

Oliver Dowden speech to RESET 2021

Welcome to RESET, and thank you for inviting me to join you at the very first conference of this kind.

It's great to see the sector coming together in this way to talk about how we can rebuild and recover from coronavirus.

But before we get into COVID, I'd just like to pay tribute to the industry as it was before this terrible pandemic shook the world – and how it will be, I am confident again once this crisis is over.

The advertising industry is really one of our creative giants.

It contributed £17 billion to our economy in 2019, employing more than 190,000 people across the country. It's a vital cornerstone of our wider, world-leading creative culture – supporting the artists who transition to film and TV, and all the lighting technicians, make-up artists and other people who make up our creative army.

That's the economic bottom line.

But then of course there's the artistry of the sector – which I think is something too many people tend to overlook.

Just like the James Bond film or Sally Rooney novel, things like the John Lewis Christmas ads are now cultural events in their own right. Across the Atlantic, the commercial breaks for the Super Bowl are a reflection of the state of the nation, and of the values of American society at that moment in time.

We look to art for a commentary on history, and on our collective values and experiences and today, ads do just that.

I also think too many people forget the raw power of the sector in terms of the impact it has on every part of our lives.

A well-crafted advert or campaign can influence the way we look. What we eat and drink. How we vote, and the way we behave during a global pandemic.

Never have people been more interested in the power of messaging to change people's behaviour – and never has that task been more urgent – than in the past year.

A few simple phrases – for example “Stay home. Protect the NHS. Save Lives” – may have been the difference that protected thousands of people from coronavirus.

So can I express my gratitude on behalf of the government for the way the industry has teamed up with us to promote our public health messaging during coronavirus, and for all the advertising space it has given over to us for

free, even as you are struggling as the sector itself comes under incredible strain from COVID.

Of course I know that ad spend fell by more than 14% as a result of COVID – though I'm glad to see that during this latest phase it is now holding up better than before.

Yet even with this turbulence, in 2020, the advertising industry harnessed its immense power and directed it against coronavirus for the national good.

While we're on the theme of COVID, I'd like to briefly address an issue I know is of significant interest to the sector.

COVID has been a stark reminder of course to us all of the importance of physical health – and one of our most urgent tasks as a government is reducing obesity and getting the nation strong and fit for the future.

I know that this is a major priority for the Prime Minister, who is on his own personal health mission. And in turn it's his priority for the entire country.

A central part of this is making sure the information and media children are exposed to – and that includes adverts – promotes a healthy, balanced diet.

With that in mind, we have announced our intention to ban adverts for products that are high in fat, sugar and salt being shown on TV before 9pm. We are also committed to addressing this online, crucially in parallel with broadcast, and are currently considering the introduction of a total HFSS advertising restriction on the internet.

This decision was taken against the specific and, as I hope you'll appreciate, exceptional backdrop of a health emergency. I believe it's the right one, given all that COVID has taught us.

However, I do genuinely appreciate it will have a really significant impact at what is already a very difficult time for the sector.

I understand those concerns, and I will continue to listen to the industry to make sure we get this right, and enable the shift to advertising healthier products.

And I will fight your corner in the coming months and years, making sure you have a strong and clear voice in government.

Of course, if COVID wasn't enough, the industry is also having to grapple with some deep structural changes that were brewing long before the pandemic.

The internet has been a huge force for good in our lives, but it has also disrupted almost every single sector – and of course advertising is no exception to that.

Online advertising now accounts for over half of all UK advertising spend, with companies increasingly shifting away from more traditional forms, like

newspapers and television.

The rise of online advertising has brought huge benefits, particularly for smaller companies. It has made things cheaper, and more direct – enabling advertisers to target their messages straight onto the Facebook page or browsers of the people they most want to reach.

But it has also brought a number of challenges. There are growing concerns about brand safety, about transparency and accountability; around content standards, and harm.

Most of all, the rise of online advertising has created a fundamental imbalance: between publishers, advertisers and the online platforms upon which they increasingly rely.

It's time to even the playing field.

At the end of last year, we announced that we are establishing a new, pro-competition regime for digital markets as part of that strategy.

I am unashamedly pro-tech, and am proud as Digital Secretary to help oversee one of the strongest tech sectors, not only in Europe but in the world.

