

NHS Test and Trace continues to improve as contacts reached exceeds 85%

- The proportion of contacts reached by tracing service increases substantially from 72.6% to 85.7%

NHS Test and Trace is reaching an ever-greater proportion of contacts of people who have tested positive for coronavirus according to the latest weekly Test and Trace statistics, helping to prevent transmission of the virus and save lives.

Recent improvements made by NHS Test and Trace to the contact tracing website to make it faster and easier to provide tracing information, as well as operational changes to the process for contacting household contacts, have led to the latest substantial improvements, with 85.7% of contacts now reached, up from 72.6% in the previous week.

Among other changes, NHS Test and Trace has encouraged greater use of the digital self-service journey so that it is faster and easier for people to provide tracing information. The service has accelerated the roll out of local tracing partnerships – it is now working with over 250 local authorities across the country – and has made operational changes to the process for reaching household contacts to avoid making repeat calls to the same household.

The improvements were made following feedback from the public and from local tracing partners and have been positively received. These latest enhancements to the service have also seen the proportion of contacts reached within 24 hours increase to 95.2%.

Health Minister Lord Bethell said:

Today's figures represent a milestone for NHS Test and Trace and a breakthrough in terms of the effectiveness of its tracing capability. The service has made a series of improvements to operations over time, informed by listening to partners and the public, and we are now seeing the positive outcome of that work. Testing, tracing and isolating are a vital part of the nation's response to COVID-19 and although there will be challenges ahead, NHS Test and Trace will continue to work to improve the service further still.

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

NHS Test and Trace continues to build on partnerships across national and local government, with business and with the public, and we are now seeing some of the fruits of that work. I am determined to make NHS Test and Trace as effective as possible in bearing down on transmission of the virus, as part of the wider government response to COVID-19.

These improvements will help stop transmission of the virus and help protect our communities. This week's figures show that as the number of people who have used NHS Test and Trace continues to increase, so the service is constantly evolving and improving.

Testing

During the week of 26 November to 2 December, 1,850,619 tests were processed for pillars 1 and 2.

More than 43 million tests have been processed in total, more than any other comparable European country. With more than 700 test sites now in operation, the median distance travelled for a test is 2.3 miles.

Testing capacity has increased almost 5-fold in 6 months, from 100,000 a day at the end of April to more than 500,000 a day by the end of October with plans to go even further by the end of the year.

For this reporting period, 90.0% of in-person test results were received the next day after the test was taken, compared with 84.9% reported in the previous week. 91.0% of pillar 1 test results were made available within 24 hours, compared with 88.5% the previous week.

Tracing

91,578 positive cases were transferred to contact tracers between 26 November and 2 December, 86% of whom were reached and told to self-isolate.

Between 26 November and 2 December, 195,355 people were identified as recent close contacts with 92.4% reached and told to self-isolate of those who had communication details. Since Test and Trace launched 80.9% of close contacts for whom contact details were provided have been reached.

Over the past few months our teams have been working incredibly hard to make the contact tracing service as effective as possible and NHS Test and Trace has now reached more than 3 million people.

These latest enhancements have meant that 85.7% of contacts were reached last week, up from 72.6% in the previous week, and the proportion of contacts reached within 24 hours increased to 95.2%. The improvements were made following feedback from the public, our colleagues and our local tracing partners, and have been positively received.

Background information

The [weekly statistics](#) from the 27th week of NHS Test and Trace show in the most recent week of operations (26 November to 2 December):

- a total of 1,850,619 were processed for pillars 1 and 2, compared with 2,028,365 the previous week
- the proportion of contacts reached by tracing service increases substantially from 72.6% to 85.7%
- 86.0% (78,729) people who tested positive and were transferred to the contact-tracing system were reached and asked to provide information about their contacts, compared with 86.1% (100,183) the previous week
- 92.4% of contacts where communication details were given were reached and told to self-isolate, compared with 83.9% the previous week
- 90% of in-person test results were received the next day after the test was taken, compared with 84.9% the previous week
- 91.0% of pillar 1 test results were made available within 24 hours, compared with 88.5% the previous week
- 64.9% of in-person test results were received within 24 hours after the test was taken, compared with 54.2% the previous week
- 96.2% of satellite (care home) tests were received within 3 days after the day they were taken, compared with 95.2% the previous week

Since NHS Test and Trace launched, over 3 million contacts have been identified, and 80.9% of all contacts where communication details were given have been reached and told to self-isolate.

Latest figures also show that the [NHS COVID-19 app](#) has been downloaded more than 20 million times since it was launched.