

# More employers sign up to rapid testing to protect workforce

- Expansion of testing will find more positive cases, keeping key workers from unknowingly passing on the virus and protecting vital services
- Organisations signed up to workplace testing already include Royal Mail, Tate & Lyle Sugars, Primula, Moy Park, Octopus Energy, Apetito, and DVLA.

Businesses and public sector organisations are joining a government scheme to test workers without symptoms who cannot work from home.

Around 1 in 3 people who have coronavirus have no symptoms and may be unknowingly spreading the virus. To help stop the virus spreading, the government is making millions of rapid test kits available to NHS and care home staff, primary care workers, schools, colleges and universities, as well as to all 314 local authorities in England via the community testing offer.

To support this national effort, government departments are working in partnership with NHS Test and Trace to support businesses and public sector bodies to implement rapid testing, including organisations operating in the food, manufacturing, energy and retail sectors, and within the public sector including job centres, transport networks, and the military. An estimated 734,600 lateral flow tests have been distributed across the public and private sector so far, helping workers who need to leave home for work during lockdown to continue to do so, whilst quickly identifying those who may be carrying the virus.

Rapid testing in the workplace, using lateral flow tests, aims to help protect those at highest risk and provide vital information to help inform further rollout of the rapid testing technology in future. Organisations signed up to workplace testing already include: Royal Mail, Tate & Lyle Sugars, Primula, Moy Park, Octopus Energy, Apetito, and DVLA.

In addition to scaling up employer-led testing, targeted community testing is now being rolled out across all local authorities in England, with local authorities being encouraged to target testing to people who are unable to work from home. There are now 156 local authorities rolling out community testing programmes, with more than 7 million test kits delivered to participating local authorities.

Local authorities will have the decision on how to use the tests, prioritising those who cannot work from home during the national lockdown. For example these could include using them for council workers, bin collectors or shop workers.

Rapid asymptomatic testing programmes targeting workers are underway in many areas as part of community testing, including Essex, Milton Keynes, Brent and Darlington.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock said:

With around 1 in 3 people not showing symptoms, testing those without symptoms is vital to breaking chains of transmission.

By offering rapid testing in the workplace, we are offering additional peace of mind to those who are unable to work from home during the current lockdown.

Lateral flow tests have already been hugely successful in finding positive cases we would not otherwise find and I encourage employers and workers to take this offer up to help protect essential services and businesses.

Lateral flow tests used by the UK government go through a rigorous evaluation by the country's leading scientists. Tests detect cases with high levels of virus, making them effective in finding infectious individuals who aren't showing any symptoms and are the most likely to transmit the disease.

They are also being rolled out across primary care including general practice, community pharmacy, dentistry and optometry; in addition, tests have been provided to independent sector providers and community interest companies providing NHS care – around 17 million tests have been approved for this, of which 7.5 million have already been distributed.

All NHS patient facing staff in acute, mental health, ambulance and community trusts have been provided with lateral flow tests to enable them to test themselves at home twice a week. Over 25 million tests have been distributed to date.

More than 21 million PCR swab test kits and 16 million LFDs have been sent to care homes for testing all residents and asymptomatic staff.

Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng said:

Keeping workers safe is absolutely crucial and businesses have been working incredibly hard to prioritise the health of their staff and customers during this difficult time.

I am pleased so many businesses have taken up the opportunity of rapid workplace testing. I would encourage even more to do so and to continue to follow our COVID-secure guidance as we pull together to protect our NHS and save lives.

Dr Shaun Davis, Global Director Compliance and Sustainability at Royal Mail said:

Throughout the pandemic, the health and safety of our customers and our people has been our number one priority. We were pleased to

take part in the government's pilot of rapid COVID-19 testing for workforces. Lateral flow device testing is poised to add another important tool in our drive to keep our people safe, as well as inform a mass testing strategy for the UK. Our employees and union in Sheffield have been incredibly supportive of the pilot. We could not be prouder to play our part in the government's fight against COVID-19.

Julie Lennard, DVLA Chief Executive, said:

We are very pleased to be part of this important programme to help the fight back against the virus. Staff safety is our priority at DVLA so taking part in this scheme is a valuable addition to the changes we have already put in place to help keep our site COVID-19 secure and to reduce the risk of transmission. These include zone working, additional cleaning, one way systems, Perspex screens and the addition of a new building to give operational staff on site more space.

Gerald Mason, Senior Vice President of Tate & Lyle Sugars said:

Mass testing has really helped us get one step ahead of the virus by identifying colleagues who were infectious but showed no symptoms. This has been especially welcome over the last few weeks at our East London factories as the levels of virus in the local area have been extremely high. Our colleagues have welcomed it as it means they are much safer in our workplace, and our factories are better placed to continue to feed the nation.

Primula Managing Director, Paul Lewney, said:

I am delighted that Primula has been chosen as a pilot site for lateral flow testing. Our colleagues have worked tirelessly and we really appreciate their commitment throughout the pandemic to ensure we can continue to play our part in helping to feed the nation. By implementing this mass testing programme, they are able to continue their work in the knowledge that they are keeping both themselves and their families safe. It is vital that we do everything we can to understand more about the virus and help control the spread of COVID-19 and it is an honour that Primula can play a role in that.

Kirsty Wilkins, HR and Performance Director at Moy Park said:

We are proud to be playing our part to help tackle the spread of

coronavirus by participating in the Department of Health and Social Care's (DHSC) rapid testing programme.

Safety is a condition at Moy Park and we continue to maintain the highest level of vigilance to stop the virus coming into our facilities and help prevent its transmission. Participation in the scheme runs in tandem with the rigorous safety protocols we have in place such as thermal temperature scanning, enhanced cleaning and hygiene regimes, Perspex screens, additional PPE and social distancing measures.