But we want to make sure big tech cannot exploit its dominance to crowd out competition and innovation, and expose people to unfair or exploitative practices – with businesses and consumers in turn paying the price.

So we are establishing a Digital Markets Unit, housed in the Competition and Markets Authority, to enforce a new code of conduct for tech giants.

And we are going to tackle the devastating knock-on effects that anti-competitive practices have had on our newspaper industry, which were outlined in the Cairncross Review.

However, given the speed and scale of all this change, now is a good time to step back and consider the impact of online advertising much more generally.

I want to see advertising that is fair, accountable and ethical. That is why, last year, as part of the Online Advertising Programme, we opened a call for evidence asking for views on the extent to which consumers are exposed to harmful or misleading advertising online, and whether the scale and speed of online transactions is creating challenges for the existing regulatory system.

We are considering responses to this call for evidence and will follow up, I can assure you, later this year.

Thankfully though, the industry has been incredibly proactive at recognising and addressing many of these challenges off your own back – an effort that began back in the 60s, when the introduction of the Advertising Standards Authority set a gold standard for the rest of the world to follow. Great progress is being made across a range of initiatives, such as the work through Project Origin to deliver more transparent measurement of advertising

online. And I'll be watching with particular interest the progress the ASA is making on its "More Impact Online" strategy – including its work to introduce a set of new Online Gatekeeper Standards. This is a central task in ensuring all online players are bound into the regulation of advertising, and in finding a sufficient and reliable funding solution. Given this is a key area where progress is long overdue, my department is willing to consider other ways of solving this problem as part of our upcoming work, should this and other voluntary approaches fail. With that in mind, it's a good moment to use my final remarks to call on every player in the online advertising market – many of whom I know are represented here today – to work with the ASA to ensure the industry is fit for the digital age. That task is just one of many challenges facing advertising today – which now includes the unprecedented backdrop of a global health pandemic.

I know its going to be a long road back, but I also see the glimmer of a real opportunity here.

In the coming months, if the vaccine rollout maintains its current pace, the government will be able to start reopening the economy. With any luck, the Euro 2020 and the Tokyo Olympics will finally make it onto our screens – complete with the usual carnival of colourful adverts from world-famous brands like Adidas and Nike.

And we will be getting ready to launch our own huge tourism campaign, to broadcast to the rest of the world that Britain is back open for business. This crescendo will build all the way to the showstopper events of 2022 to which I'm looking forward enormously – the Platinum Jubilee, the Commonwealth Games, Festival UK 2022 – all of which represent huge opportunities for the industry.

As we regroup and begin to recover, advertising will be there every step of the way – heralding the return of all the things that make life worth living and for which we're all yearning.

And it will also be absolutely pivotal in rebuilding our economy back to full strength. A strong market economy needs advertisers, and your immense creativity, to help consumers make choices.

You, almost more than any other sector, can turbocharge our recovery.

And the government will be here to support you through that post-COVID transition – making sure you have an environment in which you can thrive during the coming months and years.

It's one of the reasons we felt it was so important to secure work permit exemptions for advertising and other industries in our deal with the EU – and why we extended essential support packages like the furlough scheme through to the end of April.

Most of all, though, this pandemic represents a genuine opportunity to stop, and to take a moment to think about how we can do things differently.

To reset, as this conference asks us to, and build back better.

As we exit this pandemic, we have the chance to leave a stronger, more equitable, more resilient advertising sector in its wake. I look forward to building it with you.

Thank you.

[New standard tenancy agreement to help renters with well behaved pets](#)

- New standard tenancy agreement makes it easier for tenants with pets to find rented accommodation
- Landlords no longer able to issue a blanket ban on pets
- Just 7% of private landlords currently advertise pet friendly properties

Responsible tenants with well-behaved pets will be able to secure leases more easily through the new Model Tenancy Agreement announced by the government today (28 January 2021).

Under the new [Model Tenancy Agreement](#), announced by Housing Minister Rt Hon Christopher Pincher MP, landlords will no longer be able to issue blanket bans on pets.

Instead, consent for pets will be the default position, and landlords will have to object in writing within 28 days of a written pet request from a tenant and provide a good reason.

Currently, just 7% of private landlords advertise pet friendly properties, meaning many people struggle to find suitable homes. In some cases, this has meant people have had to give up their pets all together.

