

# CMA clears NHS hospital trusts merger

In 2013, the Competition and Markets Authority's (CMA) predecessor, the Competition Commission, prohibited a [previous merger proposal](#) between the hospital trusts. As a result, they were required to enter into a 10-year commitment not to merge without the CMA's permission.

When investigating an NHS hospital merger, the CMA considers the potential impact of that merger on competition between hospitals. Since the Competition Commission's decision, there have been significant changes to policy within the NHS that have affected the role that competition plays in the provision of public healthcare services.

The CMA's investigation in this case has confirmed that competition between NHS hospitals now plays little role in the provision of NHS services in the east Dorset area, with collaboration often viewed as a better way to meet increasing demands for care and deliver better value. In particular, the CMA found that the 2 hospital trusts have limited incentive to compete with each other, given the way that they are now funded, and so there would be no significant loss of competition in this area after the deal.

The CMA has therefore concluded that the merger does not give rise to competition concerns and should be cleared. The CMA has, in parallel, also released the hospitals from the commitment not to merge that they had given in 2013.

Throughout its investigation, the CMA worked closely with the sector regulator, NHS Improvement, and engaged with local commissioners, who are responsible for planning and commissioning healthcare services in their local area. These NHS bodies fully supported the merger. The CMA also carefully considered all views and evidence provided by patients and their representative groups, local authorities and other interested bodies.

The CMA started to discuss the merger with the two hospitals in 2019. Its information-gathering with the trusts and other NHS bodies was completed before the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The CMA has been conscious of the exceptional pressures on the hospitals at this time when finalising its investigation.

Looking ahead to future hospital mergers, the CMA is aware of [longer-term plans to exempt mergers between NHS hospitals from CMA review](#), which it fully supports.

For more information, visit the CMA's dedicated webpage for the [Royal Bournemouth and Christchurch Hospitals / Poole Hospital NHS Foundation Trusts merger investigation](#).

For media enquiries, contact the CMA press team on 020 3738 6460 or [press@cma.gov.uk](mailto:press@cma.gov.uk).

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## Christine Tacon to continue as Groceries Code Adjudicator

Small Business Minister Paul Scully today (Monday 27 April) confirmed the reappointment of Christine Tacon CBE as the Groceries Code Adjudicator for a period of up to 6 months. Her reappointment will provide continuity and reassurance to the groceries sector through the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

The Groceries Code Adjudicator enforces compliance with the Groceries Code, which was introduced in 2009 to ensure a level playing field between the UK's largest supermarkets and their direct suppliers.

The adjudicator also works with supermarkets and grocers to respond to issues raised by suppliers and others. They have the power to launch investigations where there are reasonable grounds to suspect that the code has been breached and arbitrate disputes between retailers and suppliers. This work continues during the coronavirus outbreak.

To further support the sector during the coronavirus pandemic, the government has temporarily relaxed domestic competition rules so that supermarkets, their suppliers and logistics services providers can better work together to respond to the crisis. Legislation now in place enables affected businesses to work together to help keep shops open and deliver the essential supplies that people need.

Small Business Minister Paul Scully said:

Supermarkets and their suppliers are working flat out to ensure people's needs are met during this unprecedented time. We are doing everything we can to make it easier for grocery suppliers to do their job, and Christine's reappointment will provide them with some much-needed continuity and reassurance in what is a very unsettling time.

Christine Tacon, Groceries Code Adjudicator, said:

These are exceptional times and it is vital for both retailers and suppliers that there is consistency and certainty when the nation is relying on the groceries supply chain to keep supermarket shelves filled.

I want to play my part in the response to COVID-19 and so will be staying in post to provide the continuity the sector needs.

Having held the role of Groceries Code Adjudicator since its launch, Christine Tacon has succeeded in improving compliance with the Groceries Code. The proportion of suppliers experiencing issues with the code has decreased from 79% in 2014 to 41% in 2019. Suppliers' assessments of each retailer's compliance with the code ranged from 58% to 90% being compliant in 2014 to between 81% and 97% in 2019, with 10 out of 12 retailers achieving a compliance rate of at least 90%.

