

# Information about the NHS COVID-19 app

Dear Colleague

You will have seen information in the news and via other sources about the new NHS COVID-19 app, part of the NHS Test and Trace system.

We have prepared this briefing for you in case you wanted any more detailed information on this new service. Millions of people have already downloaded the app and the more people who use it, the more effective it will be.

There are also important actions for businesses and organisations that have venues open to the public.

We hope you find this information useful.

Buckinghamshire Council Communications Team.

## Introduction

- The new NHS COVID-19 app is now live and is available for people in England and Wales to download and use on their smartphones
- This is the 'official' NHS app to support the Test and Trace system
- The app doesn't use personal data other than the first part of a user's postcode - it works anonymously via Bluetooth
- Users download it voluntarily and we want to encourage people to do so, as the more people who use the app, the more effective it will be

## How it works and what it does

- The app will work on both Apple and Android devices. Some users may have to install the latest update
- All users will have to have Bluetooth enabled on their phones. It only needs to run in low energy mode
- If someone doesn't have a smartphone then they cannot use the app
- The app is available in the following languages and it's hoped this list will be extended: English, Punjabi, Urdu, Gujarati, Bengali, Welsh
- Users can use the app to: **i) Report symptoms ii) order a coronavirus test iii) check into venues like pubs, cafe and restaurants, churches, leisure centres and hairdressers using a QR code**
- Users will not give their personal data; the app will store info on what time the user enters and leaves a venue and it will use Bluetooth to see which other users have been at the same place at the same time
- If another user who'd been in close contact then reported symptoms or a confirmed case, the user would be automatically sent an alert with further advice if necessary, such as whether they should isolate
- This alert would not identify the person who had tested positive – it uses unique anonymous IDs embedded in the phone itself
- The postcode information supplied by users allows the NHS to see which areas the virus is spreading in. It's just the first half of the postcode that users will put in eg HP19

- If the app advises someone to isolate, it also provides a countdown timer so they can easily keep track of how long to stay isolated
- The app will also let users check symptoms; it will give a list of symptoms and they can select which ones apply to them – it will then tell the user if the symptoms suggest they have coronavirus

## Venues

- Certain venues are now required to display the posters with the ‘check in’ QR codes for app users to use
- Most of these venues will need to display the QR codes by law – although this is not the case for all eg places of worship (unless they have a café or similar on site too)
- People who don’t have the app will have to sign in directly with the venue, who are obliged by law to keep contact information on all visitors/customers on a 21 day rolling basis
- This list of venues includes all **local authority venues**. This means all Buckinghamshire Council buildings are now required to display the NHS App QR code posters
- All venues from the following sectors will also be required to display the NHS App QR code posters: **hospitality, leisure and tourism, close contact services, libraries and places of worship**

## Why it’s so important

- This technology will allow the NHS to find out much more quickly if the virus is spreading in a certain area
- It will significantly reduce the amount of time it takes to alert people if they’ve been in contact with a case
- The app helps trace other users who’ve spent time near each other, even if they don’t know each other personally
- Users will be able to check the app each day to see if their postcode area has become higher risk – meaning people can more easily make personal choices about their movements
- If enough people use it, it will significantly help the NHS trace the spread of the virus, ultimately helping both the user and the wider population

## Privacy

- The app does not store personal data, other than the first part of a user’s postcode
- If a user tests positive for coronavirus, they can choose whether to enter this information into the app – it isn’t compulsory
- The positive user’s ID and privacy is protected at all times
- The app cannot access any other data on the user’s phone such as contacts or photos
- The app **cannot** be used:
  - o to identify you
  - o to track you
  - o to check if you are self-isolating
  - o by law enforcement

- **The app tracks the virus, not the user**

**For detailed information about the new COVID-19 NHS App go to [www.COVID-19.nhs.uk](http://www.COVID-19.nhs.uk)**