The Model Tenancy Agreement is the government's recommended contract for landlords. With figures showing that more than half of adults in the United Kingdom own a pet and many more welcoming pets into their lives during the pandemic, these changes mean more landlords will cater for responsible pet owners.

Under the new agreement, rejections should only be made where there is good reason, such as in smaller properties or flats where owning a pet could be impractical. To ensure landlords are protected, tenants will continue to have a legal duty to repair or cover the cost of any damage to the property.

Housing Minister Rt Hon Christopher Pincher MP said:

We are a nation of animal lovers and over the last year more people than ever before have welcome pets into their lives and homes.

But it can't be right that only a tiny fraction of landlords advertise pet friendly properties and in some cases people have had to give up their beloved pets in order to find somewhere to live.

Through the changes to the tenancy agreement we are making today, we are bringing an end to the unfair blanket ban on pets introduced by some landlords. This strikes the right balance between helping more people find a home that's right for them and their pet while ensuring landlords' properties are safeguarded against inappropriate or badly behaved pets.

Figures on pet ownership taken from The People's Dispensary for Sick Animals (PDSA), February 2020

The Model Tenancy Agreement is intended for use in England

[New UK Government Covid testing site opens in Cumbernauld](#)

The UK Government has today, Thursday 28 January, opened a new drive-through coronavirus testing centre at Broadwood Stadium in Cumbernauld (G68 9NE).

The test centre is part of the largest network of diagnostic testing facilities created in British history. In Scotland, this comprises of seven drive through sites, 27 walk-through sites, 21 mobile units, plus the Glasgow Lighthouse Lab which is working round the clock to process samples.

In Scotland, the UK Government is providing all Covid testing and test processing outside of the NHS. Around two thirds of all daily tests are provided by the UK Government, in support of Scotland's health services.

Tests must be booked in advance at [NHS Inform](#) or by calling 0800 028 2816. People should only book at test if they have coronavirus symptoms (a high temperature, a new and continuous cough, or a loss or change to their sense of smell or taste).

Health Minister Lord Bethell said:

To respond to the coronavirus, we have built a major testing and tracing system from scratch. We are constantly working to expand and improve it with new technologies and innovations so everyone with symptoms can get a test.

New drive-in sites like this one make it even easier to get a test no matter where you live. If you have symptoms of coronavirus, I

urge you to book a test today and follow the advice of NHS Test and Protect if you are contacted to protect others and stop the spread of the virus.

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

Drive-through sites offer communities better access to coronavirus testing, so everyone with symptoms can get a test. This new site is part of our ongoing work to expand our testing network across the UK which now has the capacity to process more than 700,000 tests a day. We will continue to expand capacity to improve test turnaround times and push forward testing innovations to make sure anyone who needs a test can get one.

Please book a test if you have coronavirus symptoms: a new continuous cough, a high temperature and a loss or change in sense of smell or taste, and follow the advice of NHS Test and Protect if you are contacted.

UK Government Minister for Scotland, Iain Stewart said

The UK Government is doing everything it can to support people in all parts of the UK through the pandemic.

Testing continues to play an important role in how we manage the virus alongside the roll out of vaccines, helping to identify local outbreaks, slow down the rate of transmission and protect communities. I would like to thank the public for continuing to do the right thing and come forward to be tested when they display symptoms.

The UK Government continues to provide the bulk of testing in Scotland, with this new drive-through centre in Cumbernauld just the latest in our extensive network. We have also secured and paid for millions of doses of the Pfizer and Oxford vaccines for all parts of the UK.

Hope is on the horizon, but we can't let up on our efforts to contain the virus.

Gabe Docherty, Director of Public Health, NHS Lanarkshire said:

The public health department continues to contact-trace positive cases and clusters in our community and this addition to the UK testing provision is welcome.

I want to thank the public for their co-operation in reducing

spread of the virus and ask that they please remain vigilant. The general measures to minimise the risk of Covid-19 remain the same – face coverings, avoid crowded places, clean your hands, two metre distance, self-isolate and go for a test if you have symptoms.

Please do not hesitate if you have symptoms. It's critical that you go for a test and this drive-through centre is a very welcome addition to our testing capacity.

Simon Venn, Mitie Chief Government & Strategy Officer, said:

Our priority during the pandemic is to support the nation's efforts to fight COVID-19 and help keep the country running. Testing is a critical part of the UK's strategy to combat coronavirus and we're proud to support the UK Government with this vital task. A big thank you to all the NHS staff, Mitie employees and other frontline heroes in Cumbernauld, who are working tirelessly to keep us all safe.

