

New Lighthouse Labs to boost NHS Test and Trace capacity

- 2 new Lighthouse Labs to be set up in Newcastle and Bracknell, increasing capacity by tens of thousands
- Weekly data from NHS Test and Trace shows testing continues to increase each week
- 20 new testing sites opening across the country for this week

[Weekly data from the 15th week of operation of NHS Test and Trace](#) shows that 27% more people have received a test for the first time this week and repeat testing in care homes continues.

The 2 new Lighthouse Labs follow the previous announcements of others in Newport and Charnwood, which will scale testing capacity to help deliver 500,000 tests per day by the end of October.

The 4 new labs come on top of ongoing work to build capacity at existing Lighthouse and partner lab facilities. Measures taken include recruitment of hundreds of additional staff and new technology to boost the number of tests processed. Surge laboratories will continue to maximise testing as demand rises. A further 20 new testing sites are opening across the country this week, increasing the number of local booking slots available throughout England.

New labs in Newcastle and Bracknell will help increase capacity by tens of thousands, gradually increasing the number of tests they can process over the coming months. Newcastle will be able to deliver 80,000 tests per day by the end of March, and Bracknell 40,000 tests per day by February.

NHS Test and Trace has reached a record number of positive cases this week, with more than 12,800 people testing positive sharing their recent contacts. This is the result of a 74% increase in positive cases being transferred to the system since the previous week.

Contact tracers continue to reach the vast majority of those contacts identified, with 83.9% of those with contact information successfully advised to self-isolate in the latest week.

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

We are working tirelessly to boost testing capacity so that everyone who needs a test can get one. Each day, around 200,000 people are successfully booking and taking tests and we are growing our capacity to 500,000 tests across the UK by the end of October, with more and more capacity being added each week.

I cannot stress enough how important it is that only those with

symptoms book tests. The service is there for those experiencing a high temperature, new continuous cough or loss or change in sense of taste or smell. If you don't have symptoms but think, or have been told by NHS Test and Trace, that you have been in contact with someone with the virus, please stay at home but do not book a test. We need everyone to help make sure that tests are there for people with symptoms who need them.

From today, a new dedicated helpline will be available for nurseries, schools and colleges to seek advice if they have a confirmed positive coronavirus case in their setting. The helpline will inform educational settings of what action is needed in response to a confirmed case from the latest public health advice and work through a risk assessment. Where necessary, complex cases will be escalated to health protection teams to provide further support. Usually, full closure will not be necessary, but some individuals may need to self-isolate if they have had close contact with the confirmed case.

Demand is being increased in part by a large number of people without symptoms booking tests. The guidance – and the clear advice of public health experts – is that you should not book a test if you do not have symptoms, unless advised to do so by a public health professional. Anyone who is self-isolating because they have had close recent contact with someone who has tested positive must self-isolate for the full 14-day period.

Tests can be booked via [gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test](https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test) or 119, with new booking slots made available throughout the day. A number of tests continue to be reserved for NHS staff and essential workers experiencing virus symptoms.

The [weekly statistics from the 15th week of NHS Test and Trace](#) show in the most recent week of operations (3 to 9 September):

- testing capacity increased by 2% from the previous week to 1,612,543 (pillars 1 and 2) across the UK
- 82.6% of people who tested positive and were transferred to the contact-tracing system were reached and asked to provide information about their contacts
- 83.9% of contacts where communication details were given have been reached and told to self-isolate
- pillar 1 testing capacity was at 575,043, the same as the previous week
- pillar 2 testing capacity was at 1,037,500, an increase of 4% since the previous week
- pillar 3 testing capacity was at 840,000, the same as the previous week
- pillar 4 testing capacity was at 72,700, a decrease of 12% since the previous week

Statistics from the 15th week of operation of NHS Test and Trace show that since the service launched:

- 417,296 people have been reached by the service. This includes both those testing positive and their contacts

- 86.6% of all contacts where communication details were given have been reached and told to self-isolate