

Social care to receive £269 million to boost staff levels and testing

The impact of the new variant is being felt across the country, with staff absence rates rising sharply both in care homes and among home care staff, due to testing positive or having to self-isolate.

The funding announced today will protect and support the social care sector, including care homes and domiciliary care providers, by increasing workforce capacity and increasing testing.

The vital infection prevention and control guidance on staff movement in care homes is also being reinforced, with a reminder to providers to continue following the rules and keep staff and residents safe.

The new £120 million funding will help local authorities to boost staffing levels, a direct ask of the sector. The funding can:

- provide additional care staff where shortages arise
- support administrative tasks so experienced and skilled staff can focus on providing care
- help existing staff to take on additional hours if they wish with overtime payments or by covering childcare costs

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

This funding will bolster staffing numbers in a controlled and safe way, whilst ensuring people continue to receive the highest quality of care.

Since the start of the pandemic, we have taken steps to protect care homes, including increasing the testing available for staff and residents, providing free PPE, and investing billions of pounds of additional funding for infection control.

Help is on the way with the offer of a vaccine, with over 40 per cent of elderly care home residents having already received their first dose.

Many local authorities across the country already have staffing initiatives in place to increase capacity and address staffing issues. These include care worker staff banks where new recruits are paid during training, re-deployment models where DBS checked staff are trained and moved into operational roles, and end-to-end training and recruitment services. The new £120m fund will ensure such initiatives can continue, and help other local authorities implement similar schemes.

The £120m fund is in addition to the £149 million announced in December,

which will be used to support rapid testing of staff testing and facilitate visits from family and friends where possible. The funding will help care home providers with the costs incurred, including setting up safe testing areas, providing staff training and will contribute towards staff time spent administering and receiving tests.

This £149 million grant is ringfenced for lateral flow device testing in adult social care. Local authorities will be required to pass on 80 per cent of the funding to care homes on a per beds basis, with 20 per cent used at the local authorities discretion to support the care sector in delivering additional lateral flow device testing. All the funding will be available later this month, so local authorities can take action quickly to respond to the pandemic.

Minister for Care Helen Whately said:

This additional funding gives a boost to the social care workforce during some of the most difficult days of this pandemic so far.

Care workers have been doing the most amazing job throughout the pandemic. In challenging circumstances, they have been caring for some of the people most at risk from this virus with compassion and skill.

This additional £120 million will support social care to cope where there are pressing staff shortages due to the pandemic and comes on top of the £149 million to support safer testing.

We're continuing to listen to care providers to make sure they have the help they need, from free PPE to extra testing, along with all the work to vaccinate care home residents, staff and the wider social care workforce.

Increased staff testing remains a critical part reducing transmission. Care homes currently have access to 3 tests per week for their staff, with daily testing for 7 days in the event of a positive case to protect staff and residents.

Care homes will have additional lateral flow devices to test individuals working in more than one setting before the start of every shift.

Restricting staff movement remains critical to minimising the risk of transmission. In response to the government's consultation, the sector called for an increase in staffing capacity instead of regulation to achieve this goal.

Professor Martin Green OBE, CEO of Care England, said:

As the largest representative body for independent providers of adult social care, Care England, is pleased the government listened

to the sector regarding their deep concerns about banning staff movement.

We want to work with the department to ensure the staff capacity fund delivers to the front line and is suitably flexible to reflect the crisis whereby providers are struggling with staff illness and absenteeism in the same way as their colleagues in the NHS are.

Staff are our most precious resource and we want to do all that we can to support them especially in these incredibly difficult times.

Vic Rayner – Chief Executive of the National Care Forum said:

It is positive that the government has taken note of the extreme staffing pressure that care providers across the country are experiencing.

The funding announced and confirmed today is welcome news, but must be subject to continuous review.

Communities across the country desperately need care organisations to be properly supported now and in the future so that they are ready and able to face every twist and turn of this pandemic.