9 in 10 test results returned next day by NHS Test and Trace

- Significant improvement in test turnaround times – 93.8% of in-person test results returned the next day after the test was taken, compared with 84.8% the week before
- 93.2% contacts reached – the highest percentage since NHS Test and Trace was launched
- 300 local tracing partnerships are now live across the country, demonstrating a strong national and local partnership to halt the spread of the virus

NHS Test and Trace continues its strong start to 2021 with 93.8% of in-person test results the next day after the test was taken, compared with 84.8% the week before. Turnaround times have now reduced to similar lengths of time seen at the beginning of December, following the increase over the festive period.

Not only are people able to receive a test result more quickly and conveniently, but the service has seen another record-breaking week in which the service reached 93.2% of contacts – the highest since Test and Trace was launched.

NHS Test and Trace has successfully reached 85.9% of the people who received a positive test result, and 93.2% of their contacts, making a real impact in

breaking chains of transmission. In total during the week of 14 to 20 January, 675,431 people who had either tested positive or their recent close contacts were reached and told to self-isolate, people who might otherwise have gone on to unknowingly infect others.

As NHS Test and Trace's test site network continues to expand, with more than 800 test sites in operation, including 448 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 2.1 miles, the lowest since the service was launched, compared to 5.1 miles as recently as September.

Alongside improving turnaround times for tests, testing capacity has also increased, with a fleet of 500 new and improved mobile testing units hitting the streets earlier this month.

The new vehicles offer twice the daily testing capacity of the original model, with the ability to store 1,000 test kits compared to the original's capacity of 500. This, combined with the doubling of the fleet's numbers overall from around 250 to 500, has significantly increased the testing capacity offered by the UK's mobile testing capability.

As NHS Test and Trace continues to employ innovation to increase testing capacity, the Milton Keynes Lighthouse laboratory, hosted by UK Biocentre, is on schedule to be able to process up to 225,000 samples per day. The laboratory is now using the LGC Biosearch Technologies' EndPoint PCR (EPCR) testing system for COVID-19, which is confirmed to be accurate and sensitive enough to be used for COVID-19 testing, including for those without symptoms. EPCR is a technology that can be used to detect SARS-CoV-2 RNA N1/N2 genes with high sensitivity and ultra-high capacity (up to 150,000 tests each day on a single instrument).

Health Minister Lord Bethell said:

The service is continuing to increase in capability and the testing capacity available is growing even further.

The turnaround times for test results have improved consistently since the start of the year, providing a service which ensures we contact as many people as possible, as quickly as possible.

More than one million LFD tests were conducted in this reporting week and exciting new technologies continue to come onboard to help us improve our detection of positive cases. Around 1 in 3 people with COVID-19 do not display symptoms, meaning you can infect others unknowingly. It is therefore crucial that we continue to follow public health guidance, and all play our part by following the rules and reducing our social contact to slow the spread of the virus.

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

Every week of 2021 we have seen a new record broken by NHS Test and Trace. This reporting week, 93.2% of contacts of those who tested positive for coronavirus have been successfully reached, a testament to the service's performance levels and a continuation of the programme's strong start to the year.

It is fantastic to see so many local tracing partnerships now underway and reaching 300 is a significant achievement. These partnerships give us better insights on where transmission of infection is occurring and increase the number of cases we are able to contact-trace. We're incredibly grateful to everyone involved in the national and local teams across the country who are working non-stop to help us combat the spread of the virus.

Commenting on the introduction of the EPCR PCR testing system at Milton Keynes Lighthouse Lab, Tim Robinson CBE, Chief Executive, LGC, said:

We are extremely proud of the work achieved at the UK Biocentre. LGC's testing solution leverages established PCR technology, enables rapid processing of unparalleled volumes of samples per instrument, and delivers clinical grade results. It also provides a significant reduction in the volume of PCR components required for the tests, providing significant cost savings to the NHS and reducing supply chain pressures.

Prior to the coronavirus pandemic, infectious disease testing at this scale was never envisaged. Now in rapid time, we have a validated testing system that will enable clinical laboratories to perform COVID-19 molecular testing workflows, allowing for mass testing.

