

UK begins testing a new app to fight COVID-19 spread

August 13 2020



In this Thursday, Aug. 13, 2020 file photo, shoppers walk along Oxford Street in London. Britain started testing a new smartphone app Thursday to help people find out whether they've been close to someone infected with COVID-19 after security concerns torpedoed an earlier effort to use technology to track the disease. (AP Photo/Kirsty Wigglesworth, File)

Britain started testing a new smartphone app Thursday to help people find out whether they've been close to someone infected with COVID-19 after security concerns torpedoed an earlier effort to use technology to track the disease.

The Department of Health and Social Care said that trials of the app began on the Isle of Wight, with testing in the London borough of Newham scheduled to begin soon. The app, which was developed in conjunction with privacy experts and companies such as Google and Apple, is similar to technology being used in Germany and Ireland.

“It uses the latest security technology and is designed with [user privacy](#) in mind, so it tracks the virus, not people,” the Health Department said in a statement.

The app uses bluetooth technology to determine when a user's phone has been in close proximity to the phone of someone who has tested positive for the disease. It does not store [personal information](#) such as the name, address or birth date of users.

The app is designed to work alongside the National Health Service's existing track and trace program, and authorities believe widespread adoption of the smartphone technology is crucial to helping people return to the lives they lived before the pandemic, including use of public transportation and eating in restaurants.

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Citation: UK begins testing a new app to fight COVID-19 spread (2020, August 13) retrieved 28 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-08-uk-app-covid-.html>

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