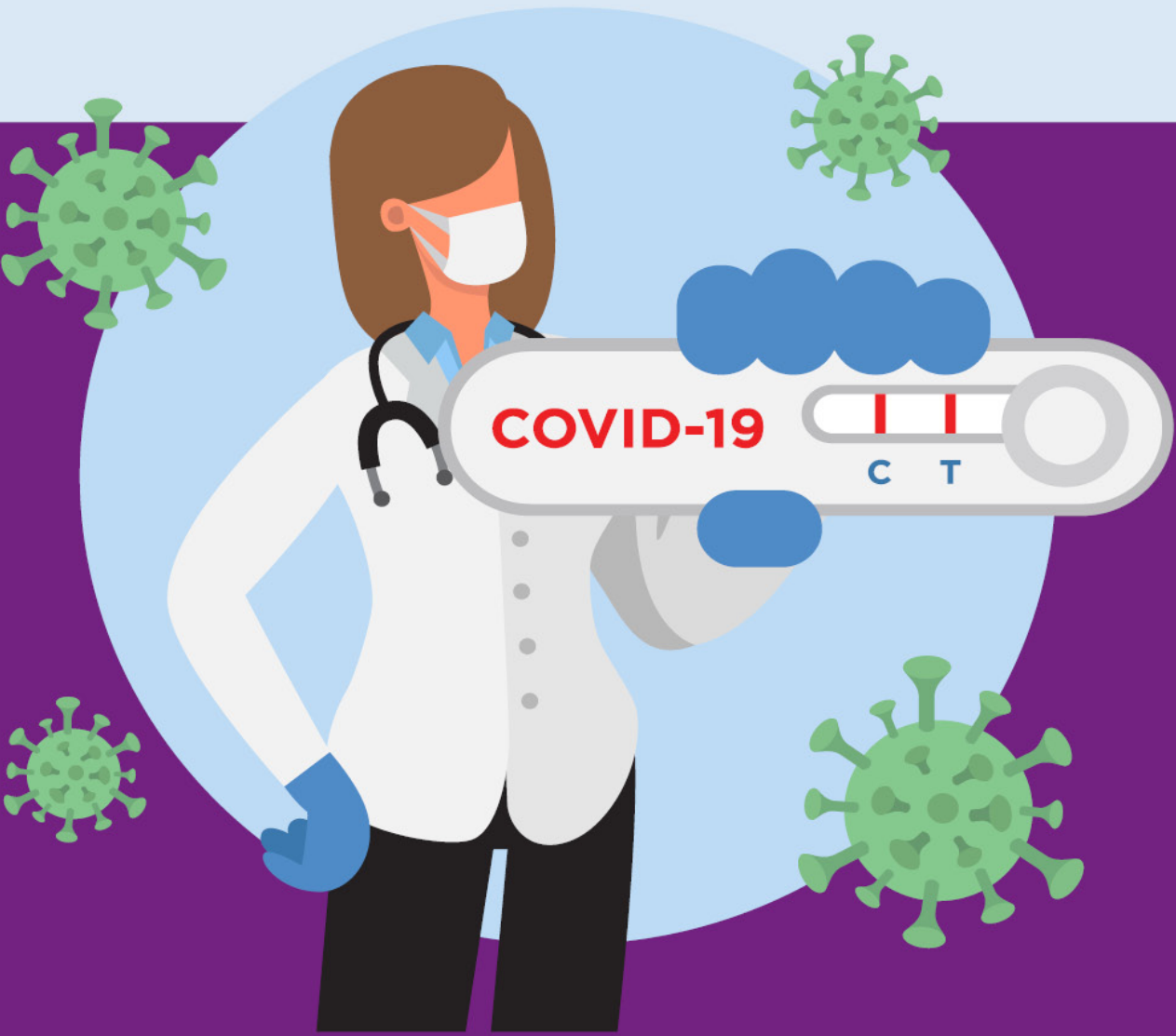


# COVID-19 TESTING GUIDANCE



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Final Draft

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## **Introduction**

As we continue to manage the spread of coronavirus amongst our communities and workforce, a multi-agency approach is being taken across the Lanarkshire area to encourage employees to get tested on a regular basis to help identify more positive cases of the virus and to ensure that those who are infected, self-isolate. This will reduce the spread of the virus and protect those who cannot work from home.

