



October 2020

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about contact tracking and tracing measures for coronavirus.

I fully support steps being taken to reduce the spread of coronavirus through sensible social distancing and isolation measures where appropriate.

Mass testing and contact tracing are not, by themselves, solutions, but may allow some social restrictions to be relaxed faster by working to suppress transmission more precisely. The UK now has capacity to carry out over 370,000 tests per day.

The COVID-19 Test and Trace Taskforce programme will ensure that, when someone develops COVID-19-like symptoms, they can rapidly have a test to find out if they have the virus, and people who they've had recent close contact with can be alerted and provided with advice. Part of the tracing effort includes a voluntary NHS contact tracing app; this will help increase the speed and effectiveness of the tracing effort. Around 18,000 additional contact tracers are being deployed to support the programme, around 6,000 of whom will be supporting local test and trace teams.

The NHS Test and Trace app was launched across England and Wales on the 24th September. This is a significant achievement, and I congratulate all who have been involved in this process. I would encourage you to download the app, if you have a smartphone, and to scan NHS Test and Trace QR codes which will be displayed in businesses and venues across the country, making it much easier for you to be notified in the event of an outbreak. I recognise concerns about accessing the app on much older versions of smartphones. However, I understand it is not uncommon for apps to be made compatible with the latest available software to minimise the risk of glitches, which is particularly important in this case. Handsets must have Android 6.0, which was released in 2015, or iOS 13.5, which was released in May 2020, as well as Bluetooth 4.0, which was launched in 2010.

Baroness Harding has been appointed to head up the NHS Test and Trace Service following many years of service with major British companies, including Sainsbury's and TalkTalk. She has been Chair of NHS Improvement since 2017, where she has been instrumental in supporting foundation trusts and NHS trusts to give patients consistently safe, high quality, compassionate care within local health systems that are financially sustainable. In addition, she has been working to deliver the new NHS People Plan, published in July 2020, a plan of action to grow and support the NHS workforce.



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This experience of NHS infrastructure is invaluable in her role overseeing NHS Test and Trace, where she and her team have been delivering the centrally important contact tracing system, alongside work on the development of a contact tracing app to supplement the existing framework.

It is absolutely not true that the Coronavirus app has automatically been downloaded to phones. I understand that Android and Apple systems were recently updated to enable technology used in Covid-19 apps across the globe, which is called an Exposure Notification API. However, this feature is turned off by default, with users needing to make an explicit choice to turn it on; even those who choose to download the app, thereby enabling the notification technology, will be able to switch off the Exposure Notification API in their phone settings.

I would like to reiterate that people will always have the choice of whether or not to download the app.

My understanding is that at present there are no moves to make downloading an app compulsory. However, the more people who use it, the better informed the Government response. It will enable staff to understand the spread of the virus, as well as to get in touch with people who may be at risk.

I absolutely agree that it is important to protect people's privacy, which is why the Government has been working with Apple and Google to ensure that the security is of the highest standard and is compatible with all devices.

It is extremely important that members of the public feel safe being contacted by the Track and Trace team. I understand that the team have undergone thorough training with this in mind. A member of the NHS Track and Trace team will never ask for details of card or bank account numbers, ask you to provide or fill in social media log in details, ask you to set up a pin, or ask you to download anything. You should only be asked for the information found in the privacy notice, here:

<https://contact-tracing.phe.gov.uk/help/privacy-notice>

If you do not feel comfortable talking on the phone, or suspect the call to be a scam, you can ask for an email or a text that will invite you to use the Test and Trace web site instead. From this email, you will only ever be directed to this web address: contact-tracing.phe.gov.uk.

If you would like further information about how data will be gathered and stored, you can read the privacy notice, here:

<https://contact-tracing.phe.gov.uk/help/privacy-notice>.

This programme is vital to the national effort to defeat coronavirus, and I will continue to monitor it closely. Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

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Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Chris'.

CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY