

UK reaches 200,000 coronavirus testing capacity target a day early

- The extensive capacity now available makes this one of the largest network of diagnostic testing facilities
- To achieve this more than 150 drive through and mobile testing sites have been set up across the UK and the new NHS Test and Trace service has been rolled out to ramp up the coronavirus response The UK-wide target to build testing capacity to 200,000 tests a day has been reached.

The rapid expansion of testing capabilities has led to the largest network of diagnostic testing facilities in British history. The capacity of NHS and Public Health England labs has been more than doubled, over 150 drive through and mobile testing units are in operation, and new innovative testing solutions such as home testing kits and lab-based antibody tests have been introduced from scratch.

The 200,000 testing capacity target was reached yesterday, at 205,634 (Saturday 30 May).

The increased testing capacity has now allowed for the rollout of the new NHS Test and Trace system, which will identify and isolate new cases of the virus, controlling its spread and helping to gradually and safely ease lockdown measures.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock said:

Reaching our 200,000 capacity target is an important milestone on our journey to control the spread of the virus, save lives and gradually ease lockdown.

By rapidly expanding our testing capacity, we have been able to introduce NHS Test and Trace, and enabling those who have coronavirus symptoms to get a test is an important part of the programme.

I want to thank and pay tribute to the incredible team who joined together in one of the greatest national mobilisations that we've seen. We brought together the best minds in the civil service, NHS, PHE, universities and the scientific community, the armed forces and private sector companies across the globe to reach this incredible achievement.

This is by no means the end of our ramping up of testing. We will continue to build upon the tremendous work so far, exploring new technology and deliver even more test results.

The UK was one of first countries in the world to develop a PCR swab test to identify who currently has the virus, and teams across the public and private sectors and academia have worked tirelessly to expand testing to all those who are symptomatic. A rapid test which can return results in 20 minutes is now being trialled in Hampshire, with hospitals, GP practices and care homes using it to quickly identify if staff and patients have the virus.

Testing capacity has also been expanded by new innovations developed since the outbreak began, including antibody tests to identify who may previously have had the virus. There is now a 40,000 antibody testing capacity available daily to NHS and social care staff, enabling us to gather information and understand how the virus has previously spread.

Surveillance testing is also underway to develop a greater understanding of how the virus is moving through the population. So far, more than 250,000 surveillance tests have been done across the UK.

National Testing Coordinator Professor John Newton said:

The expansion of our testing capacity has allowed us to take important steps to control the virus, including the introduction of a world-class contact tracing service that will help us to safely ease lockdown over time. I am proud to say that anyone in the country who needs a test can get one, regardless of where in the country they are.

We will continue to develop and grow our testing capabilities, to learn more about transmission of the virus and how it has previously spread.

The capacity to conduct 200,000 tests each day has been made up of:

- Capacity of more than 112,000 tests across the new network of diagnostic testing facilities, made up of home testing kits, drive through sites, mobile testing units and supported by new mega laboratories.
- Capacity of more than 40,000 antibody tests, currently offered to NHS staff and care workers across the country to understand who may previously have had the virus and how it has spread.
- Surveillance testing is also underway to develop greater understanding of how the virus is moving through the population. So far, more than 250,000 surveillance tests have been done across the UK. Work continues to further develop and expand the Government's testing capabilities, including to reduce the time it takes for a test result to be delivered and continued research and verification of new kinds of tests.