

Virus tracing app goes live in Scotland

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Scotland on Thursday launched a smartphone app for tracking coronavirus cases using technology developed by Apple and Google, while neighbouring England is still struggling to roll out its own troubled version.

The "Protect Scotland" app, developed by the UK nation's National

Health Service (NHS), adopts the decentralised approach offered by the US tech giants to help fight the spread of COVID-19.

It alerts app users if they have been in close contact with another user who tests positive for the virus, and helps trace their other contacts "while keeping your information private and anonymous", Scotland's devolved government said.

First Minister Nicola Sturgeon urged Scots to adopt the tool, stressing it was "confidential" and users would be notified "anonymously".

"There's a new way to help fight COVID in Scotland," she said on Twitter.

"Please download, and let's all protect Scotland."

The rollout contrasts with the situation in England, where the effort by the UK government in Westminster to develop its own app has been bedevilled by problems.

In an embarrassing U-turn in June, it was forced to abandon the release of the tool nationwide after it encountered major problems with its more centralised approach.

Officials switched to the Apple and Google technology, and needed several months of further troubleshooting before trials could begin with the latest version of the app in parts of England.

Britain has been the worst-hit country in Europe by COVID-19, recording nearly 42,000 deaths according to government statistics, and has seen positive cases spike dramatically in the last week.

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