

# More employers sign up to rapid testing to protect workforce

- Expansion of testing will find more positive cases, keeping key workers from unknowingly passing on the virus and protecting vital services
- Organisations signed up to workplace testing already include Royal Mail, Tate & Lyle Sugars, Primula, Moy Park, Octopus Energy, Apetito, and DVLA.

Businesses and public sector organisations are joining a government scheme to test workers without symptoms who cannot work from home.

Around 1 in 3 people who have coronavirus have no symptoms and may be unknowingly spreading the virus. To help stop the virus spreading, the government is making millions of rapid test kits available to NHS and care home staff, primary care workers, schools, colleges and universities, as well as to all 314 local authorities in England via the community testing offer.

To support this national effort, government departments are working in partnership with NHS Test and Trace to support businesses and public sector bodies to implement rapid testing, including organisations operating in the food, manufacturing, energy and retail sectors, and within the public sector including job centres, transport networks, and the military. An estimated 734,600 lateral flow tests have been distributed across the public and private sector so far, helping workers who need to leave home for work during lockdown to continue to do so, whilst quickly identifying those who may be carrying the virus.

Rapid testing in the workplace, using lateral flow tests, aims to help protect those at highest risk and provide vital information to help inform further rollout of the rapid testing technology in future. Organisations signed up to workplace testing already include: Royal Mail, Tate & Lyle Sugars, Primula, Moy Park, Octopus Energy, Apetito, and DVLA.

In addition to scaling up employer-led testing, targeted community testing is now being rolled out across all local authorities in England, with local authorities being encouraged to target testing to people who are unable to work from home. There are now 156 local authorities rolling out community testing programmes, with more than 7 million test kits delivered to participating local authorities.

Local authorities will have the decision on how to use the tests, prioritising those who cannot work from home during the national lockdown. For example these could include using them for council workers, bin collectors or shop workers.

Rapid asymptomatic testing programmes targeting workers are underway in many areas as part of community testing, including Essex, Milton Keynes, Brent and Darlington.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock said:

With around 1 in 3 people not showing symptoms, testing those without symptoms is vital to breaking chains of transmission.

By offering rapid testing in the workplace, we are offering additional peace of mind to those who are unable to work from home during the current lockdown.

Lateral flow tests have already been hugely successful in finding positive cases we would not otherwise find and I encourage employers and workers to take this offer up to help protect essential services and businesses.

Lateral flow tests used by the UK government go through a rigorous evaluation by the country's leading scientists. Tests detect cases with high levels of virus, making them effective in finding infectious individuals who aren't showing any symptoms and are the most likely to transmit the disease.

They are also being rolled out across primary care including general practice, community pharmacy, dentistry and optometry; in addition, tests have been provided to independent sector providers and community interest companies providing NHS care – around 17 million tests have been approved for this, of which 7.5 million have already been distributed.

All NHS patient facing staff in acute, mental health, ambulance and community trusts have been provided with lateral flow tests to enable them to test themselves at home twice a week. Over 25 million tests have been distributed to date.

More than 21 million PCR swab test kits and 16 million LFDs have been sent to care homes for testing all residents and asymptomatic staff.

Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng said:

Keeping workers safe is absolutely crucial and businesses have been working incredibly hard to prioritise the health of their staff and customers during this difficult time.

I am pleased so many businesses have taken up the opportunity of rapid workplace testing. I would encourage even more to do so and to continue to follow our COVID-secure guidance as we pull together to protect our NHS and save lives.

Dr Shaun Davis, Global Director Compliance and Sustainability at Royal Mail said:

Throughout the pandemic, the health and safety of our customers and our people has been our number one priority. We were pleased to

take part in the government's pilot of rapid COVID-19 testing for workforces. Lateral flow device testing is poised to add another important tool in our drive to keep our people safe, as well as inform a mass testing strategy for the UK. Our employees and union in Sheffield have been incredibly supportive of the pilot. We could not be prouder to play our part in the government's fight against COVID-19.

Julie Lennard, DVLA Chief Executive, said:

We are very pleased to be part of this important programme to help the fight back against the virus. Staff safety is our priority at DVLA so taking part in this scheme is a valuable addition to the changes we have already put in place to help keep our site COVID-19 secure and to reduce the risk of transmission. These include zone working, additional cleaning, one way systems, Perspex screens and the addition of a new building to give operational staff on site more space.

Gerald Mason, Senior Vice President of Tate & Lyle Sugars said:

Mass testing has really helped us get one step ahead of the virus by identifying colleagues who were infectious but showed no symptoms. This has been especially welcome over the last few weeks at our East London factories as the levels of virus in the local area have been extremely high. Our colleagues have welcomed it as it means they are much safer in our workplace, and our factories are better placed to continue to feed the nation.

Primula Managing Director, Paul Lewney, said:

I am delighted that Primula has been chosen as a pilot site for lateral flow testing. Our colleagues have worked tirelessly and we really appreciate their commitment throughout the pandemic to ensure we can continue to play our part in helping to feed the nation. By implementing this mass testing programme, they are able to continue their work in the knowledge that they are keeping both themselves and their families safe. It is vital that we do everything we can to understand more about the virus and help control the spread of COVID-19 and it is an honour that Primula can play a role in that.

Kirsty Wilkins, HR and Performance Director at Moy Park said:

We are proud to be playing our part to help tackle the spread of

coronavirus by participating in the Department of Health and Social Care's (DHSC) rapid testing programme.

Safety is a condition at Moy Park and we continue to maintain the highest level of vigilance to stop the virus coming into our facilities and help prevent its transmission. Participation in the scheme runs in tandem with the rigorous safety protocols we have in place such as thermal temperature scanning, enhanced cleaning and hygiene regimes, Perspex screens, additional PPE and social distancing measures.