

NHS Test and Trace winter performance holds steady

- 58% increase in the number of positive coronavirus cases detected by NHS Test and Trace compared to the previous week
- 92.6% of contacts of positive cases reached last week, and the proportion of contacts reached within 24 hours increased to 97.5%
- NHS Test and Trace service to remain open every day over Christmas and the New Year

NHS Test and Trace is continuing to improve tracing performance, with a rising number of cases and contacts entering the system. In total, during the week 10 December to 16 December, 389,328 cases and contacts have been reached.

Changes such as improving the contact tracing website, reducing repeat calls to households, and increasing numbers of call handlers have led to increases over past weeks in the proportion of contacts being reached and reached faster. The improvements were made following feedback from the public, our colleagues and our local tracing partners, and have been positively received.

Due to growing demand over the holiday period and the recent emergence of a new and more transmissible strain of coronavirus, the service has prioritised making more tests available so that anyone who needs a test can get a test. This increased demand and supply has resulted in a temporary dip in turnaround times, but tests are available for anyone who needs one.

NHS Test and Trace will be open every day over Christmas and the New Year, providing and processing tests for those who need them and tracing contacts of positive cases. All test sites will remain open, only reducing opening hours and booking slots available on the bank holidays, when demand is expected to be lower.

NHS Test and Trace contact tracers will also continue to work throughout the festive period to ensure there are no delays in contacting close contacts of positive cases and breaking chains of transmissions.

NHS Test and Trace's vastly expanded test site network now has more than 700 test sites, including 400 local test sites, in operation. The median distance travelled for a test just 2.3 miles, compared to 5.1 miles as recently as September. More than 4.9 million tests have been processed in the UK in total since testing began, more than any other comparable European country.

Health Minister Lord Bethell said:

These figures mark another week of strong performance from our contact tracing service despite increased demands on NHS Test and Trace. Around 1 in 3 people infected with coronavirus may show no symptoms. Thanks to NHS Test and Trace, more than 3.9 million people have been reached who could have otherwise unknowingly spread this dreadful virus.

The service will continue to work night and day to ensure testing is accessible across the country and this crucial work will not stop over the Christmas period. We have built increased testing capacity ahead of the winter and this will continue in the months ahead.

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

As we enter the holiday period, I would urge the public to heed our advice on 'Hands. Face. Space', and not to hesitate to book a test if they have coronavirus symptoms. NHS Test and Trace continues to test record numbers of people and people can have confidence that if they have symptoms and need a test, they can get one.

NHS Test and Trace has developed into one of the largest contact tracing and testing systems anywhere in the world and the COVID-19 contract tracing app we launched in September has now been downloaded more than 20.7 million times.

Thank you to everyone who is working over the holiday period across the country to keep NHS Test and Trace running on Christmas Day and throughout the holiday period. So much effort has been put into developing the service throughout the year and I am hugely grateful to all of those who will be sacrificing time with their loved ones to make sure it is there for those who need it over Christmas and the New Year.

Testing

During the week of 10 December to 16 December, 2,293,012 tests were conducted for Pillars 1 and 2 in the UK.

More than 4.9 million tests have been processed in the UK in total since testing began, more than any other comparable European country.

For this reporting period, 61.0% of in-person test results were received the next day after the test was taken, compared with 91.8% reported in the previous week. 93.9% of pillar 1 test results were made available within 24 hours, compared with 91.9% the previous week.

The NHS Test and Trace laboratory network will also be processing samples as normal with the same level of capacity, including on bank holidays, to ensure

continuity of service.

Testing capacity for those with COVID-19 symptoms has increased 6-fold in 7 months, from 100,000 a day at the end of April to more than 650,000 a day. In this reporting week we can see that, as the demand for tests has increased, particularly in the south east, turnaround times have also increased slightly.

Tracing

139,332 positive cases were transferred to contact tracers between 10 December and 16 December, 88.1% of whom were reached and told to self-isolate, compared with 87.5% the previous week.

Between 10 December and 16 December, 287,756 people were identified as recent close contacts, with 96.5% who had provided communication details reached and told to self-isolate. Since Test and Trace launched 83.2% of close contacts for whom contact details were provided have been reached.

Over the past few months our teams have been working incredibly hard to make the contact tracing service as effective as possible and NHS Test and Trace has now reached more than 3.9 million people.