Testing

As of 27 January, more than 66 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, 1,332,525 lateral flow device (LFD) tests have been carried out, with 3,932,951 conducted in total since first introduced in October.

Pillar 1 test results made available within 24 hours is consistent with last week's total (94.8%) and this has remained broadly consistent since Test and Trace began. 94.8% of satellite tests were received within 3 days after the day they were taken, compared with 92.9% 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 now 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 7.7 million cases and contacts have been reached and told to self-isolate by contact tracers.

Tracing performance has remained high with 85.9% of cases and 93.2% of contacts reached last week. The proportion of contacts reached within 24 hours once identified as a contact was 97.9%.

275,351 positive cases were transferred to contact tracers between 14-20 January, with 236,583 reached and told to self-isolate.

Between 14 and 20 January, 470,950 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 89.1% of close contacts for whom communication details were provided have been reached.

Background information

The [weekly statistics from the 34th week of NHS Test and Trace](#) show in the most recent week of operations (14 to 20 January):

- the proportion of contacts reached by tracing service has increased to 93.2%
- 85.9% 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 87.3% the previous week
- 96.5% of contacts where communication details were given were reached and told to self-isolate, compared with 96.2% the previous week
- 93.8% of in-person test results were received the next day after the test was taken, compared with 84.8% of tests the previous week (England only)
- 94.8% of pillar 1 test results were made available within 24 hours, consistent with last week's percentage
- 70.8% of in-person test results were received within 24 hours after the test was taken, compared with 53.5% the previous week
- 94.8% of satellite tests were received within 3 days after the day they were taken, compared with 92.9% the previous week

EPCR is a technology that can be used to detect SARS-CoV-2 RNA with high sensitivity and ultra-high capacity (more than 150,000 tests each day on a single instrument). An EPCR assay specific for SARS-CoV-2 RNA has been manufactured by the UK-based LGC Biosearch Technologies. The EPCR assay has been evaluated at the Milton Keynes Lighthouse Laboratory by UK BioCentre Ltd. See the [evaluation report for more information](#).

Earlier this 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.

[Defence Secretary visits Kenya and Somalia to discuss Al Shabaab](#)

The Defence Secretary has signed a refreshed security cooperation agreement following high-level talks with Dr Fred Matiang'i, Kenyan Cabinet Secretary for the Interior, and Dr Monica Juma, Kenyan Cabinet Secretary for Defence, in Nairobi this week.

The deal commits the UK and Kenya to deepening cooperation to combat shared threats such as the terrorist group Al Shabaab, cybercrime and human trafficking, and will promote regional stability. It will see the two nations meet regularly to share information on terror groups, target their backers with financial sanctions and undermine their recruitment efforts.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

Kenya has long been the UK's defence partner of choice in East Africa. There are over 200 British personnel based here, and the UK Armed Forces are determined to invest further in those bilateral bonds.

Both our nations face shared threats, from violent extremism to organised crime. The security agreement we have signed will allow us to deepen our relationship and tackle regional defence issues as partners.

The signing comes as the Ministry of Defence works towards the publication of the Integrated Review later in the year, which will look to strengthen Britain's security and intelligence cooperation with key allies, allowing us to work together to identify and respond quickly to future threats.

During his visit to Kenya this week, Mr Wallace visited troops at the British Army Training Unit Kenya (BATUK), a vital hub where UK soldiers prepare for operations around the globe.

The UK currently has around 230 military personnel based permanently in Kenya, most of them at BATUK, with thousands more visiting the country every year to take part in joint exercises. Over the past two years, the British Army and the Kenyan Defence Force have conducted 10 joint training exercises there, involving around 1,500 Kenyan troops and 10,000 British troops.

The UK is committed to security in Kenya, an important economic partner with strong links to the UK. The UK is the largest cumulative investor in the East African nation, with bilateral trade totalling over £1.4 billion in 2019. Last month Kenya signed a trade deal with the UK to deepen this relationship.

During his visit to East Africa the Defence Secretary also travelled to Mogadishu, Somalia, where he met President Mohamed Abdullahi Farmaajo to reaffirm the UK's commitment to helping the government build up its armed forces to combat terror groups like Al Shabaab. The British Army has over 50 personnel based in the country, and recently trained the 500th Somali soldier in basic infantry skills, with plans to train up to another 600 in 2021.