Around 40 per cent of people aged 80 and over and a quarter of older care home residents have now received their first vaccine dose. By the end of next week we aim to have offered a jab to all care home residents and staff.

New legal protection for England's heritage

- New legal safeguards introduced for historic monuments at risk of removal
- All historic statues, plaques and other monuments will now require full planning permission to remove, ensuring due process and local consultation in every case
- The law will make clear that historic monuments should be retained and explained
- The Secretary of State able to “call in” any application and ensure the law is followed
- The most significant new protection for England's heritage since the 1967 Civic Amenities Act established Conservation Areas
- Measures build on proposals that embed beauty, design and quality in England's planning system for the first time

New laws to protect England's cultural and historic heritage have been announced by Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick today (17 January 2021).

The new legal protections mean that historic statues should be 'retained and explained' for future generations. Individuals who want to remove any historic statue, whether listed or not, will now require listed building consent or planning permission.

Under the new regulations, if the council intends to grant permission for removal of a particular statue and Historic England objects, the Communities Secretary will be notified so he can make the final decision about the application in question.

Historic England and the Secretary of State will apply the new policy of "retain and explain", meaning historic statues will only be removed in the most exceptional circumstances.

Many unlisted heritage assets are of interest, significance and pride to the local communities in which they are erected and it is right that protections are put in place for them.

These new laws will protect 20,000 statues and monuments throughout England for future generations.

These landmark legal changes come in the tradition of previous landmark heritage protection laws such as the Civic Amenities Act 1967 and the Town & Country Planning Act 1947.

Communities Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

For hundreds of years, public statues and monuments have been erected across the country to celebrate individuals and great moments in British history.

They reflected the people's preferences at the time, not a single, official narrative or doctrine. They are hugely varied, some loved, some reviled, but all part of the weft and weave of our uniquely rich history and built environment.

We cannot – and should not – now try to edit or censor our past. That's why I am changing the law to protect historic monuments and ensure we don't repeat the errors of previous generations, losing our inheritance of the past without proper care.

What has stood for generations should be considered thoughtfully, not removed on a whim, any removal should require planning permission and local people should have the chance to be properly consulted. Our policy in law will be clear, that we believe in explaining and retaining heritage, not tearing it down.

Culture Secretary Rt Hon Oliver Dowden MP said:

I strongly believe that we should learn from our past – in order to retain and explain our rich history.

The decisions we make now will shape the environment inherited by our children and grandchildren.

It is our duty to preserve our culture and heritage for future generations and these new laws will help to do so.

The new rules will also apply to unlisted historic plaques, memorials or monuments which will also require planning permission and Historic England to be informed.

AI at the forefront of efforts to treat coronavirus patients

- AI imaging database will improve diagnosis of patients presenting with COVID-19 symptoms
- Increased speed and accuracy in diagnosis can lead to early medical intervention and save lives

NHSX, a unit tasked with driving the digital transformation of care in the NHS, has brought together over 40,000 CT scans, MRIs and X-rays from more than 10,000 patients across the UK during the course of the pandemic.

Access to this National COVID-19 Chest Imaging Database (NCCID) has now been extended to hospitals and universities across the country who are using the images to track patterns and markers of illness. The database can speed up diagnosis of COVID-19, leading to a quick treatment plan and greater understanding of whether the patient may end up in a critical condition.

Matt Hancock, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, said:

The use of artificial intelligence is already beginning to transform patient care by making the NHS a more predictive, preventive and personalised health and care service.

It is vital we always search for new ways to improve care, especially as we fight the pandemic with the recovery beyond. This excellent work is testament to how technology can help to save lives in the UK.

Clinicians at Addenbrooke's Hospital in Cambridge are developing an algorithm based on the NCCID images to help inform a more accurate diagnosis of

patients when they present to hospital with potential COVID-19 symptoms and have not yet had a confirmed test. Using visual signatures of the virus, as they appear in chest scans, they are able to compare the patterns in the patient's imaging with those seen previously in the NCCID to get a more accurate diagnosis and prognosis.