Background information

The [statistics from week 29 of NHS Test and Trace](#) show in the most recent week of operations (10 December to 16 December):

- a total of 2,293,012 tests were conducted for pillars 1 and 2, compared with 2,157,895 the previous week
- the proportion of contacts reached by tracing service remains consistent at 92.6%
- 88.1% 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 87.5% the previous week
- 96.5% of contacts where communication details were given were reached and told to self-isolate, compared with 96.6% the previous week
- 61.0% of in-person test results were received the next day after the test was taken, compared with 91.8% of tests the previous week (England only)
- 93.9% of pillar 1 test results were made available within 24 hours, compared with 91.9% the previous week
- 34.1% (247,767) of in-person test results were received within 24 hours after the test was taken, compared with 59.8% (294,842) the previous week
- 91.1% (518,561) of satellite (care home) tests were received within 3 days, compared with 93.4% (506,793) the previous week
- since NHS Test and Trace launched, over 3.7 million contacts have been identified, and 83.2% of all contacts where communication details were given have been reached and told to self-isolate
- NHS COVID-19 app users in England, who have been instructed to isolate via the app, will be able to claim the £500 Test and Trace Support

Payment, providing they meet the eligibility criteria. This comes as Apple revealed that the NHS COVID-19 app was the second most downloaded free iPhone app on its App Store in the UK this year and has been downloaded more than 20.7 million times

DAO 04/20 Accounts Directions 2020-21

If you use assistive technology (such as a screen reader) and need a version of this document in a more accessible format, please email digital.communications@hmtreasury.gov.uk. Please tell us what format you need. It will help us if you say what assistive technology you use.

UK secures 'listed status' to protect £5 billion animal export market

Press release

Exports to the EU of live animals and products of animal origin such as meat, fish and dairy can continue.



The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has confirmed today that the UK has been granted 'national listed status', which ensures exports to the EU of live animals and products of animal origin such as meat, fish and dairy can continue, providing certainty for a market worth more than £5 billion a year.

The UK's listed status was confirmed by the EU after it met the health and biosecurity assurances required for a third country.

The move recognises the UK's high biosecurity and animal health standards and will bring welcome clarity to our world-leading farmers and food producers. The decision will also allow the continued movement of equines between the UK and the EU.

UK Chief Veterinary Officer, Christine Middlemiss, said:

Third country listed status demonstrates our very high standards of biosecurity and animal health which we will continue to maintain after the end of the transition period.

If you or your business imports or exports animal and animal products, or imports high risk food, then I urge you to visit our guidance pages on gov.uk for what you need to do to continue to trade after 31 December.

Businesses will require an Export Health Certificate for all different product types within a consignment, which will need to be signed by a certifier such as an Official Veterinarian.

Guidance for animal importers and exporters including equine transporters is available on GOV.UK.

The EU has voted to lift a number of plant health prohibitions and they also voted to grant equivalence for fruit and vegetable propagating material, which means these plants and plant products can continue being exported to the EU and NI. We are expecting a decision on agricultural species and forest reproductive material, which is decided via a Council vote.

The recent positive outcome of the EU vote means it will be possible to export seed and propagating material, as well as ware potatoes, to the EU and NI from 1 January 2021.

Further information

- Third country listing is a technical requirement for imports of sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) products into the EU. Northern Ireland does not need to be listed due to the Protocol meaning it is within the same SPS area as the EU.
- Ware potatoes can continue to be exported to the EU and NI, but the EU have not accepted our case for a permanent change to the prohibition on seed potatoes, so it will not be possible to export seed potatoes to the EU or NI from 1 January. Defra will continue to engage with the Commission on this issue.

Published 24 December 2020

North East households urged not to become 'accidental' waste criminals this Christmas

Waste carriers, like other licensed trades, are required to register and operate in line with a set of rules that protect the environment and their customers. These rules require them to dispose of waste in the right place, store it safely and keep accurate records of its transfer and disposal.

There has been recent concerns about the number of 'man and van' adverts and self-promotion on Facebook and other social media platforms offering to take away people's rubbish.

If these traders don't have a waste carriers' licence, there is no guarantee rubbish will be disposed of safely and responsibly at an authorised site. Instead, it could end up dumped on the side of the road or burned in a field. What's more, because the person who created the rubbish is legally responsible for it, it is they who could face criminal charges.

