

Duncan Selbie's Friday Message - 24 April 2020

[Duncan Selbie](#), 24 April 2020 - [Duncan Selbie Friday Message](#)



Dear everyone

Test, Track and Trace

Alongside a new NHSX App – [previewed here](#) – and the anticipated very careful and gradual lifting of social distancing measures, phone and web-based contact tracing will be a critical part of the Government's strategy in getting the country back on its feet. As the CMO said this week, we are likely to be living for many more months with a degree of social distancing arrangements in place, but work is underway to prepare for the next phase, with a Test, Track and Trace programme at the heart of this.

At PHE we are preparing for a massive scale up of our contact tracing capacity, with the Department of Health and Social Care organising the recruitment of what will be an initial 18,000 strong team of contact tracers, from many backgrounds including from local government, the NHS and volunteers. Local government in particular will be helping with the design and running of the system. During the initial 'contain' phase of the outbreak, PHE built a new Contact Tracing and Advisory Service, which is an online platform where people with a positive COVID-19 test result can input their history of contacts, giving the contact tracers a flying start in working out who they need to reach by email and phone. More on this to follow soon.

Ethnicity review

There appears to be a disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on Black, Asian and minority ethnic people and we need to develop a better understanding of the reasons behind this. As a first step, PHE will be linking thousands of existing health records for confirmed COVID-19 cases to gather more robust data, and I am delighted that Trevor Phillips OBE and Professor Richard Webber have agreed to provide expert independent support. This will be complemented by the call on Wednesday from the National Institute for Health Research for rapid research proposals on COVID-19 and ethnicity.

Ramadan

Yesterday was the start of Ramadan and staying at home and practising social distancing during this holy month will play an important part in slowing the spread of COVID-19. These extraordinary measures are supported by the British Board of Scholars and Imams, and places of worship will remain closed for the current time. However, despite being physically apart, religious practices can still be observed, and your faith leaders will be able to advise on the best ways to stay connected. [Read our blog](#) to find out more.

Surveillance

Each Thursday, PHE will be publishing weekly COVID-19 surveillance reports and infographics. [This blog](#) explains the data mix we are bringing together and you can see the [first of the reports here](#). Complementary regionalised data will also be available. Do not forget our [daily dashboard is also available here](#).

Best wishes

Duncan

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