

Caroline does her bit to support community Covid-19 response

When someone asks you what you did to help during the Coronavirus pandemic, what will you say?

It was this question, along with proud memories of her gran that compelled Sellafield employee, Caroline Easdon, to answer Sellafield Ltd's call for employees to volunteer support to our local communities.

Caroline said:

During the Second World War my gran volunteered to be part of the land army. In years to come, when we look back on all of this and people ask me what did I do? I want to be able to say that I helped. And hopefully someone down the line will be proud that I stepped up in the same way that I am proud of my gran.

To do her bit, Caroline has volunteered to help at Cumbria County Council's emergency call centre for vulnerable people.

Along with her fellow call centre volunteers, Caroline is connecting people who need help with the community hub that can best provide support.

She said:

Most of the people who I have spoken with at the call centre are ringing in because they are worried about how to get food and prescriptions. Others are concerned that they haven't seen their neighbour for a while and want someone to go and check on them.

I take the details of those calls and feed them into the network of community hubs and local groups so that vulnerable people can get the help they need.

All the precautions that you would expect to see, like social distancing and welfare and handwashing facilities are in place, and from next week we should be able to man the call centre virtually from home.

If anyone is considering volunteering, go for it. Hearing someone tell you that they appreciate being able to talk to a real person about their concerns, and that you've helped, is really rewarding.

Caroline works as part of the Corporate Affairs team at Sellafield which is headed up by Jamie Reed. He said:

Like all our volunteers, Caroline is heeding the call from our community and doing her bit. As an individual she's doing what she can to make a difference in the situation we all find ourselves in. I'm proud of her response and that of everyone else who has been able to step forward and answer the call in their own way. Right now, volunteering is making a real difference in helping our community meet this unprecedented challenge.

Stephen Hall, assistant director of economy and environment at Cumbria County Council, said:

We can't thank the staff from Sellafield enough. The helpline is supporting around 200 people each day now. It's not just the material support with food and medication that we can provide that is important but also the reassurance vulnerable residents feel by being able to speak to a caring and sensitive member of the team.

We are incredibly grateful to them for volunteering their time, it has been invaluable and has made all the difference to those people in the community who need our help and support at this difficult time.

Sellafield Ltd has confirmed this week that any employee who isn't a key worker can volunteer to support their local community during work time. For further details, [see the employee area of our website](#)

[NHS asks people to share their coronavirus symptoms to help others](#)

A new [Coronavirus Status Checker](#) that will help the NHS coordinate its response and build up additional data on the COVID-19 outbreak has been launched today by Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock.

People with potential coronavirus symptoms are now being asked to complete the status checker and answer a short series of questions which will tell the NHS about their experience.

It is open to anyone in the UK to use on the NHS website and in its initial phase the NHS is particularly keen for anyone who thinks they may be displaying potential coronavirus symptoms, no matter how mild, to complete it.

Status Checker users are clearly told at the beginning and the end of the survey that it is not a triage or clinical advice tool, and that they should

visit 111 online for medical advice about their symptoms.

The information gathered will help the NHS to plan its response to the outbreak, indicating when and where more resources like oxygen, ventilators and additional staff might be needed and will provide valuable insight into the development and progression of the virus across the country.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

Technology and data is playing a vital role in battling coronavirus and supporting our heroic NHS frontline workers to save lives, protect the vulnerable, and relive pressure on the NHS.

We must learn as much as possible about this virus, and we are asking the whole nation to join this effort.

If anyone has experienced symptoms of COVID-19 I would urge you to use our new status checker app to help us to collect essential information on the virus and allow us to better allocate NHS resources where they are needed most.

The service is hosted on the NHS website and is available to access openly, with links directly from the NHS 111 online coronavirus service and NHS coronavirus pages.

The initiative is a collaboration between NHS England, NHSX, NHS Digital and Public Health England at the request of the Health and Social Care Secretary.

The creators of a number of independent apps and websites which have already launched to collect similar data have agreed to work openly with the NHS and align their products and data as part of this central, national effort.

Information collected by the NHS Coronavirus Status Checker will form part of a core national COVID-19 dataset held by NHS England.

