

{* ON-PREM *}

Outsourcing firm Serco wins £212m UK Test and Trace deal

Nice work if you can get it – it bagged £322m deal for Test and Trace last year

Lindsay Clark

Tue 22 Mar 2022 // 11:45 UTC

9 



UPDATED Serco has won a £212m (\$278m) contract for disease testing and contract tracing from the UK Health Security Agency, the organisations set up to replace the controversial NHS Test & Trace and doomed Public Health England.

In a **contract** initially set to last two years, the tech and public sector outsourcing provider will be expected to support services in the country including positive case tracing, contact tracing, isolation follow-up, test enquiries, and test bookings.

T&T in 2022 and beyond

The move comes one month after UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson's

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The government said last month that "from April" it will "update guidance setting out the ongoing steps that people with COVID-19 should take to be careful and considerate of others, similar to advice on other infectious diseases. This will align with testing changes."

Over in the US, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said **it no longer recommends** universal case investigation and contact tracing. As of 28 February, it encourages health departments to focus those practices on "high-risk settings" instead.

The situation on the ground in the intervening weeks, however, has changed and continues to do so.

Serco's work during initial UK outbreak

The outsourcing provider has already worked on the test and trace system during the COVID-19 pandemic. **It was awarded a £322m (\$423m)** contract to continue its work on the Test and Trace system in England and Northern Ireland in 2021, having first won a £45m (\$59m) deal in June 2020.

The £37bn (\$48bn) Test and Trace service set up in the UK during the height of the pandemic received damning criticism from **national public spending watchdog the National Audit Office**.

In October last year, **Parliament's Public Accounts Committee also released a report criticising government performance on Test and Trace**, saying it failed to meet its objectives of mitigating the pandemic.

In December 2020, the NAO **said** that the system had not yet achieved all its objectives, "with too few test results delivered within 24 hours, and too few contacts of infected people being reached and told to self-isolate."

- **UK Test and Trace finding consultant habit hard to break: More contracts go to Deloitte and Accenture**

- Brit MPs blast Baroness Dido Harding's performance as head of NHS Test and Trace
- IBM tossed £20m to keep the Trace side of NHS Test and Trace services running
- How many Brits have deleted life-saving track and trace app from their phones? No idea, junior minister tells MPs

Govt criticised for contracting private sector firms

Dido Harding, the former head of Test and Trace was forced to defend the services use of private sector providers. Speaking to the **Public Accounts Committee** in February last year, she said outsourcing was necessary because the work was "quite technical [in addressing] operational processes and systems design as we build the services".

Harding added that she hoped roles would be transferred to the civil service.

Serco is no stranger to criticism in terms of services delivered to the UK public sector.

In 2019, it paid £22.9m to the UK's Serious Fraud Office in fines and costs related to its electronic tagging scandal. Under the "deferred prosecution agreement", the firm's UK subsidiary – Serco Geografix Ltd (SGL) – has taken responsibility for three offences of fraud and two of false accounting related to the contract with the Ministry of Justice between 2010 and 2013.

Serco was alleged to have charged the Ministry of Justice for monitoring offenders in Britain who were **already in jail, dead or had left the country**.

Rupert Soames, the grandson of **wartime-era British prime minister Winston Churchill** and Serco's group chief exec, said the company was "mortified, embarrassed and angry" that it had **understated** the level of profitability of its "Electronic Monitoring" contract in its reports to the Ministry of Justice six to nine years ago. ®

Updated to add on 22 March:

A UKHSA spokesperson has been in touch to say: "It is vital we have the right services in place to communicate effectively with the public and respond to any public health threats, including COVID-19."

"The advertised cost of the contract is the maximum that can be spent, the actual cost is likely to be much less."

"The contracts have been awarded following a fair and open procurement process, in line with public sector procurement guidelines and with the aim of achieving value for the taxpayer."

Whitepaper: Top 5 Tips For Navigating Your SASE Journey



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Daisy Group to take on some of data management company Sungard's UK customers

Customers at other Sungard datacenters are not affected

Dan Robinson Fri 20 May 2022 // 12:30 UTC



UK customers of datacenter and colo service provider Sungard Availability Services are to be transferred to Daisy Corporate Services, part of the Daisy Group, months after Sungard went into administration.

According to some reports, Daisy Group has signed a deal to acquire the UK arm of Sungard, in a move that would see the company pick up Sungard's former customers, including major banks and other financial institutions.

However, a statement given to *The Register* by the administrators, Teneo

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FreeBSD 13.1 is out for everything from PowerPC to x86-64

The granddaddy of FOSS UNIX just keeps on trucking – and is a lot easier to install this time round

Liam Proven in Prague Fri 20 May 2022 // 11:25 UTC



The latest version of FreeBSD, 13.1, was released this week for both 32 and 64-bit forms of x86, Arm, POWER – and 64-bit RISC-V.

FreeBSD is the oldest open-source Unix that's still actively maintained and is directly descended from the original BSD Unix developed at the University of California at Berkeley in the 1970s: the Berkeley System Distribution.

