

Britons answer call for volunteer coronavirus force

March 25 2020

Over 400,000 people signed up within 24 hours of a British government call for volunteers to help those stuck at home due to the coronavirus outbreak, Prime Minister Boris Johnson said Wednesday.

Health Minister Matt Hancock unveiled a plan on Monday to create a 250,000-strong [volunteer](#) force to help deliver groceries and medicines to the most [vulnerable people](#) instructed by the [government](#) to self-isolate.

This is larger than Britain's [armed forces](#), which currently stand at just over 192,000.

"When we launched the appeal last night, we hoped to get 250,000 volunteers over a few days," Johnson said during his daily address.

"But I can tell you that in just 24 hours, 405,000 people have responded to the call."

The government has closed all non-essential shops and services and told people to stay at home to try to stop the spread of COVID-19, after 422 deaths and more than 8,000 cases as of Tuesday.

Special advice has been drawn up for 1.5 million people considered most at risk because of underlying [health conditions](#), asking them to entirely avoid [social contact](#).

Under the new NHS Volunteers scheme, healthcare professionals and some charities will be able to request help for their at-risk patients, who will then be matched with volunteers who live near them.

Any adults who are fit and healthy can apply to help deliver medicines from pharmacies, drive patients to appointments or make regular phone calls to check on people.

"This is one of those once-in-a-lifetime moments where a single action from one person can be the difference between life and death for another," said Nikki Kanani, head of NHS primary care services.

"Simple acts of kindness are going to make all the difference in keeping some of the most vulnerable people well and out of hospital.

"NHS staff are pulling out all the stops to ensure those who need care receive it, and creating a bank of helpers that they can call upon to support their most vulnerable patients through this difficult time is going to be invaluable."

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