

British manufacturer SureScreen Diagnostics to supply 20 million rapid lateral flow

- New tests will support the government's drive to deliver rapid testing to those without symptoms to break chains of transmission
- New tests can return results in 30 minutes, and are the first British-made lateral flow tests validated for asymptomatic testing

The UK government has secured 20 million British-manufactured rapid coronavirus (COVID-19) tests in a new contract with Derby-based test manufacturer SureScreen Diagnostics. These lateral flow antigen tests produce a result in under 30 minutes and are the first British tests to be validated in the laboratory by Public Health England (PHE).

The SureScreen test will be used as part of the government's rapid testing programme for those without symptoms, which has seen lateral flow tests deployed across the country to test NHS and care home staff, as well as in targeted settings including schools, universities and to allow key workers to continue their vital work during lockdown.

With up to a third of individuals with COVID-19 not displaying symptoms, broadening asymptomatic testing is essential in finding positive cases who may unknowingly pass on the virus in order to break chains of transmission.

The partnerships being created with companies such as SureScreen also supports the wider resilience of the UK British diagnostics industry. The contract will create 200 additional jobs for Derby residents with roles across the whole production line as well as in the wider UK supply chain.

The tests have already been validated by PHE in the lab and are now in their final stage of validation in clinical trials. The tests have been proven to detect the B117 'Kent' variant of COVID-19, and are already CE marked and MHRA registered. Results for the test at the laboratory validation stage show sensitivity against high viral loads was 97.1% and specificity was 99.9%.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

Rapid lateral flow tests strengthen our national response to the virus significantly, helping us to identify the around 1 in 3 people who are asymptomatic and break chains of transmission in our workplaces and communities. It is excellent to be working with a UK firm to deliver millions more of these rapid tests.

I am committed to bolstering onshore UK manufacturing capabilities. The brilliant work done by SureScreen, and the contribution it will make to our rapid testing programme, is another example of the home-grown talent, ingenuity and industry that exists right here in

the UK.

It remains absolutely paramount that everyone follows the rules to stop the virus spreading further, and comes forward for rapid testing where it is offered. I thank every single person adapting and working to support and protect the country.

Lord Bethell Minister for Health, said:

From the very beginning of this pandemic we have worked with UK manufacturers to support the resilience of UK diagnostics.

It's fantastic that UK industry has come together to help us all respond to COVID-19 to help stop the spread of the virus.

I am hugely grateful for the considerable work that has been and will continue to be done by British suppliers, manufacturers and entrepreneurs to support our enormous scale up of testing. SureScreen's rapid tests will help prevent the spread of infection, while supporting jobs and the UK industry across the country.

David Campbell, Director of SureScreen, said:

We believe our rapid antigen tests can really help in screening people both in the community and in clinical settings. Routine testing is crucial to help business, as well as hospitals and GPs.

We are delighted to be working with DHSC on this project and that our tests have been recognised by the government and its scientists. We look forward to doing all we can to help the UK going forward in 2021.

SureScreen is a member of the UK Rapid Antigen Test Consortium, a growing coalition of industry scientists and manufacturers, who have come together to secure lateral flow tests and manufacturing capability for the UK. A secure supply line for the UK for these tests is vital for ensuring the continuation and expansion of rapid regular testing programmes which, alongside vaccine roll-out, will be key for getting people back to work, education and friends and family.

Professor Chris Molloy, Chair UK Rapid Antigen Test Consortium, said:

The UK lateral flow diagnostics industry has come together with intense purpose and the help of government to generate new UK tests and manufacture them at a scale never considered possible.

Their willingness to leave competition at the door in the national service should be celebrated as yet another example of what the UK can do with shared purpose, innovation and drive. This work lays a strong foundation for how the diagnostics industry as a whole will flourish in the UK to improve our future healthcare.

The kind of large-scale community testing that these tests facilitate is part of the government's COVID-19 winter plan to identify those who may be infectious with coronavirus earlier in order to break the chains of transmission and keep the virus under control. Alongside the rollout of vaccines, rapid regular testing will be key in time to getting people back to doing the things they love.

Lateral flow antigen tests work by taking a sample from the nose or back of the throat and testing that sample for the presence of antigens, the signature proteins of the virus. They show results visually, in the same way as many pregnancy tests. Antigen testing can tell someone whether they currently have the virus that causes COVID-19, and produce results in under 30 minutes.