

## Lord Appointed as Chair of Health Centre Voted Against Free COVID Testing



Image: Lord James Richard O'Shaughnessy conversing with staff during a visit to King's College London and the NIHR King's Clinical Research Facility 2023. Credit: NIHR Maudsley BRC

The newly appointed chair of Cambridge University Health Partners (CUHP), Lord James Richard O'Shaughnessy, previously voted against an amendment that would have ensured COVID-19 tests remained free in the UK, according to Parliament.uk.

The amendment was brought to the attention of the House of Lords by Baroness Dorothea Thornton on 20 July 2021, who argued that the regulations at the time heavily relied on private sector tests that charged fees and were not integrated with the NHS testing system.

The proposal called on the government to ensure that “reliable, high-quality and free NHS tests remain available beyond July 19 to help manage COVID-19.” The amendment was rejected after 230 Not Contents, including O'Shaughnessy's vote, were outvoted by 229 Contents.

In response to the amendment's rejection, over 300,000 people signed a Keep Our NHS Public petition urging the government to continue to offer free tests, according to the BBC.

He similarly voted Not Content for another of Baroness Thornton's amendments on 14 October 2020. The amendment to “give all local authorities the resources they need to operate an effective contact tracing system in their areas” was voted against by O'Shaughnessy and 209 of his fellow members of the Conservative party.

However, a record of O'Shaughnessy's spoken contribution during the Coronavirus Bill debate on 24 March 2020 shows that he said the government should be "aiming for nationwide population-wide testing so that we can understand who is infected and who is not." Yet, his voting history on testing policies appears to contradict this stance.

Lord O'Shaughnessy undertook the position at CUHP on 13 January 2025, according to his LinkedIn page. As the world's most intensive science and technology cluster, the CUHP has charitable objectives that focus on public health, as stated on their website.

O'Shaughnessy's recent appointment as the chair of the organisation that focuses on public health is likely to raise questions about how his voting record aligns with the CUHP's charitable aims.