years. More than 3,500 patients have already received their kits.

Patients taking part receive a simple test kit and smartphone app that allows them to test, scan and transmit their results to their GP within minutes, without leaving home.

The technology developed by Healthy.io essentially turns patients' smartphone cameras into medical devices – analysing testing images and producing results regardless of lighting conditions, setting or camera type.

With chronic kidney disease affecting around 1 in 10 people in the UK, this new testing and technology is designed to reduce unnecessary trips to the GP and hospital. It should encourage more people to seek an early diagnosis, ultimately saving thousands of lives each year.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

This is another brilliant example of how innovative technologies are transforming healthcare and improving lives. Patients are able to receive a diagnosis sooner, saving time for clinicians so they can spend more time on treatment, and ultimately saving more lives through earlier diagnosis.

This innovation is another step forwards in making high-quality healthcare more accessible – in some cases without leaving the comfort of your own home.

Matthew Gould, Chief Executive of NHSX, said:

Artificial intelligence holds enormous potential for the NHS and in many areas is already providing radical benefits for patients and clinicians.

The use of this latest testing technology is another huge step forward enabling us to provide earlier diagnosis of disease and improve patient care and treatment outcomes while also freeing up

NHS staff.

The technology is one of 42 innovations that are being supported by the first round of the AI in Health and Care Award programme, managed by the Accelerated Access Collaborative in partnership with NHSX and the National Institute for Health Research.

In a project at Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust, the team found that by allowing people with type 1 diabetes to self-test at home, the testing rate rose from 0% to 79% among the consented untested population. Almost 1 in 5 were found to have abnormal or highly abnormal results.

Dr David Lipscomb, diabetes clinical lead at Sussex Community Foundation NHS Trust, said:

The service has enabled us to identify and prioritise follow-up care for people who may have early-stage chronic kidney disease that could have otherwise gone undetected.

It allows us to offer our patients a new way of engaging with their care that is more convenient for both patients and staff.

With Healthy.io's CKD Early Detection Service, people receive a test kit by mail, which includes a standard urine dipstick, a urine collection pot and a patented colour board. An app guides the user through the test, which includes scanning the dipstick on the colour board using a standard smartphone camera.

Using AI and colourmetric analysis, the app is able to read the dipstick results equivalent to a lab-based device. Results are then shared instantly with the individual's GP practice, which can follow up if there is an abnormal result.

During the ongoing pandemic, by offering at-home tests to populations at higher risk, such as those living with diabetes, the NHS can provide an easy alternative to visiting the clinic.

The technology is being tested and evaluated over a 3-year period to explore its benefits at scale before a potential roll-out across the NHS.

Dr Indra Joshi, Director of AI at NHSX, said:

Technologies like this have great potential to identify serious disease earlier, and can empower people to make the lifestyle changes needed to help better manage their condition.

Enabling people to self-test at home using their smartphone's camera can ease the burden on frontline services whilst encouraging uptake of an important test that is far easier to conduct at home.

Through the AI Award we are testing some of the most promising AI-based innovations to see if the NHS should consider spreading them on a much larger scale to even more patients.

According to an independent evaluation by the York Health Economics Consortium, if rolled out nationally Healthy.io's solution has the potential to save more than 11,000 lives and save the NHS at least £660 million over 5 years.

Katherine Ward, Chief Commercial Officer and Managing Director of UK and Europe, Healthy.io, said:

Chronic kidney disease is a silent killer and has a major impact on society, yet very few people are aware of its dangers. Early detection of the disease from the comfort of home will help people avoid dialysis or transplant and will be a huge cost saving for the NHS.

The NHS has been at the forefront of the AI revolution with the creation of the NHS AI Lab within NHSX and the £140 million AI in Health and Care Award programme, which in September announced the first 42 innovations approved, each receiving a share of over £50 million.

The package also includes funding to support the research, development and testing of promising ideas that could be used in the NHS in future to help speed up diagnosis or improve care for a range of conditions including sepsis, cancer and Parkinson's.

The NHS is committed to becoming a world leader in the use of AI and machine learning, aiming to reap the benefits that range from faster and more personalised diagnosis to greater efficiency in screening services.

To deliver technology for use in health and care, the NHS AI Lab in January published A Guide to Good Practice for Digital and Data-driven Health Technologies, setting out what the NHS is looking for when it buys digital and data-driven technology for use in health and care.

[Read the full Sussex case study](#)

[Read a case study of the service that won an HSJ and BMJ award](#)

[Read the York Health Economics Consortium estimate of cost savings](#)

[Read the NICE Medtech Innovation Briefing on the product](#)

Measures announced to boost international study and global opportunities

- Government bolsters International Education Strategy to grow global opportunities and help the sector build back better from the pandemic
- New measures to attract overseas students and plans for new international teaching qualification based on world-renowned domestic standards
- Next phase of the landmark £110 million Turing scheme unveiled, offering students of all backgrounds across the UK the chance to study and work abroad

New measures aimed at attracting more overseas students, boosting access to global student exchanges for thousands of people, and supporting international education partnerships have been announced today (6 February) by the Government.