David Edwardson the Environment Agency's Enforcement Leader for the North East, said:

"Rogue traders using social media to exploit people into parting with their waste cheaply are regarded as the new door steppers. People are then discovering their waste has been fly-tipped in a country lane or beside the road. These illegal waste carriers undermine legitimate businesses, undercut their prices and blight the environment. They will step up their activities over the festive season as they know people will be looking to dispose of unwanted items after Christmas.

"We want people to take three steps to check whether the collector has a waste carriers' licence from the Environment Agency: ask where the rubbish will end up, don't pay cash and insist on a receipt, then record the details of the vehicle used to take the rubbish away.

"If people suspect criminal activity, they should report it on our national incident hotline 0800 807060 or anonymously through CrimeStoppers on 0800 555 111 and give as much detail as possible. Let's work together to stamp out waste crime and protect our urban spaces and beautiful countryside."

Everyone has a duty of care to ensure their waste is disposed of legally. Failing to meet that requirement means people could be held responsible if their waste is fly-tipped or otherwise illegally disposed of. In the event of a court prosecution individuals could receive an unlimited fine and/or a £400 Fixed Penalty Notices.

People should check the festive opening times for their local Waste Recycling Centre if they decide to discard any items of the Christmas and New Year

period.

Before hiring someone to remove waste, check their credentials online at <https://environment.data.gov.uk/public-register/view/search-waste-carriers-brokers>

British troops train Zambian rangers to catch poachers

Troops from the Royal Gurkha Rifles have spent six weeks training Zambian rangers in counter-poaching, helping to strengthen Zambia's response to the illicit wildlife trade, estimated to be worth up to £17 billion a year internationally to criminal gangs. With Zambia home to a large elephant population and a number of rare and endangered species, the authorities are tackling both poaching and illegal trade after seeing an increasing number of syndicates who sell products on the international market.

The 30-strong unit supported the Zambian National Anti-Poaching Task Force by sharing a wide range of soldiering skills that can be used to track and combat poachers. A total of 119 students from the Zambian Police, Armed Forces, National Service and Department for National Parks and Wildlife were trained under the programme.

The training and exercises in the 8,600 square miles of Kafue National Park allowed British soldiers to pass on their expertise, including interception tracking tactics, evidence gathering, leadership development and medic response training. The Zambian rangers were also trained in the use of lightweight patrol packs and first aid kits so they can operate at greater distances from their bases, covering more ground in isolated areas where the poachers are more active.

Minister for the Armed Forces James Heapey said:

The UK is committed to tackling the illegal wildlife trade, which has a destabilising impact on communities across Zambia, and the wider continent. These deployments are also a valuable learning opportunity for the soldiers, operating in challenging terrain and learning bush-craft from the rangers.

Having trained over 200 rangers in Malawi and 119 in Zambia, this work by the British Army aims to reduce poaching at source and uses sustainable, community-led solutions to protect and conserve wildlife.

Zambian rangers learning tracking techniques

The latest training mission comes after four previous deployments of British troops to neighbouring Malawi, where soldiers trained over 200 rangers in Liwonde National Park to improve patrolling effectiveness and information sharing with other partners. The team in Malawi also helped to move two black rhinos which had been transported by air and road from KwaZulu National Park in South Africa under a scheme to boost their population in the region.

Major James Marden, Officer Commanding, said:

This was a unique operation unlike anything I have done before, enhanced by it being the first British counter-poaching training support mission in Zambia. It was hugely rewarding working with such a diverse team.

Since our departure a new course has already started with the Zambian instructors changing the recruit training syllabus to align with the lessons taught.

The partnership with Zambia, funded by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and delivered by the British Army, aims to crack down on the illegal wildlife trade. The UK Government is at the forefront of global efforts to protect endangered animals and plants from poaching and has committed more than £36 million to tackle the illegal wildlife trade between 2014 and 2021.

International Environment Minister Lord Goldsmith said:

The illegal wildlife trade fuels corruption, impoverishes communities and threatens the existence of some of the world's most iconic animals. Many species are now critically endangered because of this trade and the UK government is committed to ending it.

Rangers, with the support of the UK soldiers, can create safe places for people and wildlife and are vital in delivering long-term conservation successes.

This is the first deployment of its kind in Zambia and by sharing skills and expertise, we can work together to fight against poaching and illegal smuggling.

The UK is hosting COP26 next year in Glasgow where the protection of natural assets including wildlife protection and tackling deforestation and landscape degradation will be key themes. This ranger training helps to promote these

goals by supporting authorities and local communities to protect and value local resources.

British troops share their medical skills with the rangers