

Nearly all in-person test results returned next day by NHS Test and Trace

- Test turnaround times continue to rise, with 97.2% of in-person test results returned the next day after the test was taken
- In-person test results received within 24 hours is at 82.7%, the highest since July 2020
- 93.6% contacts reached – the highest percentage since NHS Test and Trace was launched

NHS Test and Trace has recorded another record-breaking week, with turnaround times for most testing routes returning to levels not seen since the middle of 2020, when testing demand was around a quarter of its current level.

In this reporting week, NHS Test and Trace returned 97.2% of in-person test results the next day after the test was taken, compared with 93.7% the week before.

Not only are people able to receive a test result more quickly and conveniently, but the service continues to reach a high proportion of cases and contacts.

NHS Test and Trace has successfully reached 86.4% of the people who received a positive test result, and 93.6% of their contacts, making a real impact in breaking chains of transmission. In total during the week of 21 January to 27 January, 507,692 people who had either tested positive or been identified as a recent close contact were reached and told to self-isolate – people who might otherwise have gone on to unknowingly spread the virus.

NHS Test and Trace's test site network continues to expand. With more than 850 test sites in operation, including 474 local test sites, people are travelling a shorter distance than ever before to get a test. The median distance travelled for a test is just 2.1 miles, compared with 5.1 miles as recently as September.

NHS Test and Trace has also delivered one of its best turnaround times for home test kit results since the service launched last May, with a median turnaround time of 35 hours. More than 280,000 ordered a home test kit during this reporting week, with the service ensuring that those who are required to take a COVID-19 test are able to access one without visiting a test centre and meeting demand despite the current weather conditions.

More than 300 local authorities have joined forces with NHS Test and Trace to launch local tracing partnerships, combining specialist local expertise with the data and resources of NHS Test and Trace. These strong partnerships enable NHS Test and Trace to go further in supporting people who have tested positive for COVID-19 and tracing their recent contacts.

Health Minister Lord Bethell said:

NHS Test and Trace is continuing to deliver record-breaking results. Thanks to the hard work of all those involved, we have been able to improve turnaround times for most testing routes to record speeds. These numbers are hugely impressive and have an enormous impact on the spread of the virus.

We are also continuing to carry out a significant number of LFD tests, identifying people who are infectious but not showing symptoms. Around 1 in 3 people with COVID-19 do not display symptoms. This means every positive LFD test helps us break a chain of transmission we wouldn't have identified otherwise.

Interim Executive Chair of the National Institute for Health Protection Baroness Dido Harding said:

In a few months we have built NHS Test and Trace from scratch, creating a service where tests are easily available, results are received quickly, and those who test positive – and their recent contacts – are reached successfully in the vast majority of cases. This has all been delivered at speed, against a backdrop of continued demand. The impressive performance of NHS Test and Trace during this reporting week is a continuation of the programme's strong start to the year.

I am incredibly grateful to everyone involved in NHS Test and Trace who is working non-stop to help us combat the spread of the virus.

Testing

As of 2 February, more than 71 million tests have been processed in the UK in total since testing began, more than any other comparable European country.

In the latest reporting week, 1,782,807 lateral flow device (LFD) tests have been carried out, with 5,716,248 conducted in total since first introduced in October.

Pillar 1 test results made available within 24 hours have increased to 95.1%, compared with last week's total of 94.8%. This has remained broadly consistent since Test and Trace began. 96.5% of satellite tests were received within 3 days after the day they were taken, compared with 94.8% the previous week.

Over the past months, the government has put in place the largest network of diagnostic testing facilities created in British history. NHS Test and Trace now has the capacity to carry out more than 790,000 tests per day, compared with 2,000 just 9 months ago.

Tracing

So far, more than 8.2 million cases and contacts have been reached and told to self-isolate by contact tracers.

Tracing performance has remained high with 86.4% of cases and 93.6% of contacts reached last week. The proportion of contacts reached within 24 hours once identified as a contact was 98.0%.

198,874 positive cases were transferred to contact tracers between 21 January and 27 January, with 171,847 reached and told to self-isolate.

Between 21 and 27 January, 358,959 people were identified as recent close contacts, with 96.6% of those with communication details provided reached and told to self-isolate. Since Test and Trace launched, 89.6% of close contacts for whom communication details were provided have been reached.

Background information

The [weekly statistics from the 35th week of NHS Test and Trace](#) show in the most recent week of operations (21 to 27 January):

- the proportion of contacts reached by the tracing service has increased to 93.6%
- 86.4% of people who tested positive and were transferred to the contact-tracing system were reached and asked to provide information about their contacts, compared with 86.9% the previous week
- 96.6% of contacts where communication details were given were reached and told to self-isolate, compared with 96.5% the previous week
- 97.2% of in-person test results were received the next day after the test was taken, compared with 93.7% of tests the previous week (England only)
- 95.1% of pillar 1 test results were made available within 24 hours, consistent with last week's percentage
- 82.7% of in-person test results were received within 24 hours after the test was taken, compared with 70.7% the previous week
- 96.5% of satellite tests were received within 3 days after the day they were taken, compared with 94.8% the previous week

Last month, the government announced an additional £20 million to local authorities to cover the cost of the [Test and Trace Support Payment scheme](#), to ensure people continue to have access to the support they need to stay at home and reduce the transmission of COVID-19. This includes an additional £10 million to enable local authorities to continue making discretionary payments to people who fall outside the scope of the main scheme, but who will still face hardship if required to self-isolate.

As of 27 January, the [NHS COVID-19 app](#) has been downloaded 21,629,902 times and 788,859 QR posters have been generated.