

## **Asymptomatic Testing Programme: Colleges and Higher Education Institutions (HEI)**

*The Scottish Government is working with the UK Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and other key partners to implement a testing programme for those without symptoms of coronavirus in Colleges and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). This document provides an overview of the key elements of the LFD Asymptomatic Testing Programme. Further guidance and detailed information is provided via local authorities and can be found on the document-sharing portal, Objective Connect.*

### **Aims and objectives of the Asymptomatic Testing Programme**

The Scottish Government is working with local authorities, colleges and HEIs and other key partners to put in place a testing programme for people without the symptoms of coronavirus (asymptomatic). This is part of the package of measures to reduce the risk of coronavirus in education settings.

The programme will help to identify asymptomatic individuals in educational environments or settings at the earliest possible opportunity. By asking them and their close contacts to self-isolate, the likelihood of the virus being passed on is minimised. This is expected to help enhance the confidence of our communities in a return to education.

### **Existing testing arrangements**

The asymptomatic testing programme does not replace the current testing policy for those with symptoms. College/HEI staff, setting staff and students who experience symptoms of coronavirus must self-isolate immediately and arrange a PCR test at [www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test](https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test). People with symptoms must not rely on a negative LFD result to continue to attend their college/HEI.

### **Individuals and institutions involved in this programme**

- All college/HEI staff;
- all college/HEI students.

College/HEI staff include teachers, lecturers, classroom-based support staff, administrative staff, facilities management staff (cleaners, janitors, etc.), transport staff and other college/HEI based staff who attend colleges/HEIs regularly and are critical to the effective delivery of the college/HEI education.

If staff are working from home, and not attending the setting, they should not participate. This is because the goal of the programme is to minimise the risks of COVID-19 in the college/HEI environment.

### **Key features of the programme**

Drawing on learning from pilots, we have worked with the UK Department for Health and Social Care and key stakeholders to agree a model of asymptomatic testing that is intended to be both effective and deliverable. The resulting programme is designed to minimise burdens on staff whilst reducing risks in education settings as part of a wider package of mitigations. The model involves the following:

- Participation in the testing programme is voluntary.
- Settings that wish to participate are required to adhere to the Contract Agreement, Standard Operating Procedures and the DPIA/Privacy Notice to ensure legal requirements around GDPR and regulatory requirements from the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MRHA) are met.
  1. **Contract Agreement** (between DHSC and the setting): outlines the legal framework for delivering the testing programme and sharing information.
  2. **Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)**: outlines the delivery process to follow to ensure the effective delivery of clinical, quality control and governance processes.
  3. **DPIA and Privacy Notice**: outlines the legal framework for information sharing, roles and responsibilities around processing and sharing personal data.
- Guidance and information packs will be provided via Objective Connect
- Settings will be provided with packs of Lateral Flow Device (LFD) test kits for staff and students.
- Settings will then be asked to distribute these test kits to consenting staff and students. Settings will be asked to keep a log of which kits have been distributed to which individuals. This is a regulatory requirement.
- Participants will take test kits home and, following the instructions for use, perform the tests on themselves or with the support of a parent or guardian, twice weekly. They will then register positive, negative and void results on a web-based portal, with the results shared with NHS Test and Protect. The actions that should be taken by individuals whether they receive a positive or negative result are clearly explained in the supporting guidance. A positive LFD test result requires a confirmatory PCR test to be taken.
- College/HEIs will be able to reorder test kits when they need to do so. The precise processes for doing so are still under development with DHSC and will be communicated as soon as they have been confirmed.

### **Is participation compulsory?**

We expect all college/HEIs will wish to participate and offer at-home LFD test kits to staff and students.

The programme is voluntary – nobody should be required to undergo testing without consent, and nobody should be excluded from college/HEI or their setting if they do not wish

to test. However, we are asking that staff and students be strongly encouraged to participate, in order to contribute to the wellbeing of their college/HEI communities and settings.

Staff and students who decline to participate should continue to follow the usual national guidelines by getting tested if they show any symptoms and to self-isolate if they test positive.

### **How an LFD test works**

An LFD at-home test detects the coronavirus antigen (protein) that is produced when a person is infected with coronavirus by applying a swab from the nose and throat to a special test kit. These tests are fast and simple: they produce a result in 20-30 minutes that is easy to interpret and does not require a laboratory to be processed. Comprehensive guidance on self-testing is covered in the “Instructions for Use” (IFU) which come with every test kit and there is also a [step-by-step video guide available](#) online which is linked to in additional guidance documents.

