



Department  
of Health &  
Social Care

*From the Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP  
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care*

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The Rt Hon Harriet Harman MP  
Chair, Joint Committee on Human Rights  
House of Commons  
Westminster  
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21 May 2020

Dear Harriet,

Thank you for your letter of 7<sup>th</sup> May and for drafting a proposed Bill relating to the processing of information in respect of contact tracing for COVID-19.

Contact tracing is key to containing and preventing the spread of infection, by identifying people at risk of COVID-19 due to their contact with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 cases. The new NHS COVID-19 App is one part of our new Test and Trace programme, which expands a well-established public health intervention through greater use of technology. The programme also comprises extended web and phone-based contact tracing, and swab testing for those with potential COVID-19 symptoms.

As I set out in my letter of 5<sup>th</sup> May, I have every confidence that the NHS COVID-19 App complies with the law and the high information governance standards expected of public services. I do not consider that new legislation is necessary to govern contact tracing. I am firmly of the view that existing legislation provides the necessary powers, duties and protections. In accordance with those checks and balances, we are already taking all necessary steps to ensure the app operates in a fair and transparent way and protects any data that the app collects from a user. Participation in contact tracing and use of the app is voluntary and we will ensure that an app user understand fully how their data will be collected, used and protected throughout their time using the app.

Existing legislation (especially the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Human Rights Act 1998), our commitment towards transparency, and the commitments I have previously set out ensure high levels of security and privacy will provide the public with the right protection and give them clarity and confidence to download and use the app to support our national effort to tackle COVID-19.

We will continue to work with the Information Commissioners Office and the National Cyber Security Centre and use our Ethics Advisory Board to review our processes, provide rightful challenge and informed advice as the Test and Trace programme is rolled out nationally in the coming weeks.

You will be aware that the Prime Minister has appointed Baroness Dido Harding to lead the wider Test and Trace programme. There is rigorous governance in place, including

Senior Responsible Owners (SROs) for each delivery workstream, and robust Equality and Data Protection measures are being built into the design of the programme (including the app).

Many thanks for your proposal and the recently published report of the Joint Committee on Human Rights, which Government will respond to in due course. I appreciate the work that you and the Committee have undertaken to scrutinise the app and ensure it is a success in helping us to beat COVID-19.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Matt". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

**MATT HANCOCK**