



Department of Health & Social Care

*From the Lord Bethell
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Innovation (Lords)*

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Lord Kinnoull
Chair of the European Union Committee

By Email: euclords@parliament.uk

06 August 2020

Dear Lord Kinnoull,

C(2020)2296 : COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION on a common Union toolbox for the use of technology and data to combat and exit from the COVID-19 crisis, in particular concerning mobile applications and the use of anonymised mobility data

C(2020)2523 : COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION: Guidance on apps supporting the fight against COVID 19 pandemic in relation to data protection

Thank you for your further letter of 23 July about the NHS Test and Trace contact tracing app seeking clarification about how the app will work with the Google/Apple API, interoperability with other countries' contact tracing apps, international cooperation on COVID-19, and the timetable for introducing the app.

How we are building on the Google/Apple API

We tested our app and the Google/Apple Exposure Notification Framework on Android and Apple phones to see how they performed on a range of issues, such as detecting contacts and measuring distance between devices.

As a result of this testing, the NHS Test and Trace contract tracing app has been progressed using the Google/Apple Exposure Notification framework, and incorporated essential findings from the Isle of Wight Pilot such as on distance. We continue to build on three areas where the app can bring benefits to the NHS Test and Trace Service:

- Speed - the ability to communicate with users in minutes.
- Precision - the ability to measure distance and time accurately.
- Reach - the ability to 'remember' people you have been near but not necessarily met.

Our aim is to bring together the functionality required to carry out contact tracing, whilst making it easy to order tests, and access proactive advice and guidance to aid self-isolation. We have also added enhancements based on feedback from users in the Isle of Wight Pilot that they would like a more personalised risk-based approach.

Could these changes affect the interoperability of the app?

We have been working in collaboration with other app development teams across the world - including Ireland, Northern Ireland, Germany, and New Zealand. We have exchanged ideas and are working on solutions that best support local systems taking account of cultural and societal differences.

The app will help to break the chains of transmission to enable society to return to a more normal way of life. We are actively exploring how our app may work with apps of other nations - to ensure that our citizens can help disrupt the spread of the virus when travelling abroad and when there are visitors here. We are currently evaluating emerging interoperability standards to understand how the UK may be able to align with them technically. We are aware that Northern Ireland and Ireland have built interoperability capability on the Google/Apple API and we are monitoring their progress.

There is also further work underway to understand and comply with data sharing, information governance and legal implications and requirements.

Timetable for introducing the app

We know that introducing an effective, working app as part of our overall NHS Test and Trace service is important. However, we also understand the trust the public are putting in us to get our response right. We will test the app and only conduct a national roll out when we are confident we have the technology and functionality right.

International cooperation to encourage innovation and digital solutions in other areas

We are working closely with other countries through international forums such as the G7, G20 and the World Health Organisation, as well as on a bilateral basis on a wide range of issues relating to COVID-19. We recognise that COVID-19 presents a global challenge which requires a collaborative response, and we will continue to work with other countries throughout the crisis and beyond.

Best Wishes



LORD BETHELL