Instructions for Use are [available in translation in a number of languages](#).

Once the test has been conducted, participants must log their test result – whether positive, negative or void – online at <http://www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result>. Alternatively, you can report by telephone by calling 0300 303 2713 in Scotland.

### **Safety and accuracy of LFD tests**

LFD tests have been widely and successfully used to detect coronavirus in asymptomatic individuals. No test is perfect, but the speed and convenience of LFD tests supports detection of the virus in asymptomatic individuals who would not otherwise be tested. The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has authorised the use of these at-home tests for the purposes of detecting the virus in asymptomatic people.

Only a very small proportion of people who do not have coronavirus will receive a positive result (false positive). The tests are better at picking up true positive cases when a person has a higher viral load and is more contagious. There is a risk of returning a false negative result when viral loads are low (e.g. in the early stages of infection). This is why the Scottish Government recommend two LFD tests 3 to 4 days apart, or regular testing, to enhance detection by picking up any cases which were not detected during the first test and to catch any new infections. This is also why it is important to continue to follow [FACTS guidance](#) and sector-specific guidance on reducing risks even if you have had a negative test result.

### **Monitoring of test kits**

College/HEIs are required to keep a log of all of the test kits distributed to staff and students. This is a regulatory requirement, and helps ensure that test kits are being distributed to eligible individuals and that any consistent problems (e.g. individuals requesting more kits than expected due to successive void results) can be picked up.

The UK Department of Health and Social Care may from time to time request that college/HEIs or settings share this log (or extracts from it) to assist in monitoring and responding to issues with test kits.

### **Receiving a positive test result**

If a participant receives a positive result from their LFD at home, they must report the result online at <http://www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result> (or by calling 0300 303 2713 in Scotland), self-isolate and book a confirmatory PCR test. A PCR test can be booked via <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>. We advise visiting a local walk-in test site or drive through test site as this is the quickest way to get tested, or participants can order a home test kit.

It is important participants begin self-isolation immediately after they receive the positive result from the LFD test, and do not wait until the result of their PCR test.

A positive test result via LFD will feed into the Test and Protect contact tracing system and commence contact tracing for the positive case. The person who has tested positive will then be offered a confirmatory PCR test.

If the PCR test result is negative, individuals will be contacted by Test and Protect who will advise them on what to do next. In most cases this will involve ending self-isolation and returning to college/HEI, provided the individual continues to have no symptoms. In some limited circumstances the individual may be advised by Test and Protect to continue self-isolation if a risk assessment determines this to be appropriate.

### **Close contact testing**

If a pupil or member of staff has tested positive, they and their household will have to self-isolate as per government guidelines. The pupil or member of staff should also inform the college/HEI or setting of their absence, and are strongly encouraged to report a positive case to their college/HEI or setting to support contact tracing activities.

Test and Protect and/or the college/HEI will contact staff members and students who were in close contact with a positive case to inform them that they need to self-isolate and book a PCR test through [www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test](https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test). If a close contact tests negative they must complete their 10 day self-isolation period. However, if they continue to show no symptoms, other people living in the same household do not need to self-isolate.

If a close contact tests positive then they become an index case, and will have to self-isolate for 10 days from their test date. Test and Protect will contact this person and perform a risk assessment to determine who has been exposed to the virus and needs to self-isolate as a close contact.

### **Other protective measures**

The testing programme does not reduce the need for other protective measures. It is extremely important that you do not let a negative LFD test result affect the way you follow and stick to the protective measures already in place, including [FACTS guidance](#) and sector-specific guidance on reducing risks.

### **What to do if there are problems with LFD tests**

Any incidents that could potentially impact the quality or safety of testing should be reported to the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).

Incidents occurring in a home setting (for example: something damaged, or missing or difficult to use in the kit, unable to log result) should be reported to 0300 303 2713.

If there is a clinical incident which led to, or has the potential for, harm (e.g. swab breaks in the mouth, bleeding, allergic reaction on using the kit etc.) this should be reported on <https://coronavirus-yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk/>.

This is not for seeking immediate medical care. Medical care should be sought through the usual route of contacting 111 or 999.

## Annex: User Journey

