

***Template letter for workplace enquiries regarding the NHS COVID-19 app and inappropriate isolation messages from the Test and Trace automated messaging service***

There is a lot of confusion about the NHS COVID-19 mobile phone app and the Test and Trace Service. The NHS COVID-19 app is not a replacement for the Test and Trace Service and it works completely separately and independently. There are no connections or any form of data sharing between the Test and Trace Service and the NHS COVID-19 app.

**The NHS COVID-19 app**

The NHS COVID-19 app is downloaded by the user on to their phone and uses Bluetooth to anonymously track contacts. If an app user then inputs that they have tested positive, the app will alert other phones with the app that have been in close contact during the case's infectious period. The notification is generated within the app itself, and a countdown is started indicating the remaining isolation period. No user information is shared at any point, and it is not possible to tell which positive case the notification refers to.

Guidance on using the NHS COVID-19 app is available at: <https://COVID19.nhs.uk/>  
There is also a link to the NHS guidance from within the phone app itself.

Downloading the NHS COVID-19 app is voluntary and an optional extra. While we would recommend that people follow all isolation recommendations, isolation recommendations from the NHS COVID-19 app (in contrast to those from the Test and Trace Service) are not currently legally enforceable.

There is no Government financial support to those isolating in response to a notification from the NHS COVID-19 app.

There is no way of finding out which contact initiated the alert from the NHS COVID-19 app (due to the anonymity) and no-one can make alterations to the contacts identified or stop inappropriate alerts.

If you have a workplace situation where you believe the NHS COVID-19 app has alerted staff inappropriately, we recommend that you do a risk assessment on whether the contact notification is likely to relate to the workplace contact. If you are satisfied that there has not been close contact as per the Test & Trace guidance in ANY setting (not just the workplace i.e. social contact, car sharing, or contact with other positive people who are not fellow workers), then the staff can ignore the alerts from the NHS COVID-19 app. Even so they should be vigilant for the symptoms of COVID-19 and immediately self-isolate and get a test if they develop any.

We also recommend that all staff read the guidance on how to use the NHS COVID-19 app and especially note the importance of pausing the NHS COVID-19 app (or turning off Bluetooth) while at work as per the instructions.

In situations where the NHS COVID-19 app has been left scanning when not on the person or in someone wearing full PPE, data can be deleted from the app to prevent false

alarms. Please note that this will delete all Bluetooth contact data and may prevent some future appropriate notifications. The delete function is under the [Information] tab, click on [manage my data].

#### Excerpt from NHS COVID-19 app instructions

##### **Should I use the NHS COVID-19 app while I'm at work?**

It's important you use the app at all times, including while at work, except if you:

- store your phone in a locker while you're working or are involved in a leisure activity, like swimming
- are already protected by a Perspex (or equivalent) screen
- are a [healthcare worker working in a healthcare building such as a hospital or GP surgery](#)
- a worker in social care and are wearing medical grade PPE such as a surgical mask

If your phone is not with you, use the 'pause' function on the app so that the contact tracing part doesn't work. If you forget, you might get an alert because an infected person was near your phone when your phone wasn't with you. [Read more about how and when to pause contact tracing.](#)

#### **The NHS Test and Trace Service**

The Test and Trace service uses phone calls, text messages, or emails to inform contacts. These contacts are identified (and the name and phone number / email shared with Test and Trace) by the positive case, to enable them to be informed and told to self-isolate.

Further information on how the Test and Trace service works can be found here:  
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/nhs-test-and-trace-how-it-works>

The Test and Trace Service relies upon people with COVID-19 infection completing an online record of their activities and close contacts. Where people are unwilling or unable to complete an online record, a Test and Trace operative will phone them to collect the details.

Cooperation with the Test and Trace Service is a legal requirement and government financial support is available to those required to isolate.

If you have an urgent enquiry relating to the NHS Test and Trace Service, you can call the helpline on 119.

Sometimes cases may have entered a contact name in error. If so, the case is able to return to their Test and Trace record online and make amendments e.g. amend a telephone number or remove a contact entirely. It is also possible, under certain circumstances, for the Test and Trace Service to amend a contact record where a mistake has been made.