Understanding the earlier stages of disease means that clinicians are more easily able to implement appropriate, early medical interventions, reducing the potential for later complications. This includes giving patients oxygen and medication before they reach a critical stage, and predicting the need for additional ICU capacity, enabling the management of beds and staff resource in those settings.

Carola-Bibiane Schönlieb, Professor of Applied Mathematics and head of the [Cambridge Image Analysis](#) group at the University of Cambridge, said:

The NCCID has been invaluable in accelerating our research and provided us with a diverse, well-curated, dataset of UK patients to use in our algorithm development.

The ability to access the data for 18 different trusts centrally has increased our efficiency and ensures we can focus most of our time on designing and implementing the algorithms for use in the clinic for the benefit of patients.

By understanding in the early stages of disease, whether a patient is likely to deteriorate, we can intervene earlier to change the course of their disease and potentially save lives as a result.

The NCCID is also helping researchers from universities in London (University College London), and Bradford, to develop AI tools that could help doctors improve the treatment for patients with COVID-19.

The database is helping to inform the development of a potential national AI imaging platform to safely collect and share data, developing AI technologies to address a number of other conditions such as heart disease and cancers.

The NCCID is one workstream taken forward by the NHS AI Lab at NHSX. The NHS AI Lab has also set up and launched a £140 million AI award this year in collaboration with the Accelerated Access Collaborative (AAC) and National Institute for Health Research (NIHR), which aims to bring the benefits of AI technologies to patients and staff across health and care. Initial bids were awarded to 42 organisations in September 2020 with a further round of bids closing last month.

Dominic Cushnan, Head of AI Imaging at NHSX, said:

We are applying the power of artificial intelligence to quickly detect disease patterns and develop new treatments for patients. There is huge potential for patient care, whether through quicker

analysis of chest images or better identification of abnormalities.

The industrial scale collaboration of the NHS, research and innovators on this project alone has demonstrated the huge potential and benefits of technology in transforming care.

Evis Sala, Professor of Oncological Imaging at the [University of Cambridge](#), said:

The NCCID team have been extremely knowledgeable, helpful and responsive to our questions throughout the process. This is precisely the initiative we need to ensure we are better prepared and more responsive for future pandemics.

Dr Joe Jacob, consultant radiologist and research lead at BSTI, said:

The National COVID-19 Chest Imaging Database was developed with the support and enthusiasm of chest radiologists and healthcare professionals from around the United Kingdom.

Their efforts have helped to provide a resource that will help the NHS in the management of the healthcare emergency engendered by COVID-19.

NHSX was able to quickly establish the project during the spring by working closely with Royal Surrey NHS Foundation Trust to scale up an existing data collection process.

Dr Mark Halling-Brown, Head of Scientific Computing at Royal Surrey County Hospital, said:

Royal Surrey NHS Foundation Trust has led the way in creating and sharing research imaging databases that have enabled the development of AI tools, and has more recently specialised in the evaluation and validation of AI radiology products within a range of specialties supporting their safe deployment into the clinic.

Our expertise allowed us to help build the National COVID-19 Chest Imaging Database and we are excited by the potential of the AI solutions being developed and the research underway that will use this dataset.

Led by NHSX, the NCCID is a collaborative effort with the British Society of Thoracic Imaging (BSTI), Royal Surrey NHS Foundation Trust and Faculty, a London-based AI specialist.

All of the scans in the library are stripped of any identifying patient

details by each hospital trust before they are submitted to the national collection, ensuring researchers are only able to access pseudonymised information.

To deliver technology for use in health and care, the NHS AI Lab has also this week 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.

[Find out more about the NCCID and see a full list of research projects](#)

The full list of NHS trusts submitting data is below and we actively encourage more trusts to send in their data to continue to grow the database:

1. Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust
2. Brighton and Sussex University Hospitals NHS Trust
3. London North West University Healthcare NHS Trust
4. George Eliot Hospital NHS Trust
5. Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board
6. Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
7. Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board
8. Ashford and St Peter's Hospitals
9. Royal Cornwall Hospitals NHS Trust
10. Sheffield Children's NHS Foundation Trust
11. Liverpool Heart and Chest Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
12. Norfolk and Norwich University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
13. Royal Surrey NHS Foundation Trust
14. Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust
15. West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust
16. Somerset NHS Foundation Trust
17. Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
18. Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust
19. Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
20. Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

See a list of [AI in Health and Care Award winners](#)

British public urged to play their part in historic vaccine roll out

- Public urged to join the national effort by helping family and friends aged 80 and over to get their life-saving jabs
- Government calls on the public to commit to 3 pledges to support the roll out of COVID-19 vaccines
- Around 45% of people aged 80 and over have now been vaccinated and over one million have been offered a jab at an NHS vaccination centre

The NHS has vaccinated around 45% of those aged 80 and over in England and is encouraging people who have been offered a vaccine to book their appointments as soon as possible. Over one million people aged 80 and over have now been invited to book their jab at one of England's NHS vaccination centres.

Helping vulnerable people to get their vaccinations is one of three pledges the government has asked the public to make to support the largest vaccination programme in British history.

The 3 pledges are:

- Help out – help those aged 80 and over by supporting friends, family and loved ones with their appointments, as well as volunteering to help those in the community
- Join up – sign up to clinical trials for COVID-19 vaccines and treatments
- Stay informed – keep up to date with accurate and trusted NHS advice and make sure to share facts with friends and family

By taking part in one or more of these pledges, members of the public can join the national effort and support the NHS as the vaccination programme continues to expand.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

Throughout this pandemic, I have been in awe of how much the British public has contributed to the fight against the virus. I want to thank everyone for the time, effort and patience they have put in to keep themselves and others safe.

We recognise that so many people want to support our NHS so health and care workers can continue to save lives, and now is your chance to get involved by helping the remaining people aged 80 and over get their jabs.

I urge everyone, no matter who you are, what you do or where you're from, to come forward and take on our three pledges. Everyone has a part to play in this national effort – to protect our NHS, our loved ones and other people's loved ones too.

The 3 pledges are:

Help out

The NHS is working tirelessly to offer vaccinations to the most vulnerable as

quickly as possible, and remains on track to reach the government's target of vaccinating the top four cohorts – those over the age of 70, care home residents and staff, NHS workers and clinically extremely vulnerable individuals – by 15 February.

People eligible for vaccination will be contacted by letter or text, inviting them to their appointments, and the NHS has stood up vaccination sites in local communities across the country – from GP surgeries and hospitals, to pharmacies and large-scale vaccination centres. It has also worked to deliver vaccines to thousands of care homes.

The single most important thing everyone should do is stay at home and follow the current national restrictions – by doing this, people will help stop the spread, protect the NHS and, therefore, save lives.

The public can help with vaccination efforts by encouraging relatives, friends and neighbours aged 80 and over to book their vaccination appointments and helping them with forward planning. For those who live with people getting their vaccinations, they can also support with transport to and from the vaccination sites. It is essential strict social distancing is maintained at all times and people follow Hands, Face, Space.

There are also a number of opportunities to support at-risk people in the community and help ease pressures on local NHS services while it continues to rollout the programme. This includes the [NHS Volunteer Responder](#) scheme, delivered by the Royal Voluntary Service in partnership with NHS England and GoodSAM. Through the scheme, people can undertake a range of tasks, including shopping and prescription collection, supportive 'check in and chat calls' and transport to and from vital medical appointments.

NHS Volunteer Responders will also be supporting the vaccination programme as Steward Volunteers. Volunteers who have already offered their support will be contacted when they are needed.

Case study

Liz Parry, an NHS Volunteer Responder, has so far completed 490 shopping and prescription collections for vulnerable people in her community. She said:

We all need to pull together to keep our communities safe and defeat this virus.

Volunteering is without a doubt the most rewarding thing I have ever done and it's so humbling to be part of the team making a difference to people in need.