Following the announcement in December of the new £110 million Turing scheme, a new website has gone live today with funding and eligibility details so that universities, colleges and schools to prepare for bids to open in Spring. The pioneering scheme will support students from across the UK and from all backgrounds to take advantage of the benefits of studying and working abroad from September 2021.

To help level up opportunities for more people, the scheme will look to target students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The updated International Education Strategy, led by the Department for Education (DfE) and the Department for International Trade (DIT), will work alongside the scheme, focused on supporting the education sector to build back better from the pandemic by boosting global growth opportunities.

This updated strategy reaffirms the Government's commitment to increase the amount generated from education exports, such as fees and income from overseas students and English language teaching abroad, to £35bn a year, and sustainably recruit at least 600,000 international students to the UK by 2030.

It also outlines plans for a new international teaching qualification (iQTS) so teachers around the globe can train to world-leading domestic standards and support growing international demand for high quality teaching. It also highlights recent changes including streamlining application processes and boosting job prospects for international students.

Universities Minister, Michelle Donelan said:

In these unprecedented times, having a proactive global education

agenda is more important than ever so we can build back better from the pandemic. Our world-class education is a vital part of our economy and society, and we want to support universities, schools, colleges and all aspects of the education sector to thrive across the globe.

We are committed to making sure our students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, can benefit from studying and working abroad. Working with the British Council, we will open up the globe to our young people, and I look forward to seeing the exciting and enriching opportunities the Turing scheme will bring.

I am also pleased to launch initiatives to enhance the experience of international students at our universities, from the moment they apply, to the first steps of their careers.

Minister for Exports Graham Stuart MP, said:

The UK offers world-class education. Thanks to our global reputation for excellence and strong presence in international markets, our education exports – from EdTech to transnational education – reached £23.3 billion in 2018.

I'm proud to lead the Department for International Trade's education work, as our International Education Strategy aims to help the sector recover from the impacts of the pandemic. It's vital we help the UK's world-renowned education industry to build back better by exporting our brilliant goods, services, skills and innovation across the globe.

Schools, colleges and universities can now access details on the Turing Scheme including funding rates and eligibility criteria to help them to prepare applications for the new scheme ahead of the applications window opening in the next few weeks.

The updated Strategy's measures to boost the UK's world-renowned education exports include:

- Launching a consultation for a new international teaching qualification, International Qualified Teacher Status (iQTS), to enable teachers around the world to train to domestic standards, supporting the sector to meet growing international demand for its high quality teacher training;
- Promoting UK teaching methods for supporting those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) internationally;
- Setting out priority countries for the International Education Champion,

Sir Steve Smith, to work with, promoting growth for exports and addressing any barriers in the global market.

International Education Champion, Sir Steve Smith, said:

I warmly welcome this revised International Education Strategy. Not only does it show the progress we have made since the launch of the original strategy in March 2019, but it outlines concrete measures to support the entire education sector across all parts of the UK to achieve the goals of at least 600,000 international students coming to the UK, and educational exports rising to £35bn by 2030.

Changes to the visa arrangements, the new iQTS, a focus on a set of priority markets and the launch of the Turing mobility scheme will all support making the UK an even more successful and attractive educational powerhouse.

UK education providers can take advantage of schemes such as UK Export Finance's General Export Facility, an export guarantee scheme that can be used by firms to help cover the everyday costs linked to exporting.

Further export support includes enhancing the international student experience from application to employment, connecting international demand for chartered body qualifications to UK education suppliers, and identifying specific Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) export opportunities for UK businesses.

Attracting inward investment will also form part of the sector recovery plans, with the government building on its promotion of the UK Education Technology sector and expanding into new sub-sectors, further stimulating foreign direct investment into all corners of the UK.

The International Education Strategy is supported by the Government's 'Education is GREAT' trade promotion campaign, which represents the UK's offer of education provision to prospective international students or trade partners in other countries. As part of the campaign, DIT has developed a virtual programme to support the global recovery of the education sector's international activity.

Chief Executive of Association of Colleges, David Hughes said:

The Turing scheme opens the world's door to work and study placements for college students. This is an important part of 'levelling up' the life chances for all of our young people – whatever their background.

International mobility motivates and inspires young people to understand their place in the world, develop their life skills and build confidence and ambition. I strongly encourage colleges new to

international exchanges to consider participating in Turing and hope that those who have been involved before can use this to extend opportunities for students.