The tool is live now and people can complete the survey either for themselves or on behalf of someone else with their permission.

It asks them:

- why they are staying at home
- to choose from a series of options to describe how they are feeling
- whether they have any other health problems
- their date of birth
- their postcode
- how many people are living in their home.

The Coronavirus Status Checker, which is the latest example of the NHS harnessing the power of technology and data to help it tackle the epidemic, is part of the NHS coronavirus service. It complements the NHS 111 online coronavirus tool launched earlier this month, which gives the public digital

access to health advice, isolation notes and a daily text messaging service for those self-isolating with symptoms.

The Status Checker will not identify users from the information they provide, although it will cross-reference data from other sources to ensure it avoids counting people twice.

The answers given by the public will only be used by the NHS and trusted organisations working directly with the NHS in response to coronavirus. The information will not be retained any longer than is strictly necessary post COVID-19.

Prof Keith Willett, Strategic Incident Director NHS England, said:

We know large volumes of people are visiting NHS 111 online each day, reporting potential coronavirus symptoms and being advised to self-isolate, and it will be hugely valuable for the NHS if we can learn more about these people and their experiences.

By taking a few moments to answer these questions, you can play your part in helping the NHS put its resources in the right places, at the right time, to save lives.

- The survey can be accessed on the NHS website at www.nhs.uk/coronavirus-status-checker
- The Coronavirus Status Checker has initially been developed for NHS England. Data will be made available for the devolved administrations to support their response needs

[Measures announced to protect NHS from coronavirus risk in prisons](#)

- Plan to protect the NHS from further pressure
- Measures will also benefit brave prison staff
- Selected low-risk offenders, within weeks of their release dates, will be electronically tagged and temporarily released on licence in stages
- Offenders can be recalled at the first sign of concern
- Violent and sexual offenders and those of security concern will not be considered

This action being taken is necessary to avoid thousands of prisoners becoming

infected, overwhelming local NHS services. This is due to the close proximity between prisoners, who often share cells.

Prisoners who pass the stringent criteria for release will be subject to strict conditions, and will be electronically monitored, including with GPS tags, to enforce the requirement to stay at home.

They can be immediately recalled to prison for breaching these conditions or committing further offences. The releases will be phased over time but can start from next week.

Public protection is paramount. No high-risk offenders, including those convicted of violent or sexual offences, anyone of national security concern or a danger to children, will be considered for release, nor any prisoners who have not served at least half their custodial term. Additionally, no offender convicted of COVID-19 related offences, including coughing at emergency workers or stealing personal protective equipment, will be eligible.

No prisoner would be released if they have symptoms of coronavirus or without housing and health support being in place.

In addition, the Ministry of Justice is working to identify publicly owned sites that could be used to house temporary prison accommodation to ease pressure on the permanent estate, further separate prisoners and reduce the spread of the virus.

Lord Chancellor and Justice Secretary Robert Buckland QC MP said:

This Government is committed to ensuring that justice is served to those who break the law.

But this is an unprecedented situation because if Coronavirus takes hold in our prisons, the NHS could be overwhelmed and more lives put at risk.

All prisoners will face a tough risk assessment and must comply with strict conditions, including an electronic tag, while they are closely monitored. Those that do not will be recalled to prison.

Some 88 prisoners and 15 staff have tested positive for COVID-19.

Prison staff have continued to ensure the effective running of our jails despite around 26% being absent or self-isolating. To further protect them and reduce pressure on prisons, the Ministry of Justice is already:

- Shielding vulnerable prisoners through social distancing measures
- Re-deploying staff, where appropriate, from headquarters into operational roles
- Working with the judiciary to expedite sentencing hearings for those on remand to reduce the numbers being held in custody.

Prisons are moving towards single-cell accommodation as much as possible across the estate – to limit the spread of infection and the number of deaths. This follows public health advice that prisons present a unique environment where rapid outbreaks of the virus could place a significant strain on local NHS services.

Strong, further action now will strike the right balance between protecting the public and managing the risk of an escalating situation in prisons.