Join up

There are a number of [ongoing clinical trials](#) for both vaccines in development and promising treatments for COVID-19 which the government urges

people to take part in to support the pandemic response.

Clinical trial volunteers have played a crucial part in the pandemic response so far, helping the NHS roll out both of its vaccines quickly and safely, as well as treatments already saving lives across the NHS – such as dexamethasone and tocilizumab.

Case study

Yusuf, a Transport for London worker, volunteered to take part in the Novavax vaccine study after losing a close colleague and a member of his family to the disease. He said:

Once you know someone who's been affected by COVID-19, it makes a difference.

I didn't have an opportunity to volunteer during the first lockdown, so this is my way to be a part of the efforts to help London and to help Britain get through this.

He called volunteering for the trial a 'really positive experience' and urged other people to 'step up', particularly those who are also from the Caribbean community who, evidence shows, are disproportionately impacted by the virus.

Stay informed

One of the most important things people can do to support the vaccine effort is to make sure they and the people around them are fully equipped with the latest NHS vaccine advice. People can keep up to date through the official NHS website and if a family member, close friend or acquaintance is offered their vaccine, encourage them to take it and make sure they have access to official advice.

The public should also watch out for COVID-19 vaccine email scams, reporting any suspect emails to the Suspicious Email Reporting Service. This is following reports of cyber criminals using the vaccine to lure people into sharing personal details.

Chief Executive of Royal Voluntary Service, Catherine Johnstone CBE said:

We are incredibly thankful to all of the volunteers who have stepped forward so far to help us keep communities safe through the pandemic. With vulnerable people once again being asked to stay at home and shield, we have seen an increase in requests for support and now, more than ever need more volunteers to join us.

We would like to urge anyone who can to please support your community with vital tasks such as shopping and prescription collection and medical transport so we can keep people safe and support the NHS.

Background

Links on how to get involved in the three pledges can be found below:

- Help out
- Join up
- Stay informed
 - read the [latest NHS vaccine advice](#)
 - people can report suspect emails they've received but not acted upon to the Suspicious Email Reporting Service (SERS), by forwarding them to report@phishing.gov.uk
 - those who have provided personal or financial details, or transferred any money as a result of a suspicious email, should report what has happened to Action Fraud as soon as possible by calling 0300 123 2040 or through the Action Fraud [website](#)

Since the start of the pandemic, Royal Voluntary Service partnered with NHS England and GoodSAM to deliver the NHS Volunteer Responder scheme.

NHS Volunteer Responders provides essential support to vulnerable people across England and since March volunteers have delivered 1.4million tasks for those in need in the community.

The NHS scheme, delivered in partnership with Royal Voluntary Service and GoodSAM has so far enabled 360,000 on-duty volunteers to complete 1.4 million vital tasks for those needing help in the community.

Presidential elections in Uganda 2021: UK statement

Press release

Minister for Africa James Duddridge has given a statement following the presidential elections in Uganda.



Minister for Africa, James Duddridge, said:

The UK Government welcomes the relatively calm passing of the elections in Uganda and notes the re-election of H.E. Yoweri Museveni as President.

Many in Uganda and beyond have expressed concerns about the overall political climate in the run up to the elections as well as the electoral process. It is important these concerns are raised, investigated and resolved in a peaceful, legal and constitutional manner. We ask that all parties, including the security services, but also all of Uganda's political movements, act with restraint to ensure the peaceful resolution of disputes.

We commend the role of the media, observers and civil society throughout the elections. The UK is concerned by the national internet shutdown, which clearly limited the transparency of the elections, and constrained the freedoms that Ugandans are entitled to.

The UK is a steadfast advocate for Ugandan democracy and we will continue to work to achieve inclusive democratic progress that delivers for future generations. As a longstanding partner, we urge Uganda to continue to strive to meet its own international human rights commitments, including respecting the right to freedom of opinion, freedom of expression and freedom of the media.

ENDS

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