



Test and Trace strategy launch

Q&A for external stakeholders

Published 27 May 2020



What is being announced today?

- The new NHS Test and Trace service will launch tomorrow (Thursday 28 May) across England, the government announced. The service will help identify, contain and control coronavirus, reduce the spread of the virus and save lives.
- From tomorrow, anyone who tests positive for coronavirus will be contacted by NHS Test and Trace and will need to share information about their recent interactions.
- We are publishing guidance on how the service will impact individuals, workplaces, households and contacts of people with confirmed coronavirus.

Frequently asked questions

How will you ensure people adhere to the isolation guidance while waiting for their test results?

- There has been very high public compliance with social distancing and self-isolation guidelines and we expect this to continue with the NHS Test and Trace service.
- We are confident that the public will want to play their part in reducing the spread of the virus to keep themselves, their families and communities safe and to protect the NHS.
- However, if we find that people are not complying with isolation instructions, we will not hesitate to introduce tougher measures, for example making visits to check they're at home or issuing fines if they are found outside the house.

How does the launch of this service support the wider opening of schools, colleges and early years settings on 1 June?

- The NHS Test and Trace service forms a central part of the government's COVID-19 recovery strategy, which seeks to return life to as close to normal as possible, for as many people as possible, in a way that is safe and protects our NHS and social care.
- The phased reopening of schools for some year groups from 1st June will be guided by the best scientific and medical advice. It will be supported by, but is not dependent on, the NHS Test and Trace service.
- The welfare of children and staff is at the heart of all decision making.
- All children, adults and their households attending schools will be able to be tested and our guidance sets out the protocols to be followed in the event of a positive test result.



Will this work to reduce the spread of the virus?

- The NHS Test and Trace service will help us control and contain the virus and save lives.
- The service will identify people at high risk of having been exposed to the virus through close recent contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19. It will alert those contacts who meet defined risk criteria, based on the proximity and duration of the contact they've had, and provide advice on what steps to take.
- This is about breaking transmission chains so the virus has less chance to spread as we ease the restrictions.

What should I do if there is COVID-19 outbreak in my school / care home?

- If multiple cases of coronavirus appear in a specific workplace or setting, an outbreak control team from either the local authority or Public Health England will, if necessary, be assigned to help manage the outbreak.
- Public Health England's health protection teams (HPTs) play a vital role locally in responding to any outbreak in [schools/care homes], providing tailored infection control advice to allow staff to protect themselves and their [students/residents]. From the outset, HPTs have been arranging testing for residents when an outbreak is reported at a particular care home.
- School: The response in every school is likely to be slightly different on account of their specific circumstances. If a contact tracer discovers that a pupil or teacher who tests positive for coronavirus has spent some time in a school while they could be infectious, our processes include taking details of the school and the classes the person attended where possible. They may contact the school for further information.
 - They may gather further information about people who may have come into recent close contact with the person with coronavirus so they can be advised to self-isolate and also to ascertain if anyone else is reporting symptoms.
 - Our work may also include finding out if there are any staff or children who may be more vulnerable to severe illness as well as providing the school with information to pass on to wider groups of staff and pupils to reinforce hand and respiratory hygiene messages and remind them to self-isolate if they experience symptoms.
 - The process is handled sensitively and in confidence, for instance schools do not announce who the person with coronavirus is.
- Care home: The Department of Health and Social Care is offering a test to every staff member and resident in every care home in England, whether symptomatic or not. By



6 June, every care home for the over 65s will have been offered testing for residents and staff.

- NHS (e.g. hospital) setting: If someone who works in – or has recently visited – a health or social care setting (e.g. a hospital or care home) tests positive for coronavirus, their case will be escalated to local public health experts, who will liaise with the relevant setting to agree on the most appropriate action. If they were wearing PPE at the time of the contact, this will not count as a contact.
- If someone who works in a health or social care setting is identified as a close recent contact of someone else, i.e. as a result of a contact outside work, the normal rules apply

If I am told to isolate, do I get sick pay? What support do I get?

- If it is possible for you to amend your working practices and work from home, then you should do so.
- Finance: Statutory Sick Pay is available to employees who have been contacted by the Test and Trace service as they have come into contact with someone who has coronavirus, and are unable to work as a result.
- If you cannot work from home while you are self-isolating, you may be entitled to Employment Support Allowance. More information, including the eligibility criteria, can be seen here <https://www.gov.uk/employment-support-allowance>
 - Some employers may also apply their own sickness policies and continue to offer full pay for all or some of your isolation period.
 - You may also be able to claim a grant through the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme, and more information can be seen in this guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-a-grant-through-the-coronavirus-covid-19-self-employment-income-support-scheme>
- Food - Councils will continue to develop services to meet local needs, including for those who do not use digital services and vulnerable people who may need access to additional support. This will include help with delivery of food and medicines.
- Mental Health - Councils will continue to develop services to meet local needs, including for those who do not use digital services and vulnerable people who may need access to additional support. This includes signposting to sources of mental health advice and support.



