

# **FAQ on Rapid Community Asymptomatic Testing in Gloucestershire**

## **12<sup>th</sup> January 2021**

### **What is rapid community testing?**

Community testing is a new testing programme offer for regions across the UK, to help provide a route to move down tier levels for the highest risk areas.

On Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> January 2021, the Government announced<sup>i</sup> that rapid, regular COVID-19 testing (Lateral Flow Devices or LFDs) would be made available across England from this week for critical workers (those who cannot work from home).

### **Why has rapid community testing been announced for critical workers and schools?**

The single most important action we can all take to protect the NHS and save lives, is to stay at home. However, as many people need to continue to work in critical roles, it is important we continue to find as many positive cases as we can. Lateral Flow Devices (LFDs) can help find people who do not know they have the virus, helping them to then isolate more quickly and avoid passing on the infection in their work / school settings.

It **does not** enable us to go back to a normal way of life. We must all continue to follow infection prevention and national guidance both in and outside of the workplace.

### **What is a lateral flow device and how does it work?**

Lateral Flow Devices (LFDs) are a type of technology that allow rapid testing for COVID-19. They work a little like a pregnancy test, in that the swab is inserted into the nose and throat; the test kit is then inserted into a fluid and some drops of this are put on a lateral flow device kit. This then gives a result in the form of coloured lines indicating a positive or negative result, usually within an hour (the most commonly used test will give a result in about 30 mins).

### **How is a Lateral Flow Device (LFD) different to a PCR test?**

PCR (Polymerase Chain Reaction) testing (sometimes called a swab test) has been available now since Summer last year to anyone who has symptoms of COVID-19. There is a drive through site at Hempsted Meadows, Gloucester and mobile sites move around other parts of the county (<https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>).

The PCR test is the “gold standard” for testing but the results need to be processed in a laboratory and so it usually takes between 24 to 72 hours for someone in the community to get their test result back. This does not matter for people who have symptoms as they should be at home self-isolating while they wait for their test result.

Lateral Flow Devices (LFDs) use a similar swab to collect the sample, but swabs processed using LFDs receive results in 30 minutes. This is why they can have a use for people who do not have symptoms but who are still infectious because, even

though they miss some people who have the virus, it can identify people who did not know they were infected. If these people isolate quickly they can avoid passing the virus on to people.

## **How effective is rapid testing?**

No test is perfect. The most accurate test we have for COVID-19 is the “PCR” test that is available when people have symptoms<sup>ii</sup>. Test results can take a day or so to come back, but are usually very accurate and means that people can be reasonably confident in these results and continue to self-isolate if it comes back positive.

Lateral Flow Devices (LFDs) can give a much quicker result (usually within an hour) but these tests are not as accurate as PCR tests. A negative LFD test is not a 100% guarantee that you do not have the virus: however, lateral flow tests tend to detect individuals in their most infectious period. As 1 in 3 people may have the virus and never get symptoms, this can be a useful tool in the box to find extra cases of COVID-19 before the virus is passed on.

In an evaluation of the mass community testing pilot in Liverpool, compared to PCR tests, these tests picked up 5 out of 10 of the cases that PCR tests detected and more than 7 out of 10 cases with higher viral loads (amounts of the virus in their nose and throat), who are likely to be the most infectious. This means that the tests missed between 3 to 5 out of every ten infectious people.

Because of this, people need to both still continue to “act like they have the virus” even if their test result is negative and ensure that they wash their hands, socially distance and wear face coverings. Also, this means regular testing is key, as if you are having contacts with other people regularly, you could have caught the virus and start to pass it on, even if a recent test showed you are negative.

## **Are we doing rapid community testing in Gloucestershire?**

Yes, but only in one area at the moment. In Gloucestershire, we are ahead of the game in that we have already run a pilot of the lateral flow devices at the Royal Agricultural University in December, and a community scheme will go live on 13th January 2020 in the Barton and Tredworth area. This will initially focus on people who cannot work from home who live in these areas of Gloucester City. If there are still slots available, these will be made available to other residents of Gloucester City.

## **Who can get a test?**

We're offering testing to people who are in critical worker roles that cannot work from home and come into contact with vulnerable residents.

Groups have been prioritised on the criteria of close contact, multiple contact and vulnerable contact groups. This is where testing will have the biggest impact – both in terms of reducing transmission of the virus and to support the delivery of key services.

Community testing will be deployed alongside existing national rapid testing existing programmes, such as in the NHS and in care homes.

Asymptomatic testing works hand-in-hand with the existing testing service for those with COVID-19 symptoms as part of the comprehensive NHS Test and Trace testing offer.

## **How often should I be tested?**

People wanting to be tested need to commit to having two tests per week for around six weeks.

## **What type of Lateral Flow Device (LFD) tests are being used?**

The Innova SARS-CoV-2 Antigen Rapid Qualitative Test is the testing kit used in our rapid community testing programme.

## **How long does it take to do the test and how long does it take to get the result?**

It takes less than 15 minutes to administer the lateral flow device test. The test takes around 30 minutes to produce a result and you'll be notified of your result by email or text message.

## **What should I do if I test positive?**

If your test is positive you must get a coronavirus test on NHS.UK as soon as possible. This can be via the NHS testing system at home or via one of Gloucestershire's testing sites. The booking system will advise you of your nearest site.