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## [PM call with President Joe Biden: 23 January 2021](#)

Press release

Prime Minister Boris Johnson spoke to Joe Biden, President of the United States, this evening.



The Prime Minister spoke to Joe Biden, President of the United States, this evening.

He congratulated the President on his inauguration and the two leaders looked forward to deepening the close alliance between our nations.

The Prime Minister warmly welcomed the President's decision to re-join the Paris Agreement on climate change, as well as the World Health Organization and the COVAX programme to ensure equitable access for vaccines.

They noted the significant challenges facing the world during the pandemic, but also the unparalleled opportunities to build back better and greener together. The Prime Minister praised President Biden's early action on tackling climate change and commitment to reach Net Zero by 2050.

Building on the UK and US' long history of cooperation in security and defence, the leaders re-committed to the NATO alliance and our shared values in promoting human rights and protecting democracy.

They also discussed the benefits of a potential free trade deal between our two countries, and the Prime Minister reiterated his intention to resolve existing trade issues as soon as possible.

The leaders looked forward to meeting in person as soon as the circumstances allow, and to working together through the G7, G20 and COP26 this year.

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## [Detention of peaceful protesters in Russia: UK statement](#)

Press release

UK concerned by detention of peaceful protesters in Russia and urges Russian government to respect international human rights commitments.



An FCDO spokesperson said:

We are deeply concerned by the detention of peaceful protesters and continue to monitor the situation closely. We urge the Russian government to respect and comply with its international commitments on human rights, and release citizens detained during peaceful demonstrations.

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# Government Chief Scientific Adviser, Sir Patrick Vallance on the new variant of COVID-19 in the UK

Press release

Government Chief Science Adviser, Sir Patrick Vallance comments on the new variant of COVID-19.



Commenting on the new variant of COVID-19 in the UK the Government's Chief Scientific Adviser, Sir Patrick Vallance, said:

The new UK variant comprises a significant number of the our cases. It is spreading 30 to 70% more easily than the old variant. It doesn't differ in terms of age distribution to the original variant.

When we look at severity and mortality, data for patients who are in hospital with the virus suggest the outcomes for those with the original variant look the same as the new variant. However, when looking at the data for people who have tested positive, there is an indication that the rate for the new variant is higher. Although these data are currently uncertain, it does appear that this variant has increased mortality compared to the old virus, as well as increased transmission. For context, with the original variant, if you took a group of 1,000 infected men in their 60s roughly 10 would die. But with the new variant, roughly 13 or 14 of that group might be expected to die.

There is increasing evidence from studies that vaccines will still work against the UK variant.

A paper from the New and Emerging Respiratory Virus Threats Advisory Group (NERVTAG) on [the new coronavirus \(COVID-19\) variant B.1.1.7](#) explains this further.

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## [UK to host G7 Summit in Cornwall](#)

- Summit will be held in Carbis Bay, Cornwall from 11-13th June 2021
- Australia, India and South Korea invited as guest countries

Prime Ministers and Presidents from the world's leading democracies will come together in Cornwall in June to address shared challenges, from beating coronavirus and tackling climate change, to ensuring that people everywhere can benefit from open trade, technological change and scientific discovery.

The Prime Minister will use the first in-person G7 summit in almost two years to ask leaders to seize the opportunity to build back better from coronavirus, uniting to make the future fairer, greener and more prosperous.

The G7 – which is made up of the UK, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the USA and the EU – is the only forum where the world's most influential and open societies and advanced economies are brought together for close-knit discussions.

The Prime Minister's ambition is to use the G7 to intensify cooperation between the world's democratic and technologically advanced nations. To that end, he has invited leaders from Australia, India and South Korea to attend as guest countries to deepen the expertise and experience around the table. Between them, the 10 leaders represent over 60% of the people living in democracies around the world.

The choice of Cornwall as the location for the Summit will mean the eyes of the world are on the beautiful, historic and innovative region. The leaders' meeting itself will be held in the coastal town of Carbis Bay, supported by neighbouring St Ives and other towns across the region. The whole of Cornwall will reap the benefits of hosting the G7.

The region is already a powerhouse for green innovation, providing an ideal setting for a Summit focused on building back better from the coronavirus pandemic.

Visit Cornwall estimates the total economic impact for the county will be £50 million, including through an increase in future tourism. The Government will also work closely with Cornish leaders and institutions to ensure the Summit leaves a long term legacy for the region, reaping the benefits of hosting the

G7 for years to come.

The UK will also host a number of meetings throughout the year between Government Ministers from the G7, both virtually and in different locations across the UK – ensuring many areas of the country experience the benefits of the UK's G7 Presidency. These ministerial summits will cover economic, environmental, health, trade, technology, development and foreign policy issues.

The Prime Minister said:

As the most prominent grouping of democratic countries, the G7 has long been the catalyst for decisive international action to tackle the greatest challenges we face. From cancelling developing world debt to our universal condemnation of Russia's annexation of Crimea, the world has looked to the G7 to apply our shared values and diplomatic might to create a more open and prosperous planet.

Coronavirus is doubtless the most destructive force we have seen for generations and the greatest test of the modern world order we have experienced. It is only right that we approach the challenge of building back better by uniting with a spirit of openness to create a better future.

Cornwall is the perfect location for such a crucial summit. Two hundred years ago Cornwall's tin and copper mines were at the heart of the UK's industrial revolution and this summer Cornwall will again be the nucleus of great global change and advancement. I'm very much looking forward to welcoming world leaders to this great region and country.

2021 marks a crucial year of international leadership for the UK. In addition to the G7 Summit, during February the UK will assume the Presidency of the UN Security Council, and later this year the UK will host COP26 in Glasgow and a global education conference aimed at getting children in the developing world into school.