Testing is crucial as around 1 in 3 people who are infected with COVID-19 have no symptoms so could be spreading the disease without knowing it. Broadening testing amongst the workforce within the Lanarkshire area to help identify those showing no symptoms will mean finding positive cases more quickly and will help to break the chains of transmission.

Testing can also provide confidence to our employees and customers in the workplace and help to protect and enable business continuity.

The purpose of this document is not to replace existing policy within individual agencies but rather to provide additional resource to encourage all employees to undergo regular testing for Covid19.

## **Aims**

- To ensure all employees understand the importance of regular testing for Covid19.
- To explain the different types of Covid19 tests and the process involved.
- To ensure all employees have access to Covid19 tests or know how to access these.
- To provide employees with guidance and support regarding regular Covid19 testing.
- To ensure that managers support employees with the testing process.
- To outline the rules that must be followed if an employee tests positive for coronavirus.
- To demonstrate senior manager leadership to encourage participation in regular testing

## **Legislation**

The following legislation has been considered when producing this document:

- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Public Health etc. (Scotland) Act 2008
- The Public Health (Notification of Infectious Diseases) (Scotland) Regulations 1988
- Data Protection Act 2018
- General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)
- Equalities Act 2010
- Employment Rights Act 1996
- Human Rights Act 1998

## Scope

Regular Covid19 testing must be encouraged amongst workforces, and particularly amongst those who are working closely with individuals within the community. Regular monitoring of the testing process must take place to ensure that organisations remain compliant with the advice and guidance from both the government and public health.

It should be noted that this document does not form part of an employee's contract of employment, or any other contract and may be amended at any time.

## What is Regular Covid19 Testing?

There are two main types of tests used to detect Covid19:

1. **Rapid Regular Lateral Flow Device (LFD) Tests** – these can be used to detect coronavirus in employees who are not displaying symptoms.
2. **Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) Tests** – these are used when employees are displaying symptoms or have had a positive LFD test.

Rapid Regular Lateral Flow Device (LFD) Tests can be used by all employees on a regular basis to check if they have coronavirus and need to self-isolate. In some service areas, depending on the nature of the work, employees will be asked to undergo an LFD test twice weekly before commencing their duties. The next section explains more about these tests and how employees can access regular lateral flow device (LFD) tests.

## Rapid Regular Lateral Flow (LFD) Tests

It is recommended that **all** employees do a rapid test twice a week (every 3 to 4 days) to check if they have the virus. If employees test positive and self-isolate, it helps stop the virus spreading amongst the workforce and communities.

Employees can collect 2 boxes of 7 tests per household or up to four packs of seven tests if collecting for multiple people from a local test site. The location of the test sites and the opening times will be advised to employees through email and other available communication channels such as notice boards. Managers will also be able to advise employees on where the nearest test site is based. Most sites allow for the collection of tests between 3.30 pm and 8.00 pm and appointments are not necessary.

Employees can also arrange for a box of 7 tests to be sent to their home address by sending a request through the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests>.

If an employee is unable to obtain tests at a site or online, they can request them by calling 119. Lines are open from 7 am to 11 pm and calls are free.

Some organisations/services may already have tests available for collection on site and managers should ensure that all relevant employees are made aware of this and encouraged to use them.

### **How and where do employees do the test?**

Employees can either go to a rapid lateral flow testing site to be tested or they can use the testing kits at home or in their workplace.

If an employee chooses to attend a testing site, they should be mindful of the following:

- they may need an appointment, so should check before they attend
- a trained helper might be able to help them do the test
- the employee will get a text or email with the result when it's ready

If the employee chooses to do the test at home, they should follow the instructions as advised within the testing kit and report the results online or by phone to the following website: [www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result](https://www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result).

### **Positive LFD Test**

Where an LFD test is positive, the employee must commence self-isolation immediately and arrange for a PCR test to be undertaken. The employee must continue to self-isolate, along with the people they live with, until the result of the PCR test is known. If the test is negative, the employee must return to work. If the test is positive, the employee must continue to self-isolate for a period of 10 days. Where possible, employees who are asymptomatic, should work from home during the self-isolation period. Periods of self-isolation will be recorded, and payment agreed in line with organisational policies and procedures.

### **Support for Regular Testing**

Employees should be encouraged and supported to partake in regular rapid lateral flow testing. Where possible, employees should be encouraged to take the test prior to attending work, however this may mean adjusting their starting or finishing times to accommodate this.