Steps are being taken to expand the use of electronic monitoring to facilitate the safe release of more low-risk prisoners who were due to leave jail in the next two months regardless.

This means those nearing the end of their sentences will be released in stages on temporary licence – allowing prisons to continue to safely manage vulnerable but higher-risk offenders within the estate.

Statutory Instruments to allow these releases to take place will be laid on Monday and the move aligns us with countries such as France, the United States, Australia, Germany, and Canada who have also sanctioned the early release of prisoners.

France has announced the release of some 5,000 prisoners, while in the US state of California alone, 3,500 are being granted early release.

The Prison Service has already taken decisive action to ensure prisons are complying with social distancing rules and provided alternative means for prisoners to keep in touch with their families after cancelling family visits.

Additionally, the Justice Secretary Robert Buckland granted [temporary release of pregnant women in custody](#), while movements between jails have been limited in all but exceptional cases.

All actions have been informed by the advice of experts from Public Health England and will be kept under constant review.

UK medicines and medical devices regulator investigating 14 cases of fake or unlicensed COVID-19 medical products

These include self-testing kits, ‘miracle cures’, ‘antiviral misting sprays’, and unlicensed medicines.

At this time, there are currently no medicines licensed specifically for the treatment or prevention of COVID-19 and there are no CE marked self-testing kits approved for home use.

The MHRA has disabled 9 domain names and social media accounts selling fake or unauthorised COVID-19 products.

Lynda Scammell, MHRA Enforcement Official said:

Don't be fooled by online offers for medical products to help prevent or treat COVID-19

There is no medicine licensed specifically to treat or prevent COVID-19, therefore any claiming to do so are not authorised and have not undergone regulatory approvals required for sale on the UK market. We cannot guarantee the safety or quality of the product and this poses a risk to your health.

The risk of buying medicines and medical devices from unregulated websites are that you just don't know what you will receive and could be putting your health at risk.

We are working alongside other law enforcement agencies to combat this type of criminal activity.

This advice is part of the MHRA's ongoing [#FakeMeds](#) campaign which aims to encourage people who buy medical products online to make sure they are purchasing from legitimate sources.

To stay safe when buying medicines and medical devices online, the MHRA advises that you purchase from a registered pharmacy – either from the premises or online. Registered online suppliers can be found [here](#). If people suspect they have a dodgy medicine or medical device they can report it via our safety monitoring system – the Yellow Card Scheme.

The National Fraud Intelligence Bureau is also seeing reports from victims who have lost money when they have tried to purchase PPE or self-testing kits online, from fraudulent websites, that simply do not exist. If you think you have been a victim of fraud, please report it to [Action Fraud](#) or by calling 0300 123 2040.

Ends

Notes to Editor

1. The [#FakeMeds](#) campaign is a public health campaign which aims to reduce the harm caused by purchasing fake, unlicensed or counterfeit medical products online. Previous phases of the campaign have focused on fake erectile dysfunction medicines, dodgy diet pills and fake self-testing STI kits. Follow #FakeMeds on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).
2. The MHRA is a centre of the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency which also includes the [National Institute for Biological Standards and Control \(NIBSC\)](#) and the [Clinical Practice Research Datalink (CPRD.)][<https://www.cprd.com/>]
3. The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency is responsible for regulating all medicines and medical devices in the UK. All our work is underpinned by robust and fact-based judgements to ensure that the benefits justify any risks. It is also an executive agency of the Department of Health and Social Care.
4. The MHRA collaborates with Nominet the UK domain name registry and City of London Police's Intellectual Property Crime Unit to help combat illegal online activity in relation to COVID-19.
5. The NCA are investigating a number of reports of the sale of counterfeit products relating to COVID-19, and working with MHRA and others to understand the scale of the threat and protect the public.

[Transport Secretary: continue to follow government guidelines on travel despite warm weather](#)

- Only go outside for food, health reasons or work (but only if you cannot work from home)
- If you go out, stay 2 metres (6ft) away from other people at all times
- Wash your hands as soon as you get home

Do not meet others, even friends or family.

You can spread the virus even if you don't have symptoms.