

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BUSINESSES URGED TO PREPARE FOR NHS COVID-19 APP

- Business venues urged to download NHS Test and Trace QR codes
- The NHS Covid-19 app currently being trialled will launch on Thursday 24 September in England and Wales including QR check-in at venues
- QR codes will be an important way for NHS Test and Trace in England and NHS Test, Trace, Protect in Wales to contact multiple people if coronavirus outbreaks are identified in venues

Businesses across England and Wales like pubs, restaurants, hairdressers and cinemas, are being urged to ensure they have NHS QR code posters visible on entry so customers who have downloaded the new NHS Covid-19 app can use their smartphones to easily check-in.

The move comes ahead of a national launch of the NHS Covid-19 app across England and Wales on Thursday 24 September.

The government will be supporting businesses and venues to display the QR codes, which can be downloaded via a website to display as posters in premises.

Following the launch of the new Covid-19 app, customers and visitors in England will be able to check-in on entry with their phone instead of filling out a check-in book or tool specific to a business. This will allow NHS Test and Trace to contact customers with public health advice should there be a COVID-19 outbreak.

In England, using QR codes will help businesses meet the new legal requirement to record the contact details of customers, visitors and staff on their premises.

With coronavirus cases rising in the UK in the last few weeks it is essential businesses capitalise on the benefits QR codes can bring to protect themselves and their customers.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

“We need to use every tool at our disposal to control the spread of the virus including cutting-edge technology. The launch of the app later this month across England and Wales is a defining moment and will aid our ability to contain the virus at a critical time.

“QR codes provide an easy and simple way to collect contact details to support the NHS Test and Trace system.

“Hospitality businesses can now download posters for their premises ahead of the launch of the NHS Covid-19 app. This will allow the public to seamlessly check-in to venues using the app when it launches.

“It is vital we are using the NHS Test and Trace system to reach as many people as possible to prevent outbreaks and stop this virus in its tracks. This function will make it simple and easy so we can keep this virus under control.”

Businesses who are already using their own QR system are being encouraged to switch to the NHS Test and Trace QR code. An alternative check-in method must be maintained to

collect the contact details of those who don't have the app, for example a handwritten register.

When someone enters a venue and scans an official QR poster, the venue information will be logged on the user's phone. This information will stay on a user's phone for 21 days and if during that time a coronavirus outbreak is identified at a location, the venue ID in question will be sent to all devices. The device will check if users have been at that location and if the app finds a match, users may get an alert with advice on what to do based on the level of risk.

Managing Director of the NHS Covid-19 App, Simon Thompson said:

"My team have worked tirelessly to develop the new NHS COVID-19 app and we are incredibly grateful to all residents of the Isle of Wight, London Borough of Newham, NHS Volunteer Responders and the team that went before us; the learnings and insight have made the app what it is today.

"We are now giving businesses the time to prepare their venues ahead of the app becoming available across England and Wales. We are working closely to engage, educate and inform them about how the App works and how they can play their part.

"The QR system is a free, easy and privacy preserving way to check-in customers to venues, and we encourage all businesses to get involved and download and display the official NHS QR code posters."

Health and Social Services Minister for Wales, Vaughan Gething, said:

"The launch of the NHS COVID-19 app is an important part of coronavirus response, supporting Test, Trace, Protect here in Wales, and the Test and Trace programme in England. Working on a joint England and Wales basis is the most practical option here, as we know there is a lot of movement across our shared border. It makes sense to use the same app, working in exactly the same way, regardless of which country you're in.

"The Welsh Government has worked closely with the NHS App team to ensure the app is easy-to-use and gives people the right advice and guidance, tailored to the country they reside in. I strongly encourage people in Wales to download and use the app when it launches.

"The more people download and use the NHS COVID-19 app, the more it will help us to prevent the spread of COVID-19."

Ongoing trials in Newham, on the Isle of Wight and with NHS Volunteer Responders show the app is highly effective when used alongside traditional contact tracing to identify contacts of those who have tested positive for coronavirus.

Mayor of Newham, Rokhsana Fiaz said:

"As an early adopter of the new NHS COVID-19 App, we've played an important part in ensuring it's ready for national roll-out. My thanks to all those Newham residents who have downloaded the app so far and all those local businesses who have displayed a QR poster; as your feedback has helped contribute to this important national effort.

“Feedback from Newham residents during the pilot phase has highlighted the significance of local approaches and local voices as part of our community-wide fight against the virus; plus the role of local businesses as getting them on board early is also crucial.

“As the cases of Covid-19 have started to rise again across the country, it’s clear we’re facing a critical moment, so the roll-out of the App comes at the right time; as an additional vital tool contributing to our local test and trace measures to stop the spread of Covid-19 and safeguard our communities.”

Jason Strelitz, Director of Public Health at London Borough of Newham, said:

“With Covid-19 cases rising again across the country, the NHS COVID-19 App is a useful tool to have in the toolbox, alongside the other measures, to combat the rise in infections.

“I’ve been so impressed by how our local communities have embraced this trial and come together working together with health partners, faith and voluntary organisations and businesses to download the app and install QR codes across the Borough.

“We have received really useful feedback from Newham which will be used in the national roll-out and help us to continue to work with other local authorities and partners to tackle this deadly pandemic.”

Isle of Wight Council leader Dave Stewart said:

““I have no doubt that the NHS COVID-19 app played a role in slowing down the spread of coronavirus on the Island and helping to keep the rate of infection low.

“Having the app on your phone enables every user to feel they are contributing - it’s the right thing to do. I am enormously proud of the crucial role our Island community played in the development and refinement of this app so that it is now ready for national roll-out.

“When the nation called Islanders stepped up to the plate not once but twice to pioneer groundbreaking technology that I’m sure will go on to save many lives from this devastating virus.

“I was overwhelmed — but not surprised — by our community’s willingness to do their bit for the good of the country. Now I urge the country to follow our leadership and download the app to help keep everyone safe. This is great news for the country and great news for our Island.”

Businesses are just one sector to be urged to use the NHS Test and Trace system. Universities, hospitals, leisure premises, civic centres and libraries will also be urged to display posters in communal areas such as cafes where people are likely to congregate for more than 15 minutes and in close proximity.

Matthew Fell, CBI Chief UK Policy Director, said:

“Companies across England and Wales have been working tirelessly to follow Government guidance, keeping workplaces, pubs and shops as safe as they can for staff and customers.

“Business therefore welcomes the introduction of the new COVID-19 app, which will provide an additional layer of armour in the UK’s battle with the pandemic.

“Continued improvements to NHS Test and Trace, while simultaneously increasing testing capacity, are what is needed to build confidence for the public and businesses before a vaccine becomes available.

“Mass adoption of this new system is essential for its efficacy, so the CBI will use its networks to encourage all firms to use the new QR code and remind companies and consumers alike of the importance of compliance.”

Kate Nicholls, UK Hospitality CEO said:

“Hospitality’s top priority is to protect the health of our customers and staff but there’s also the added appetite to avoid a return to lockdown and loss of trade. It’s crucial that Test and Trace information is gathered and deployed both effectively and securely.

“Hospitality has been at the forefront of Test and Trace, so we were keen to work closely with Government to optimise the app’s functionality and ease of implementation for hospitality businesses. It is everyone’s responsibility – and in everyone’s interest - to make Test & Trace work, so we look forward to its national rollout. We would urge all hospitality businesses to support the roll out of the app and download their QR posters to help defeat the virus.”

Businesses should download the QR codes at gov.uk/create-coronavirus-qr-poster

For more information on the NHS COVID-19 app, visit <https://covid19.nhs.uk/>

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