### **Service Specific Testing**

In areas where there are more defined instructions around testing, managers must ensure that every employee is aware of what these are, how and when they can access tests and how they record the outcomes of the tests. Managers must also maintain a level of dialogue with these employees that allows for issues to be addressed at the earliest possible point.

## **Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) Tests**

Employees who have any of the three main symptoms of Coronavirus, must be encouraged to do a PCR test. The main symptoms of coronavirus are:

- a high temperature
- a new continuous cough
- loss of taste and/or smell

If an employee has symptoms, he/she and the people they live with must immediately [self-isolate](#). They should not leave home until they have got their test results, except to post a test kit or for a PCR test appointment. Periods of self-isolation will be recorded, and payment agreed in line with organisational policies and procedures.

### **When to get the test done?**

Employees need to get the test done as soon as possible and within the first 5 days of having symptoms. This allows the employee the best chance of preventing the spread of COVID-19 to others. After 5 days the employee should still book a test if they have been advised to do so by a healthcare professional.

On days 1 to 4, an employee can get tested at a site or at home. If ordering a home test kit on day 4, it should be done by 3pm.

If for some reason an employee has not arranged a test by day 5 of the onset of symptoms they will require to be tested at a site, home testing at that point is too late.

Getting a PCR test if an employee has no symptoms

An employee may need to take a PCR test if:

- they have been in contact with someone who's tested positive
- they have been asked to get a test by a local council or someone from NHS Test and Trace
- a GP or other health professional has asked them to get a test
- they are taking part in a government pilot project
- they have been asked to get a test to confirm a positive result
- they have received an unclear result and were told to get a second test
- they need to get a test for someone they live with who has symptoms
- they are in the National Tactical Response Group

## How to obtain a test

Employees can arrange a PCR test through the following methods:

- use this [self help guide: access to testing for coronavirus](#) on NHS Inform to help select the right test
- [book a PCR test to check if you have coronavirus](#) on gov.uk
- call [119](#)
- book a priority symptomatic test slot if you are an essential worker through the [essential worker portal](#) on gov.uk

Employees can order a PCR test to be sent to their home or they can book an appointment at a walk-in or drive-through test site. Again, employees should be made aware of test sites and opening times available within the area through communication campaigns.

## Positive PCR Test Result

If an employee's PCR test result is positive, they must stay at home and self-isolate for a full 10 days even if they have no symptoms or symptoms disappear during that time. Where possible, employees should continue to work from home however following the full 10 day isolation period, the employee will be able to return to work. The isolation period includes the day symptoms started (or the day the test was taken if you do not have symptoms) and the next 10 full days.

Please note that if an employee's PCR test is positive, they do not need to test at all (LFD or PCR) for 90 days from the date they became positive.

If an employee has a negative PCR result, the employee can return to work unless they have been identified as a close contact via test and protect. If this is the case, the employee will still require to complete the 10 day self- isolation period.

## Travelling to Test Centres

If an employee is required to attend a test centre, they must drive themselves, if possible. They must not use public transport or take a taxi. If they cannot drive, they should arrange for a household member to drive them through the test site. Alternatively, the employee should select to receive a home test kit, details on how to do this are given above.

## **Test Results**

### **Positive Results**

Employees should provide their line managers with details of any positive Covid19 test, as this allows for accurate recording of self-isolation periods and ensures the ongoing protection of colleagues, customers and the vulnerable to whom we provide care and services.

### **LFD Tests – Service Specific**

In services where there is a necessity to partake in regular rapid lateral flow testing, it is imperative that all employees record their results in the appropriate website and inform their manager of the outcome. If an LFD test is positive, the employee must arrange for a PCR test immediately and must refrain from attending work and self-isolate until the result is known. Whilst these services will have their own process, employees should share the outcome of the PCR test with their manager.

### **LFD Tests – Non-Service Specific**

For employees who are partaking in regular lateral flow testing twice a week but are not required to do so by the service in which they work, they must ensure that if they get a positive result, they arrange for a PCR test immediately and refrain from attending any offices or sites and self-isolate until the result is known. The result of the PCR test should be disclosed to their manager.

All tests results for LFD tests should be recorded on the following website:

[www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result](https://www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result).

If a manager or employee has concerns regarding the disclosure of a test result, they should contact HR in the first instance.