Vivienne Stern, Director of Universities UK International, said:

I am very supportive of the International Education Strategy, which represents the next step in a joint effort by Government and the education sector to build on the international success of our education system and our attractiveness to international students. This approach has delivered real benefits already, including the introduction of the graduate route, and improvements to the visa system. Despite a very difficult year, interest in UK study has grown as a result.

The strategy is not only about attracting students to the UK. We particularly welcome the launch of the Turing Scheme, which will create new opportunities for students in UK universities to gain valuable international experience. We know these opportunities enable graduates to develop the skills employers need, and that the benefits are most pronounced for those from less advantaged backgrounds.

We look forward to continuing to be partners, working with our members, Government and others across the sector, to deliver the strategy.

Colin Riordan, Cardiff University Vice-Chancellor, said:

The government's commitment to outward mobility for UK students is very much to be welcomed. The new Turing scheme will help our students achieve more in their degrees and become more employable, but the benefits are more than economic. Anybody who is involved in outward student mobility knows that spending time abroad can be a positively life-changing experience for our students.

Studying abroad enhances their intercultural awareness, their language skills, their tolerance and their professional networks. It also boosts confidence, self-awareness, independence, curiosity, flexibility and adaptability. The focus on widening participation in Turing is a major positive. The UK has never had its own, government-funded outward mobility scheme. Turing presents a historic opportunity to shape our own destiny, and we should seize it.

Kate Ewart-Biggs, British Council interim Chief Executive, said:

The Strategy is a welcome route map for where UK international education should put its efforts in the coming years. Importantly, the new Turing scheme, which the British Council will help to deliver, will enable thousands of students to study around the world. It will target and provide support to students from disadvantaged backgrounds, making life-changing opportunities accessible to everyone across the country.

[Interim Libyan executive authority: P3 + 2 statement](#)

The Governments of France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom and the United States of America welcome the agreement reached by the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum on a unified interim Libyan executive authority charged with leading the country to national elections on December 24, 2021.

This critical step towards reaching a negotiated, inclusive political solution is the result of a genuinely Libyan-led and Libyan-owned process, the mediation of the United Nations, and the support of the Libyan people.

In this respect, we commend the extraordinary commitment of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya and of Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General Stephanie Williams. We look forward to fully supporting the work of Special Envoy Ján Kubiš.

We call on all current Libyan authorities and actors to ensure a smooth and constructive handover of all competences and duties to the new unified executive authority.

Since the Berlin Conference, Libya has made significant progress toward securing lasting peace and stability, including through the reopening of the energy sector, the nationwide ceasefire agreement of 23 October 2020, the roadmap for holding national elections in December 2021, and now the selection of a unified, interim executive authority.

A long road still lies ahead. The unified executive authority will have to implement the ceasefire agreement, provide essential public services to the Libyan people, initiate a program for meaningful reconciliation, address critical national budget needs, and organize national elections. The new interim government, to be proposed by the designated Prime Minister, should be truly inclusive, allowing all Libyans to be represented, including with regard to gender, ethnicity and regional origin.

We call on the delegates of the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum to maintain their important function, guaranteeing the focus of the new unified executive authority on preparing and holding elections as decided by the Forum.

At the Berlin Conference on Libya last year, the international community committed to supporting a resolution to Libya's conflict. In the spirit of that commitment, all participants of the Conference should now support the new executive authority in fulfilling its duties to the Libyan people, fully implement the arms embargo, and support the immediate withdrawal of all foreign fighters and mercenaries.

We stand ready to hold to account those who threaten stability or undermine the political process in Libya.

[PM call with President Macron: 5 February 2021](#)

Press release

Prime Minister Boris Johnson spoke to French President Emmanuel Macron.



The Prime Minister spoke to French President Emmanuel Macron this evening.

The leaders discussed the fight against coronavirus. The Prime Minister emphasised the important role world leaders will play in ensuring that vaccines are rolled out effectively so that we can defeat the pandemic. The leaders agreed that a successful global vaccination programme will require a collaborative effort between governments.

The Prime Minister outlined the UK's priorities for our G7 Presidency, including working together to build back better from coronavirus and tackling climate change ahead of the UK-hosted COP26 Summit in November.

The Prime Minister welcomed the agreement of the UK-EU Trade Deal in

December. The Prime Minister said that the UK's departure from the EU offered a huge opportunity to deepen and widen our bilateral relationship with France and the leaders looked forward to working together to realise that opportunity.

The leaders discussed a number of international issues including Iran, Yemen, Libya and Russia. They agreed that European leadership from the UK, France and others continues to be instrumental in making the world safer and more secure.

The Prime Minister and President Macron agreed that cooperation remained crucial as we tackle the challenges ahead and resolved to stay in close contact.

Published 5 February 2021