If I don't show symptoms can I leave self-isolation early?

- No, if you have been informed that you are a 'contact' you must immediately self-isolate at home for 14 days from the date of your last contact with someone who has tested positive for coronavirus.
- It is very important that you follow this advice even if you feel well, as symptoms can take up to 14 days to appear from your last contact with someone who has coronavirus and you can infect others even if you don't develop symptoms.

If I get a notification that I need to self-isolate am I eligible for a test? Can I leave isolation if I get a negative result?

- You should only order a test if you develop symptoms.
- If you do not develop symptoms, you should continue to self-isolate for the 14 day period.
- If you develop symptoms, order a test, and if you receive a negative result, it's important to still apply caution. If your test is negative, you must complete the period of isolation (up to 14 day self isolation), but your household does not need to self isolate.
- If you or anyone tested in your household has a positive result, you should continue to self- isolate in line with the national guidance.

How do people without email/mobiles get their test results?

- An email address and phone number are currently required to book a test, but individuals who do not have an email address themselves can use a trusted proxy like a family member to receive their results.
- We are working on a non digital solution currently, but those who, despite having email addresses, are not comfortable using the digital booking systems, can still use 119 (in England and Wales) and 0300 303 2713 (in Scotland and Northern Ireland) to book a test now. This is one of our top priorities following the launch and we expect to update further on this in the coming weeks

What measures are in place to safeguard people from fraudulent calls from "fake" contact tracers?

- Contact tracers will never ask anyone for financial information such as credit card or bank details. If the public are concerned about whether a call or email they receive comes from NHS Test and Trace service they can visit GOV.UK and view a page which lists the official phone numbers used by NHS Test and Trace service.
- If someone does not wish to talk over the phone, NHS Test and Trace service can offer to send an email or text instead inviting them to log into our web-based service.



- Background: The information that we collect is also explained in the Privacy Notice that we have produced, and which can be found here <https://contact-tracing.phe.gov.uk/help/privacy-notice> (

As measures are lifted, individuals will come into contact with more people - is it possible to trace everyone they have been in contact with?

- The incidence of COVID-19 has greatly reduced and that is why it is now feasible to introduce the NHS Test and Trace service to keep incidence low.
- We can do this by identifying people at risk of infection and, if necessary, advising them to self-isolate, to break chains of transmission and reduce the spread of the virus. We believe we have sufficient capacity to follow up all known contacts but can adapt if more contact tracers are needed.

What about people I don't know personally but come into contact with, such as on public transport?

- Contact is defined as people who have had close contact, been coughed on, or spent more than 15 minutes within 2 metres of someone with COVID-19. We would also look to trace people who someone with COVID-19 had travelled with in a small vehicle or sat next to on a plane.
- Everyone should continue to follow the social distancing guidelines by remaining 2m apart from others and wearing a mask on public transport or in settings where social distancing is not possible.
- The NHS Covid-19 app, which we will roll out shortly, will enable us to anonymously alert app users who have come into close contact with other app users who test positive for coronavirus.

If I have not been self-isolating and/or not obeying social distancing will I, or my contacts, get into trouble if I share these details?

- No, this information is confidential and will solely be used by NHS Test and Trace service to contain the virus. It will not be shared with other bodies.
- It is important that you share accurate records of who you have been in contact with to maximise our ability to contain the virus.
- We just want everyone to play their part by self-isolating if you have symptoms, booking a test and telling NHS Test and Trace who your close, recent contacts are so we can stop the spread of the virus.



Will antibody tests results be part of the system? If someone has tested positive for antibodies will they then not need to self-isolate if deemed at risk of another exposure?

- Antibody testing has a critical role to play in helping us learn about the level and length of immunity following infection and how the virus is spreading across the country.
- There is no evidence yet to suggest that those who have been proven to have had the virus are immune. This is the position of the WHO. You should continue to comply with social distancing measures and government guidelines. That does mean that right now you need to self-isolate if you are told to do so by NHS Test and Trace even if you have had a previous antibody test.
- We will continue to review this as the science develops.

When will contacts be traced from?

