

# E-learning could train community health workers to help COVID-19 efforts

March 26 2020, by Ryan O'hare

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UK researchers say an emergency program to train thousands of community health workers could help vulnerable groups during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Writing in a comment piece today in The Lancet, they suggest a large-scale program could train a workforce to help the estimated 1.5 million elderly and vulnerable people in the UK who may be in isolation for 12 weeks.

The authors, from Imperial College London, The London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, and Queen Mary University of London, propose an online-based learning program could be used to train people at [lower risk](#), such as healthy, symptomless adults between the ages of 18-30.

These newly trained community health workers (CHWs) could then support the most [vulnerable people](#) in their homes, carrying out basic assessments such as temperature checks, but which could potentially provide support in widespread testing for COVID-19, as well as a long-term model of care in the UK.

Dr. Matthew Harris, from the School of Public Health at Imperial College London, said: "This crisis requires a coordinated, systematic, national response where CHWs that are trained to deal with testing, surveillance and active case finding can also support people in their homes with [health](#) and social care issues.

"The government's launch of NHS Volunteers is a step in the right direction, however this crisis requires a fully-funded recruitment drive so that people can dedicate their time fully and be reimbursed appropriately.

"Unfortunately, there will be many job losses as certain industries begin to fail, but by pivoting those affected into this much-needed service then there is an opportunity to solve several problems simultaneously."

**More information:** Andy Haines et al. National UK programme of

community health workers for COVID-19 response, *The Lancet* (2020).  
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