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Sixty seconds on . . . covid influencers

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Pardon?

Get with the programme, Grandad. Influencers are very . . . influential these days. And they don't just encourage people on social media to buy things they don't need.

Really? What else do they do?

Help spearhead public health campaigns, it seems. The fact checking organisation Full Fact¹ did some digging and found that the government paid £63 000 (£71 000; \$85 000) to 42 social media influencers to promote the national NHS test and trace service last year. This equates to roughly £1500 per influencer on average.

Tough gig

Indeed. Not only were they trying to promote a troublesome brand (sorry Dido), but influencing people isn't as easy it sounds. Only a select few people with very large social media followings—such as *Love Island* contestants Shaughna Phillips and Josh Denzel, and professional hockey player Henry Weir—were deemed fit for this task.

This sounds more carrot than (hockey) stick?

You could say that. As part of a coordinated advertising campaign last year, the government paid the celebrities to share messages of support for the NHS and the test and trace system on their social media pages.

That's one way to win friends. What was the rationale?

The Cabinet Office told Full Fact that as part of its wider communications strategy for raising awareness of the service and the importance of testing for covid-19, it decided to work with “key micro and macro influencers to reach young adults in a channel they regularly engage with,” alongside more traditional methods of marketing.

I feel old. Is this trend here to stay?

Quite possibly. With vaccinations, diagnostic services, and health checks to promote, don't be surprised if we see influenza influencers and YouTestTubers professing their love for the NHS before long.

¹ Full Fact. The government spent £63 000 on influencer marketing for Test and Trace. 13 January 2021. <https://fullfact.org/online/influencer-test-and-trace>.