

UK government announces partnership with British rapid test manufacturers

- Supply of tests will support government's plan to cautiously ease restrictions by helping to stop the spread of the virus
- New contracts will create more than 500 jobs across the UK

Two British companies have secured contracts with the government to supply rapid lateral flow tests, which will help prevent the virus from spreading and stop outbreaks from taking hold as restrictions are carefully lifted.

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) has agreed contracts with:

- Omega Diagnostics, headquartered in Alva in Scotland
- Global Access Diagnostics, based in Thurleigh

to provide manufacturing capacity for up to 200 million COVID-19 lateral flow antigen tests, which detect positive cases quickly – in under 30 minutes – meaning positive cases can isolate immediately, breaking chains of transmission.

Around one in three people who have coronavirus do not have symptoms, so to help stop them from unknowingly passing it on, regular rapid testing is essential to find more positive cases. Lateral flow tests are helping children go back to school, keeping healthcare staff safe and making sure businesses can reopen. Including symptomatic and asymptomatic testing programmes, today the government is on track to surpass 100 million tests carried out in the UK.

The contracts are expected to create around 470 additional jobs in total, in Alva in Scotland, Thurleigh in Bedfordshire, and more widely across the production line and wider UK supply chain.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock said:

Rapid lateral flow tests are essential to help us identify cases of the virus we otherwise wouldn't find and preventing the virus spreading in our workplaces and communities.

These tests will help keep businesses open, our children return to school, people to visit their loved ones in care homes safely.

British innovation is at the forefront of our response to this pandemic and this partnership with 2 Great British firms will help us to build back better by tapping into the UK's domestic talent, ingenuity and industry.

Lord Bethell, Minister for Health, said:

The UK continues to lead the way in medical diagnostics, and we are working with companies such as Omega and Global Access Diagnostics to build on our expertise in the field. The whole industry has come together to respond to COVID-19 and get us back to the people and things we love, helping us stop the spread of the virus now while strengthening our resilience for the future.

Omega and Global Access Diagnostics will have the capacity to produce approximately 2 million tests per week each by the end of May, helping scale up the government's rapid lateral flow testing programme across the country.

Mark Radford, Executive Director of Global Access Diagnostics, said:

This announcement marks the culmination of many months of hard work and collaboration between ourselves and colleagues from the DHSC, the NHS, our supply chain and the diagnostics industry. This will not only deliver in terms of supporting the safer reopening of schools, of the economy and of the life we all long for a year on from the start of this pandemic, it is also an investment in the UK's resilience and response to future pandemics, both here and overseas. The team at Global Access Diagnostics are proud to be a part of this initiative.

Colin King, CEO of Omega Diagnostics Group plc, said:

We are delighted to deploy our state-of-the-art lateral flow test production facilities in support of the UK government's COVID-19 testing programme. The collaboration with other UK-based IVD companies and DHSC has facilitated the rapid development and manufacturing capability within the UK. We particularly welcome the government's assistance to secure the specialist machinery needed to dramatically increase the scale of our manufacturing capacity which has allowed us to ensure a ready supply of high quality, reliable British made rapid lateral flow tests.

Rapid lateral flow tests are an essential tool for identifying COVID-19 cases where people have no visible symptoms but could still be infectious and continue to spread the virus. We are very proud to be playing our part in the nation's effort to control the spread of coronavirus by using our production facilities in Scotland.

Omega Diagnostics and Global Access Diagnostics are members 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.

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

The consortium has been harnessing the power of the UK diagnostics industry since summer 2020 to significantly contribute to the national effort to ramp up and expand rapid regular testing programmes. We believe, these programmes, alongside vaccine roll-out, will be key for getting people back to work, education and friends and family.

We have increased manufacturing capacity tenfold, and our member's tests continue to be validated and marketed. We have also started a digital arm comprised of digital solution providers to work with HMG and regulators on new technologies and standards moving forwards.

Numerous bilateral deals have also been agreed between members as a result of industry coming together with intense purpose and leaving competition at the door in order to prioritise the generation of new UK tests and manufacture them at a scale never considered possible.

We would like to take the time now to thank all those suppliers and manufacturers who have contributed their time and resources to this national effort. Our work here lays a strong foundation for how the diagnostics industry as a whole will flourish in the UK to improve our healthcare in the future.

Publication of contract information is being carried out as quickly as possible in line with government transparency guidelines and details will be published via the [Contracts Finder](#).