Christine Tacon's second term as Groceries Code Adjudicator ends on 24 June 2020 and she had previously announced that she would not be seeking reappointment. However, in light of the coronavirus outbreak, she will now stay on beyond that date. The government launched a public appointment process on 30 October 2019 to identify a successor and expects to make a decision shortly.

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## [£1m innovation funding to predict and counter cyber attacks](#)

News story

DASA awards further funding to develop novel approaches to defend UK military systems and networks from cyber threats



The Defence and Security Accelerator (DASA) can today announce nearly £1m to further develop technology that predicts and counters cyber-attacks.

Three lead organisations, in collaboration with three additional organisations, have been awarded funding in Phase 2 of the [DASA 'Predictive Cyber Analytics' competition](#).

This work will develop, adapt and merge the novel approaches explored in [Phase 1 of the competition](#), to proactively defend deployed UK military systems and networks from the rapidly growing threat of offensive cyber action from aggressive adversaries.

Project manager Rebecca Duncan said:

Cyber security has been in an arms race for decades, with hackers continuously exploiting new vulnerabilities while developers race to patch them.

This DASA competition looks to get the UK ahead of these threats and better prepare us against – and even predict – future cyber-attacks.

As our understanding of adversaries and attack patterns improves, increased computing power and data growth continues to drive the artificial intelligence (AI) revolution with multiple new possibilities emerging to keep the UK safe and prosperous.

DASA delivery manager Robert Hammond-Smith said:

This DASA competition is bringing together the best minds in industry and academia with the brightest Government scientists and talent from the Armed Forces to innovate for a safer future for everyone in the UK.

Phase 2 seeks to further develop and enhance the predictive approaches while adapting them to the military environment. The work will allow MOD to better anticipate and mitigate the impact of cyber-attacks.

The organisations being funded are:

- Bristol-based RiskAware Ltd who are awarded around £450,000 in collaboration with the University of Southampton
- Vauxhall-based decisionLab who are awarded nearly £240,000 in collaboration with DIEM Analytics and Actica
- Gloucestershire-based Montvieux Limited who are awarded nearly £250,000

[Seven proposals received nearly £1m in funding during Phase 1](#) – bringing the total funding to about £2m.

DASA finds and funds exploitable technology and innovative solutions to give UK defence and security a strategic advantage over adversaries while boosting UK prosperity.

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# PM statement in Downing Street: 27 April 2020

I am sorry I have been away from my desk for much longer than I would have liked

and I want to thank everybody who has stepped up  
in particular the First Secretary of State Dominic Raab  
who has done a terrific job

but once again I want to thank you

the people of this country

for the sheer grit and guts

you have shown and are continuing to show

every day I know that this virus brings new sadness and mourning to households across the land

and it is still true that this is the biggest single challenge this country has faced since the war

and I in no way minimise the continuing problems we face

and yet it is also true that we are making progress

with fewer hospital admissions

fewer covid patients in ICU

and real signs now that we are passing through the peak

and thanks to your forbearance, your good sense, your altruism, your spirit of community

thanks to our collective national resolve

we are on the brink of achieving that first clear mission

to prevent our national health service from being overwhelmed

in a way that tragically we have seen elsewhere

and that is how and why we are now beginning to turn the tide

If this virus were a physical assailant

an unexpected and invisible mugger

which I can tell you from personal experience it is

then this is the moment when we have begun together to wrestle it to the floor

and so it follows that this is the moment of opportunity

this is the moment when we can press home our advantage

it is also the moment of maximum risk

because I know that there will be many people looking now at our apparent success

and beginning to wonder whether now is the time to go easy on those social distancing measures

