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Lewis Macdonald MSP
Convener
Health & Sport Committee

By Email.

10 February 2021

Dear Lewis,

I am writing to inform you of some enhancements due to be made to the Protect Scotland app (the app) on 10 February. To date Protect Scotland has been downloaded over 1.8m times and over 37,000 users have been notified of a contact. Daily statistics are published on the Public Health Scotland dashboard

https://public.tableau.com/profile/phs.covid.19#!/vizhome/COVID-19DailyDashboard_15960160643010/Overview

On 10 February the app will introduce a mechanism to allow users to generate an isolation certificate.

Currently, app users who are advised to self-isolate via the app (usually anonymous contacts) have no way of proving their status, short of a screenshot which isn't always accepted by other parties. This has meant a small number of app users have been unable to claim self-isolation support grants, due to the risk of fraud. This differs from 'known' contacts as Contact Tracers advise those identified as needing to self-isolate via an SMS message. The SMS is sent to all positive cases as soon as the case is logged on Case Management System and includes a link to the NHS Inform website advising further support can be found there.

The process to allow app users alerted by the app either anonymously or via a known contact is already being applied in Northern Ireland. We will continue to work closely with Local Authorities and COSLA to implement the solution and ensure app users feel supported. The roll out will be accompanied by targeted online advertising for a period of three weeks.

At the same time as introducing the self-isolation certificate process we will be implementing a solution to allow older iPhones (5S and 6) to download the Protect Scotland app.

When Protect Scotland was first launched, criticism largely focused on its inability to work on older phones, particularly older iPhones. This was never a limitation of the app itself, but rather a limitation of the Google/Apple Exposure Notification System that the app relies on to function.

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On 15 December 2020, Apple announced they will bring the exposure notification framework to older iPhones, allowing them to download and use proximity tracing apps. Research indicates that the majority of iPhone 5S and 6 users are aged 50+ so including the Apple development will provide greater access to the app.

The required development that was needed to implement this change has now been completed and from 10 February owners of iPhone 5S and 6 will be able to use the app. The change will be accompanied by a three week targeting online marketing campaign to increase uptake of the app amongst older iPhone users.

Kind regards,

JEANE FREEMAN

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