

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 a 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.

Holocaust Memorial Day: UK statement

Madam Chair,

I would like to express my thanks to Ambassador Küchler for her introductory remarks, and her work as the current Chair of IHRA.

Yesterday I and my family joined thousands of people across the world – each in our separate places, but united in our actions – to light a candle to honour the memory of the six million Jewish men, women and children who lost their lives during a time of unparalleled depravity and inhumanity. We remembered the thousands of Roma, Sinti, and all other victims of Nazi persecution. And we remembered the victims of other genocides.

Madam Chair,

We must never forget that the Holocaust was committed by ordinary people, its victims were ordinary people.

The [Arolsen Archives](#), a copy of which is housed in London at the [Wiener Library](#) for the Study of the Holocaust and Genocide, shines a light on what happened.

It shows it in all its horrible banality. Each bureaucratic record shows that there was once a government that decided to murder any Jew it could get its hands on. That murder was an integral part of its statecraft. Chillingly, it would use the efficiencies of mass production to commit mass murder.

Each record in the archive is a testament to lives cut short, of families wrecked.

Madam Chair,

We should not be lulled into a false sense that the Holocaust happened in darkness, nor should we over emphasise the importance of those few individuals whose acts of courage saved Jews.

The proposed Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre next to our Houses of Parliament will be a powerful symbol of the UK's commitment to remembering the Holocaust. It will explore the role of Britain's Parliament and democratic institutions – what we did and what more we could have done to

tackle the persecution of the Jewish people and other groups. Most importantly, our new memorial will allow us to continue to confront the immense human calamity caused by the destruction of Europe's Jewish communities during the Holocaust, and to demonstrate our sincere commitment to mourn, remember and to act.

Today, in a world where Holocaust denial, distortion and revisionism is gaining a foothold, we must remain resolute and recognise that attempts to attack the facts of the Holocaust all undermine the truth and our understanding of history.

We must face this challenge head on. It is not enough to know that facts are on our side; we must actively ensure that we never forget.