- Lab results reported from 9am today (Wed) will be part of NHS T&T service (they then come in overnight to CTAS for tomorrow)
- CTAS starts sending links to the public from 9am on Thursday
- Calls start from 9am Thurs (volume low to being with but building up from Thursday late afternoon when chase messages to lock in have been sent)

How should people self-isolate if they live with a vulnerable person?

- Where possible, people who are self-isolating should not share a household with anyone who is clinically vulnerable, especially anyone who is clinically extremely vulnerable and is shielding.
- Where possible, vulnerable people should stay with friends or family for the duration of the period that other members of their household are required to self isolate.
- Where this is not possible, households should follow guidance issued by Public Health England on how to reduce the risk of transmission.
- What happens if I have previously tested positive but I'm alerted as a contact. Do I need to self-isolate?
- Yes. You will need to self-isolate if advised to do so even if you have had COVID-19 previously.
- Until we have a better understanding of antibodies/immunity we cannot be sure that someone will not get the virus again and/or pass it on to other people.



Will I be asked to self-isolate repeatedly? Does the system recognise you've already isolated before?

- If you have been in close recent contact with someone who has tested positive for coronavirus, you will need to self-isolate, whether or not you have isolated before. By following social distancing rules, you will significantly reduce the risk of needing to self-isolate.
- The workplace guidance will help you to social distance at work and reduce the likelihood of you coming into close contact and needing to self-isolate.
- If you are following social distancing rules, you will significantly reduce the risk of needing to self-isolate.

Test and trace

What is test and trace?

- The NHS Test and Trace service together testing, contact tracing and outbreak management into an end-to-end service.
- It will play an increasingly important part in our wider strategy to save lives, protect the health and care system as we start to move out of lockdown.
- The more rapidly we can identify people who may have been at risk of infection and, if necessary, advise them to self-isolate, the more effectively we can reduce the spread of the virus and maintain transmission at low levels.

What is contact tracing?

- Contact tracing is a well-established method of preventing and controlling outbreaks from measles and TB through to sexually transmitted infections like chlamydia.
- The principles are tried and tested. We work with a person who has an infection to help them remember everyone who they have had close contact with while they could have been infectious.
- Then we contact and warn everyone who might be at risk, as quickly as possible, offering advice on how they should act in order to help prevent further spread.
- Finding contacts can be simple; a close friend or work colleague, or it can be more complex, for instance someone who has travelled or attended a communal event.
- There are also levels of risk to consider – for instance you are much more likely to transmit the virus through close contact for a period of time, whereas simply walking past someone in a street is much lower risk.



What is a “contact”?

- A ‘contact’ is a person who has been close to someone who has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) anytime from 2 days before the person was symptomatic up to 7 days from onset of symptoms. For example, a contact can be:
 - sexual partners or people who spend significant time in the same household as a person who has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19);
 - a person who has had face-to-face contact (within 1 metre), with someone who has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19), including: being coughed on, having a face-to-face conversation, or having skin-to-skin physical contact, or any contact within 1 metre for 1 minute or longer without face-to-face contact;
 - a person who has been between 1 and 2 metres from someone who has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) for more than 15 minutes; or
 - a person who has travelled in a small vehicle or on a plane near someone who has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19).

How many tracers and how long does it take to follow up a case?

- We currently have 25,000 contact tracers in place, supported by expanded local health protection teams based around the country.
- Every situation is different depending on how quickly we can get in touch with the people we need to reach, and the number of contacts each person with coronavirus has. Some of our work can be automated or be resolved very quickly by contact tracers, through to more complex situations which need to be escalated to local health protection teams.
- The number of contacts people have is also influenced by any social distancing measures in place, which limit close contact with other people.

How will you ensure all contacts are traced?

- Contact tracers/contact tracing will seek to contact all cases and contacts they can identify - PHE will report regularly into the Test and Trace programme on the number of contacts/people traced.
- The Covid 19 app provides added ability to warn contacts about people with coronavirus that they wouldn’t ordinarily be able to identify, such as a fellow passenger on a bus or someone they stood next to in a queue.



How is the risk determined? What criteria are used?

- The service will identify people at high risk of having been exposed to the virus through close recent contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19.
- It will alert those contacts who meet defined risk criteria, based on the proximity and duration of the contact they've had, and provide advice on what steps to take.
- The risk criteria will be continuously refined to help target those most at risk of having the virus.

How do I share my contacts if I test positive?

- If you test positive for coronavirus, the NHS Test and Trace service will send you a text or email alert with instructions of how to share details of people you have been in close contact with and places you have visited eg. your local school, workplace. It is important that you respond as soon as possible so that appropriate advice is given to those who need it.