You'll need to self-isolate for 10 days from the date of the first test along with all those you live with.

## **If I get a positive test from an LFD, do my contacts still have to self-isolate?**

Yes. At this stage, the rules for LFDs are that anybody you have been in close contact<sup>iii</sup> with for 48 hours before, including and after when you took your test needs to self-isolate for 10 days.

If you get a positive LFD test you will need to go home immediately and self-isolate, and you should also access a PCR test at a local testing centre to check that the LFD was correct. You will be contacted by NHS Test and Trace in the same way as if you had symptoms.

## **What financial support is available if I have to isolate?**

A Government scheme and local discretionary scheme are available.

Find out more about the [Test and Trace support payment](#).

## **If I get a negative test, can I hug my friends / relatives or ignore social distancing?**

No. It is important to remember that the Lateral Flow Devices (LFDs) can miss people who are positive (a false-negative result). Even with a negative test, you must still act like you have the virus and keep socially distanced from others, wash your hands and wear face coverings.

Regular testing with LFDs does not stop you getting the virus, and is about helping to pick up as soon as possible if you have the virus so you don't spread it to others. Even if the negative result is accurate and you do not have COVID-19 when you take the test, you might already have caught the virus and be incubating it – this means that you might start to be infectious soon after your test – so keep acting like you have it!

## **What happens if my test is negative, but I have coronavirus symptoms?**

If you have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, you must book a [PCR test](#) as soon as possible. You and your household must isolate immediately until you receive your results.

## **Will regular Lateral Flow Device (LFD) testing allow me to go back to a more normal way of life?**

No. LFD testing is very good at identifying those with a high positivity of COVID-19 so that they can isolate as soon as possible to stop the spread of COVID.

If you receive a negative LFD test this does not guarantee that you do not have COVID-19. You may have a very low positivity which has not been picked up by the LFD test. You must continue to practice all infection control and national guidelines both in and outside of work.

## **Are there any circumstances where I can get regular tests and continue to work if I am negative, even if I have been a contact of a confirmed case?**

Not at this stage. At the moment, Lateral Flow Devices (LFDs) are being used to identify cases of COVID-19 in people who may be infectious and passing the virus on to others but have no symptoms. This is called “test to find” and is about making sure that as many people with COVID-19 are found quickly so that they can self-isolate and we can inform their contacts so they can also self-isolate as soon as they can. This helps to reduce the amount of spread in the community.

The Department of Health and Social Care are considering circumstances in which if you have been exposed to a case (you are a contact), that you can have regular tests every day and if you test negative you can continue to go to work or school. This is called “test to enable”. However, as these tests can miss some people who are positive, there are risks

involved with this strategy as you might get a negative test and yet continue to work whilst you are infectious. Therefore, as yet, we cannot do this in Gloucestershire.

## **I don't live in Barton or Tredworth, when will I be able to access the testing locally?**

We know that many people want to access the new testing programmes. However, setting up testing centres takes time to identify sites, train staff and get testing kits delivered. We are awaiting further guidance from the government on the plans for the local roll out and we will learn from the Barton and Tredworth site about uptake over the coming days. We will keep people updated on [our website](#).

We ask that in the meantime people are patient, and continue to follow the lockdown rules, and continue to wash hands thoroughly, wear face coverings and maintain social distance. By taking these simple steps we can help to limit spread.

## **How can I get a test? What should I expect?**

At the moment, only NHS staff are able to do Lateral Flow Device (LFD) tests in their own homes. This is changing, and in future more people should be able to do home testing using LFDs. However, until then, you must attend a specific testing centre where you will take your own swab and hand it to a testing centre staff member who will process the result for you and enter the results on to a system. You will then get a text message or email with your results.

## **Will LFDs pick up the new strain of COVID-19?**

Yes, the LFDs will pick up the new strain.

## **Is it compulsory to take this test?**

No. We're hoping that many people will recognise the benefits of getting involved in local testing efforts to reduce the spread of the virus in their communities.

## **Why should people take part?**

We aim to identify people who do not have COVID-19 symptoms but who are infectious and could spread the infection to others unknowingly.

Identifying and supporting infectious people to isolate before they develop symptoms will help reduce spread.

## **If people are being sent away from the site to wait for their result, will this mean that they should not return to work until they receive a text with their result?**

At the moment it's taking about 10 minutes for the NHS system to send a text to the individual with their result. As this is asymptomatic testing, people can go about their daily routine as normal.

## Do I still have to go for testing if I've received the COVID-19 vaccination?

Current advice for those vaccinated is that they continue with all current guidance and advice with regards to COVID-19 restrictions; this includes testing.

## What should I do if I have symptoms?

Please get a [coronavirus test on NHS.UK](#) online or call 119 if you have any symptoms of coronavirus:

- A high temperature;
- A new continuous cough; and/or
- A loss of / change in taste or smell.

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<sup>i</sup> More detail can be found here <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/asymptomatic-testing-to-be-rolled-out-across-the-country-starting-this-week>

<sup>ii</sup> This is still available for everyone in the country by visiting <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>

<sup>iii</sup> Close contact is clearly defined here - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-contacts-of-people-with-possible-or-confirmed-coronavirus-covid-19-infection-who-do-not-live-with-the-person/guidance-for-contacts-of-people-with-possible-or-confirmed-coronavirus-covid-19-infection-who-do-not-live-with-the-person>