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Microsoft Bing censors politically sensitive Chinese terms

Research claims search engine fails to autofill certain names in Han characters, Microsoft points to technical error

[Laura Dobberstein](#) Fri 20 May 2022 // 10:37 UTC

1 

Microsoft search engine Bing censors terms deemed sensitive in China from its autosuggestion feature internationally, according to research from Citizen Lab.

The University of Toronto research organization analyzed the search engine's autosuggestion system for censorship of nearly 100,000 names in the United States, Canada and China in both English letters and Chinese characters. Testing was done by modifying region settings, language setting and IP address geolocation.

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Failed gambler? How about an algorithm that predicts the future

Hopefully an end to '... and you'll never guess what happened next!'

Alistair Dabbs Fri 20 May 2022 // 09:32 UTC

19 

Something for the Weekend Another coffee, please. Yes, I know we're about to start. There is always time for one more coffee. It's good for your brain. Thanks.

Could you hold my cup for a moment? I need to visit the restroom. Yes, I know we're about to start; you told me that already. There is always time for coffee AND a comfort break. Yes, I know the two are related but I don't have time to chat about it. I'm bursting here.

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Seriously, you do not want to make that cable your earth

Network? What's that when it's at home?

Richard Speed Fri 20 May 2022 // 08:30 UTC

56 

On Call This week we bring you a shocking incident for a *Register* reader who was party to an electrical engineer's earthly delights.

"Andrew" takes us back to the 1980s, the days of DECNet, DEC Rainbow PCs, and the inevitable VAX or two.

Back then, DECnet was a big noise in networking. Originally conceived in

Protecting data now as the quantum era approaches

Startup QuSecure is the latest vendor to jump into the field with its as-a-service offering

Jeff Burt Fri 20 May 2022 // 07:30 UTC



Analysis Startup QuSecure will this week introduce a service aimed at addressing how to safeguard cybersecurity once quantum computing renders current public key encryption technologies vulnerable.

It's unclear when quantum computers will easily crack classical crypto – estimates range from three to five years to never – but conventional wisdom is that now's the time to start preparing to ensure data remains encrypted.

A growing list of established vendors like IBM and Google and smaller startups – Quantum Xchange and Quantinuum, among others – have worked on this for several years. QuSecure, which is launching this week after three years in stealth mode, will offer a fully managed service

China's GitHub clone making all repos private pending mysterious 'review'

Gitee apologises but won't explain why this is happening

Simon Sharwood, APAC Editor Fri 20 May 2022 // 06:55 UTC



China's approved GitHub clone, Gitee, has warned users that it will make all existing repositories private pending a mysterious review of their

content.

Gitee offers Git and Apache Subversion as a service. But while GitHub has occasionally been banned in China, Gitee was anointed as China's designated open source development hub in 2020, after the nation's Ministry of Industry and Information Technology conducted a bidding process.

The Reg keeps an eye on Gitee and sees a steady stream of blog posts about product and service updates, plus news of open source software in

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Mozilla opens testing for Manifest v3 extensions in Firefox

Browser makers line up for Google's extension system but complaints persist

[Thomas Claburn in San Francisco](#) Fri 20 May 2022 // 06:30 UTC

8 

Mozilla on Wednesday launched a Developer Preview program to solicit feedback on Firefox extensions that implement Manifest v3, a Google-backed revision of browser extension architecture.

Mozilla last year said it intended to support MV3 in Firefox extensions, though with some differences. Its implementation of the WebExtensions API in Firefox has now incorporated enough of MV3 plumbing that developers can set the appropriate browser flags and experiment with MV3 extensions in Firefox v101, now in beta and due for release at the end of May.

Google Chrome is expected to stop supporting extensions created under the old MV2 specification in about a year, June 2023. And given Chrome's share of the browser market – about 64 per cent currently –

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Canada bans Huawei and ZTE from 5G networks, citing national security risks

Ban on shopping from September, rip and replace order with 2024 deadline

Laura Dobberstein Fri 20 May 2022 // 05:30 UTC

8 

The Canadian government has joined many of its allies and banned the use of Huawei and ZTE tech in its 5G networks, as part of a new telecommunications security framework.

“The Government is committed to maximizing the social and economic benefits of 5G and access to telecommunications services writ large, but not at the expense of security,” stated the Government of Canada.

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India slightly softens infosec incident reporting and data retention rules

But also makes it plain that offshore entities must comply

Simon Sharwood, APAC Editor Fri 20 May 2022 // 04:30 UTC



India has slightly softened its controversial new reporting requirements for information security incidents and made it plain they apply to multinational companies.

The rules were announced with little advance warning in late April and quickly attracted criticism from industry on grounds including the requirement to report 22 different types of incident within six hours, a requirement to register personal details of individual VPN users, and retention of many log files for 180 days.

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Lenovo halves its ThinkPad workstation range

Two becomes one as ThinkPad P16 stands alone and HX replaces mobile Xeon

[Simon Sharwood, APAC Editor](#) Fri 20 May 2022 // 02:55 UTC

5 

Lenovo has halved its range of portable workstations.

The Chinese PC giant this week announced the ThinkPad P16. The loved-by-some ThinkPad P15 and P17 are to be retired, *The Register* has confirmed.

The P16 machine runs Intel 12th Gen HX CPUs, but only up to the i7 models – so maxes out at 14 cores and 4.8GHz clock speed. The laptop

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