## **Periods of Self-Isolation**

Due to the increased volume of employees regularly testing for the virus, it is likely that more will require to self-isolate. Periods of self-isolation will be recorded and payment agreed in line with organisational policies and procedures, however employees should work from home where possible during periods of self-isolation

Managers can request that employees provide evidence that they are required to self-isolate by providing evidence of a positive test result or confirmation from NHS Test and Protect that they are a close contact.

If a manager has concerns regarding periods of self-isolation, they should discuss this with a member of the HR team.

Managers should also be mindful that employees may require support during periods of self-isolation and should therefore maintain a level of contact as deemed appropriate.



## **Service Specific Testing**

Where services have specific testing requirements due to government guidance and the nature of the work, it is imperative that procedures and protocols are in place and that these are fully communicated with employees.

If employees are refusing to participate in the testing process, it is important to try and address any concerns with them in the first instance. If the employee continues to refuse, please contact your HR team to discuss.

## **Support for Workplace Testing**

To further encourage the uptake of testing across all employees a number of additional support measures are available from the Testing Support Teams. This will include:

- The provision of a live and interactive streaming training session. This is delivered by the Testing Team and will provide a fully interactive session with the workforce highlighting the positive impact of regular testing through their own testimony and pre-recorded video support from other Service areas. The session is also followed by a live Q&A and the whole intention of the event is to be as interactive as possible. Provided these sessions are booked in advance a supply of LFD testing kits can also be provided for distribution at a specified location.
- The above stream is also available as an online training resource which can be accessed through the communication toolkit detailed later in this guidance.
- Along with online support, on-site 'pop-up' testing advice sessions are also available. This facility allows staff from the local testing teams to be present within any workplace and will provide supplies of testing kits and answer questions relevant to testing. These sessions have been extremely successful within community settings and there is no reason a similar level of success could be achieved within a workplace.

To arrange delivery of such support the local testing teams can be contacted at COVID Workforce Testing ([COVIDWorkforceTesting@northlan.gov.uk](mailto:COVIDWorkforceTesting@northlan.gov.uk)) or by phone on 07581012584.

In addition to the above, it is also recommended that all workplaces have a supply of testing kits that can be made available to all employees when required. Supplies of these kits can be achieved the ways detailed above or through the local testing teams. Having an easily accessible supply of the kits should lead to an increased uptake in testing.

## **Exemption from Self Isolation**

Changes are being made to self-isolation rules for close contacts of COVID cases to allow essential staff in critical roles to return to work to maintain lifeline services and critical national infrastructure.

It will be possible to apply to exempt those who work in critical roles where staff shortages are in danger of putting essential services, such as health and social care, transport and the provision of food supplies at risk.

Exemption will only be granted in respect of members of staff who voluntarily agree not to self-isolate, and the employers' duty of care to all their employees must be respected.

Strict conditions will apply - staff must be double-vaccinated and in receipt of their second dose at least two weeks previously. They will also require to have a negative PCR test and to agree to undertake daily lateral flow tests.

Any application for such an exemption must be made to and granted by the Scottish Government. Further detailed information on which employees would be included within an exemption and the mechanism to make an application are available at:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-test-and-protect/pages/critical-workers-exemption/>

## **Communication**

Effective communication as to the importance of testing and the role that it plays in reducing transmission of the virus and protecting fellow employees is critical. To assist with this a generic Communication Toolkit has been devised. This includes a wide variety of material which can be utilised across all agencies and includes everything from videos to posters. Full details of this together with links to all relevant documents is available at <https://www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk/lanarkshire-workforce-testing-covid-19>.

## **Vaccinations**

Employees should be encouraged to partake in regular testing even if they have been fully vaccinated. Research has shown that although the vaccination should prevent people from becoming seriously ill, it does not prevent people from having Covid19 or indeed spreading the virus.

## **Data Protection and Privacy**

Employees should be reassured that any information provided regarding the testing process will be treated in line with Data Protection and GDPR legislation.

## **Equality Impact Assessment**

All employees when following this guidance must ensure that they do not disadvantage any person or group on the grounds of race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin), religion or belief, age, sex, gender reassignment, disability, sexual orientation, being pregnant or on maternity leave and/or being married or in a civil partnership.

If you have any concerns about the contents of this document, please contact your line manager or a member of your HR team.

## **Further Advice**

Further advice, support and guidance regarding Covid19, testing and vaccinations can be found on the following websites: [www.gov.scot/coronavirus](http://www.gov.scot/coronavirus) and [www.nhsinform.scot/.../infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19](http://www.nhsinform.scot/.../infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19)