and I know how hard and how stressful it has been to give up

even temporarily

those ancient and basic freedoms

not seeing friends, not seeing loved ones

working from home, managing the kids

worrying about your job and your firm

so let me say directly also to British business

to the shopkeepers, to the entrepreneurs, to the hospitality sector

to everyone on whom our economy depends

I understand your impatience

I share your anxiety

And I know that without our private sector

without the drive and commitment of the wealth creators of this country

there will be no economy to speak of

there will be no cash to pay for our public services

no way of funding our NHS

and yes I can see the long term consequences of lock down as clearly as anyone

and so yes I entirely share your urgency

it's the government's urgency

and yet we must also recognise the risk of a second spike  
the risk of losing control of that virus  
and letting the reproduction rate go back over one  
because that would mean not only a new wave of death and disease but also an economic disaster  
and we would be forced once again to slam on the brakes across the whole country  
and the whole economy  
and reimpose restrictions in such a way as to do more and lasting damage  
and so I know it is tough  
and I want to get this economy moving as fast as I can  
but I refuse to throw away all the effort and the sacrifice of the British people  
and to risk a second major outbreak and huge loss of life and the overwhelming of the NHS  
and I ask you to contain your impatience because I believe we are coming now to the end of the first phase of this conflict  
and in spite of all the suffering we have so nearly succeeded  
we defied so many predictions  
we did not run out of ventilators or ICU beds  
we did not allow our NHS to collapse  
and on the contrary we have so far collectively shielded our NHS so that our incredible doctors and nurses and healthcare staff have been able to shield all of us  
from an outbreak that would have been far worse  
and we collectively flattened the peak  
and so when we are sure that this first phase is over  
and that we are meeting our five tests  
deaths falling  
NHS protected  
rate of infection down

really sorting out the challenges of testing and PPE

avoiding a second peak

then that will be the time to move on to the second phase

in which we continue to suppress the disease

and keep the reproduction rate, the  $r$  rate, down,

but begin gradually to refine the economic and social restrictions

and one by one to fire up the engines of this vast UK economy

and in that process difficult judgments will be made

and we simply cannot spell out now how fast or slow or even when those changes will be made

though clearly the government will be saying much more about this in the coming days

and I want to serve notice now that these decisions will be taken with the maximum possible transparency

and I want to share all our working and our thinking, my thinking, with you the British people

and of course, we will be relying as ever on the science to inform us

as we have from the beginning

but we will also be reaching out to build the biggest possible consensus

across business, across industry, across all parts of our United Kingdom

across party lines

bringing in opposition parties as far as we possibly can

because I think that is no less than what the British people would expect

and I can tell you now that preparations are under way

and have been for weeks

to allow us to win phase two of this fight as I believe we are now on track to prevail in phase one

and so I say to you finally if you can keep going in the way that you have kept going so far

if you can help protect our NHS

to save lives

and if we as a country can show the same spirit of optimism and energy shown by Captain Tom Moore

who turns 100 this week

if we can show the same spirit of unity and determination as we have all shown in the past six weeks

then I have absolutely no doubt that

we will beat it together

we will come through this all the faster

and the United Kingdom

will emerge stronger than ever before

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## Honey Authenticity Seminar (2019) Report

News story

The Seminar, "Honey authenticity: determination of exogenous sugars by nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR)" was organised in collaboration with government departments



The Government Chemist, the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), the Food Standards Agency (FSA) and Food Standards Scotland (FSS) held a UK seminar on honey authenticity: determination of exogenous sugars by nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) on 13 November 2019, which was attended by 57 people representing stakeholder organisations.

The aim of the seminar was to bring together stakeholders involved in honey production and analysis to discuss this topic and ideally come to an agreed

position. It was anticipated that the output of this seminar would help inform future UK government policy on the use of NMR for honey authenticity.

The seminar consisted of a series of presentations from invited experts that set the scene for the workshop part of the day, which involved participants splitting into four representative groups to discuss the suitability of NMR for enforcement purposes and to identify gaps and priorities to assessing the use of NMR for the appraisal of honey authenticity.

The report details the aims and outputs of the seminar. [Honey authenticity: determination of exogenous sugars by NMR Seminar Report](#) (PDF, 913KB, 19 pages)

[Presentations are also available](#)

For information on honey authenticity, or any other food testing related topics get in touch with the Government Chemist

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