Will they know it is me that exposed them to the risk of infection?

- The NHS Test and Trace service will not tell your contacts your name or details. It will simply tell them that they have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for coronavirus and need to act. You'll be encouraged to get in touch with the people you've been in close contact with when you first develop symptoms of COVID-19 and order a test, so that they know to take extra care with social distancing and to watch out for symptoms – and so that they are more prepared if they then get contacted by the NHS Test and Trace service,

Will you share my list of contacts with other people?

- No, that information is confidential and will not be shared.
- However, if someone under 18 is at risk and gets a phone call a parent or guardian will be asked to give permission for the call to continue.

What will be the role of local government in contact tracing?

- Local government will work with Public Health England (PHE) to investigate and control outbreaks and to support the community to ensure safe and effective self-isolation.

How will test and trace work if someone is wearing PPE?

- People working in health and social care professional roles who have correctly used Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) as part of their employment are not considered to be a close contact.



Will children who have coronavirus symptoms have their contacts traced?

- Contact tracers will contact anyone under 18 who tests positive for coronavirus where possible, but we require parental consent to proceed with gathering information, or alternatively for a parent or carer to provide us with information on behalf of their child.

How does this service support homeless people?

- Public Health England (PHE)'s health protection and field epidemiology experts, will work with local authorities and others to trace people who are difficult to contact.
- National and local government are working together to consider how to best ensure contact tracing is suitable for rough sleepers or other vulnerable groups, including how vulnerable people can self-isolate if needed.

How will I be notified I have been in contact with someone and am deemed at risk?

- The alert will come by text, email or phone. You will be invited to log on to a secure online service, which is the easiest way for you and the service to communicate with each other – but, if not, a trained call handler will talk you through what you need to do.

How do we work out who is at risk?

- Contact tracing involves looking for people who may have been at risk of catching coronavirus due to close recent contact with someone else who has the virus.
- The contact tracing system is designed to prompt people to flag the people they have seen or places they have been that pose the highest risk. This includes health and social care settings, prisons, leisure activities like the gym or cinema, places of worship, schools or childcare settings and any travel in small vehicles.
- Where someone with coronavirus has visited a high risk setting such as a care home or prison, this is escalated to experienced health protection experts in the relevant local area who can carry out a detailed risk assessment.

How will they get my details/phone number to tell me I have been in contact with someone?

- NHS Test and Trace uses contact details supplied by people who order a test, and also asks people who have tested positive to identify their close recent contacts and provide us with their phone number or email where possible. All information is held in complete confidence, so for instance we do not pass on the name of someone with coronavirus to the people they have been in close contact with, we simply advise that due to close contact with someone who has tested positive for coronavirus, they may be at risk.



What information will a contact tracer ask people for?

- If we're speaking to someone who has tested positive for coronavirus we need to find out about their illness, where they have been and who they met. We'll ask about their symptoms, who they live with, work and leisure activities and who they had recent close contact with. We'll also ask for details of how to get in touch with their close contacts.
- We will never ask for financial information or social media login details.

Is it acceptable to ask people to share contact details of their friends and colleagues?

- Contact tracing is a proven way of slowing the spread of an infection and protecting the community.
- The law on protecting personally identifiable information, known as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), allows Public Health England to use the personal information collected by NHS Test and Trace service. Public Health England also has special permission from the Secretary of State for Health & Social Care to use personally identifiable information without people's consent where this is in the public interest.

What if I don't want to share the personal details of others I have been in contact with?

- Contact tracing is a long-established and proven way of slowing the spread of an infection and our experience is that the majority of people want to help in order to protect others around them. Throughout the process we reassure people that all information gathered is held in strict confidence.

Do people have to tell contact tracers who they have been in contact with? What happens if they refuse?

- Contact tracing is a long-established and proven way of slowing the spread of an infection and our experience is that the majority of people want to help in order to protect others around them. Throughout the process we reassure people that all information gathered is held in strict confidence.

Will it be anonymous or will they know you are the one who infected them?

- Yes, this information is confidential and will solely be used by NHS Test and Trace service to contain the virus.

Who do I call if I have questions about what to do?

- Our web-based contact tracing tool, or contact tracers over the phone, will collect the information we need for contact tracing as well as providing links to comprehensive



online advice and signpost local government support services for people to contact if they have concerns about their ability to self-isolate. If people have concerns about their symptoms they should call NHS111 or 999 in an emergency.

(After receiving a positive test result) If no one has called within 24 hours who do I call? Can I contact the test and trace service?

- Providing we have contact details, such as email, text or landline, NHS Test and Trace will aim to make contact with people within 24 hours of contact tracers receiving the test result.
- The most important action anyone with coronavirus symptoms/confirmed coronavirus can take is to self-isolate at home for 7 days, and for their household to self-isolate for 14 days.

How long will the conversation take?

- If we've called someone with coronavirus to find out who they have been in close recent contact with we advise them the call will take around 30 minutes. This could be either longer or shorter depending on how many places they have been and people they have seen.

Is my data safe?

- Yes. Security and privacy are a priority
- All data will be handled according to the highest ethical and security standards and will only be used for NHS care, management, evaluation and research.
- Data is held on secure computer systems and your information can only be seen by people who need it to carry out contact tracing. All the contact tracers involved in NHS Test and Trace service have been trained to protect the confidentiality of people with COVID-19 and their contacts.
- We will comply with the law around the use of data, including the Data Protection Act.

How would contact tracing work when people are difficult to trace (people with no phone or computer, homeless people)?

- Public Health England (PHE)'s health protection and field epidemiology experts, working closely with local authorities, will continue to deal with complex cases.
- We are working with local government to consider how to best ensure contact tracing is suitable for rough sleepers or other vulnerable groups, including how vulnerable people can self-isolate if needed.



Will local councils receive additional support for Test and Trace?

- As the NHS Test and Trace service develops, MHCLG will work closely with the local government to understand the impact of this work and map out how to support them most effectively

With reports of PPE shortages, how are contact tracers going to be kept safe?

- Contact tracing is carried out mostly by telephone, speaking where necessary to managers of care homes for instance. If public health specialists needed to contact trace in the community, they would use appropriate PPE where required.

Is this just for England?

- This contact tracing service is being launched in England only.
- Scotland launched a two-week pilot phase of Scottish contact tracing technology on 18 May. Welsh contact tracing system currently being piloted in four health board areas. NI contact tracing launched 18 May using Rol portal, and exploring whether Public Health England (PHE) contact tracing can also be applied.

What training programme is in place?

- A range of training and guidance, designed by Public Health England (PHE) health protection experts, is provided to all 3 groups of staff and this must be completed before they can begin contact tracing. This includes:
 - Mandatory training in data security awareness, consent, customer service, counter fraud, bribery and corruption, safeguarding vulnerable children and adults, diversity and inclusion and health and safety.
 - Ongoing support and training building on lessons learned as the programme rolls out will be provided.

What is the precise role of different elements of the workforce?

- The structure will have three levels:
 - Level 3 will be call handlers (c15,000 initially). They will reach out to contacts of people with COVID-19 who cannot be reached by text or email to encourage them to use the web-based system. They will also be able to help people who are having problems with the system or do not have access to a computer. They will escalate complex cases to Tier 2.
 - Level 2 will be health professionals (c3000 initially) who interview cases by phone to understand where they have been and who they met. This might include people with confirmed COVID-19 who are under 18, who can't be contacted through text



or email or don't have access to a computer. They will deal with more complex tracing of contacts and escalate issues to tier 1.

- Level 1 are public health specialists– they are a team of Public Health England (PHE) public health professionals, linking with the local government sector and other partners, who oversee the contact tracing workforce as well as managing complex cases and outbreaks.
- Background: Health protection staff and field epidemiology staff will do this among other things. Total number of staff are:
 - 137 people in the locally based but nationally-coordinated Field Epidemiology Service. This is part of Public Health England (PHE)'s National Infections Service.
 - 362 staff in the local Health Protection Teams
 - We are recruiting approx 100 additional staff to work with HPTs and FS

Employer/Stakeholder

My staff are exposed to people every day, are they more likely to be told to self isolate?

- It is important for employers to play their part by making workplaces as safe as possible and by following the 5 steps to working safely.

If a staff member is notified, do they have to report to us?

- If an employee is notified to self-isolate for 14 days because they have come into close contact with someone who has tested positive for coronavirus, and are unable to work as a result, they should notify you that they are unable to work within the deadline you have set in your sickness absence policies (or normally within 7 days if you have not set one).

Will my whole workforce be told to self-isolate if someone tests positive?

- Only those who have had close recent contact with someone who then tests positive for COVID-19 will be asked to self-isolate.

What's the minimum and maximum time an employee can be told to self-isolate for?

- As now, those who test positive for coronavirus will be asked to isolate for 7 days from the onset of symptoms and only stop isolating from day 8 once they have been fever free for 48 hours without medication.



- Those who have had close recent contact with someone who went on to test positive for coronavirus will be asked to self-isolate for the period ending 14 days after they came into contact with the person who has tested positive.