

NENC COVID-19 Strategic Testing Group Update - 20 May 2020

Lead

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Summary of Activity

North East and North Cumbria Strategic COVID19 Testing Group formed to provide:

- Meets twice a week to review recent guidance and agree how testing will be delivered across NHS and National Testing sites.
- Oversight of the delivery of the [DHSC led National Testing Programme Strategy published on 4th April 2020](#) – target set to deliver 100,000 tests per day by end of April.
- Membership from NHS Foundation Trusts, CCGs, Local Authority DsPH and DASS, PHE, NHSEI, NECS and MoD.
- Reviews capacity in the NHS labs and changing pressures with uncertainty in supply chain and the return of non-COVID work.
- Health Advice sub-group (comprising microbiology, virology and public health clinicians) review guidance and ensure that testing will be used effectively to reduce transmission, especially to vulnerable patient groups. This group highlight any risks or issues that may impact patient or population health and well-being requiring escalation to the regional and national teams.
- Maps the health and social care patient and staff needs for testing and support LRFs in identifying sites for Mobile Testing Units.
- Provide clear comms to partners across the ICS which is challenging given frequent changes to the scope and delivery of the national programme.

Antigen test – detects if a person currently has COVID19 by doing a throat and nasal swab. Testing available at sites supported by our local NHS Foundation Trusts or the National Testing Programme. Health and Social Care staff are encouraged to book via the NECS portal

- **NHS Foundation Trusts** – swabbing and testing available for NHS patients and staff employed by the Acute, Mental Health and Ambulance Trusts as well as out-of-hospital health and social care staff such as GPs, dentists, pharmacists, social care staff etc. NHS Labs test initial care home swabs that the Health Protection Teams organise when an outbreak is first reported to PHE. Results within 24 hours.
- **DHSC led National Testing Programme** – swabbing available for all of the symptomatic population
 - **Regional Testing Sites** – permanent swabbing sites with swabs going to Milton Keynes Lighthouse Lab for testing. Results in 48-72 hours
 - Gateshead IKEA (Opened 8th April and closes 24th May), Newcastle Great Park, Park and Ride (Opening 22nd May)
 - Penrith (Opened 25th April)
 - New North East site agreed and location to be confirmed for Darlington/Teesside area by end of May
 - **Mobile Testing Units** – temporary sites available 2-3 days on a rotating schedule agreed with LRFs, DHSC and MoD colleagues. Army deployed with swabbing kits from the Regional Testing Sites collect and drop off each day. North East sites to date:
 - Berwick, Castlegate Car Park TD15 1LJ
 - Ashington Leisure Centre NE63 9JY
 - Hexham, Wentworth Car Park, NE46 1QE
 - Morpeth County Hall Car Park, NE61 2EF
 - Royal Quays Outlet, North Shields, NE28 6DW
 - Newcastle Airport, NE13 8DN
 - Pallion Retail Park, Sunderland, SR4 6TY
 - Beamish Museum Car Park, DH9 0RG
 - Bishop Auckland College DL14 6JZ
 - Darlington, Mowden Park Rugby Club, DL2 1DL
 - Hartlepool Royal Navy Museum Car Park, TS24 0XZ
 - Teesside Shopping Centre, TS17 7BU
 - Teesside Park, Stockton TS17 7BW

North Cumbria Mobile Testing Unit sites to date:

- Carlisle - Carlisle Swift Bank Car Park, Swift Bank, Carlisle CA1 1JG
- Cockermouth - Cockermouth Leisure Centre, Castlegate Drive, Cockermouth, CA13 9JR
- Grange-over-Sands - Public car park behind Nutwood Medical Centre
- Kents Bank Road, Grange-over-Sands, LA11 7DJ
- Kendal - Kendal leisure centre carpark, Burton Rd, Kendal, LA9 7HX
- Kirkby Stephen Grammar School - Christian Head, Kirkby Stephen, CA17 4HA
- Workington – Lillyhall, CA14 4HX

- Care Home Testing Kits – requested through the care home portal in collaboration with support from DPH and Local Authority. Army support some collection of kits from Regional Testing Sites with drop-off and pick up to care homes identified by national team.
- Home Testing Kits – delivered and collected from individual's home to go to one of the Lighthouse Labs. Results in 48-72 hours.

Care Home testing for staff and residents is embedded in the enhanced support offer from partners in the Local Authority, NHS and Public Health England that has been developed in the North East and is being adopted as a regional approach across the wider North East & North Cumbria and Yorkshire & Humber region.

Ensuring effective testing and advice about exclusion / return to work for staff working in health and care is crucial to the prevention of further infection within the care home / elderly population and other vulnerable groups. In order to reduce the risk of transmission to vulnerable patient groups, the North East & North Cumbria Strategic Testing Group has endorsed the following approach to results from health and social care staff testing:

1. For symptomatic individuals, guidance on self-isolation should be followed **regardless of test result** with return to work 7 days from onset of symptoms or until symptoms have clinically including 2 days free of fever, whichever is longer.
For care home **residents** the recommended isolation period is **14 days**.
2. For asymptomatic household contacts of symptomatic test positive cases, self-isolation should continue for the full 14 days prescribed in national guidance.
3. For asymptomatic household members of index cases who are, or have been symptomatic but the index case tests negative, the household members may return to work provided:
 - a. They first discuss their return with their HR department
 - b. They are themselves asymptomatic and
 - c. Neither they nor the index case worsens in health (in which case isolation should immediately be resumed)
4. For workers with high risk clinical groups and vulnerable groups such as care homes, it is recommended that **neither index cases nor household members return to work, regardless of test result**, before completion of self-isolation periods.

Data flows being developed so that testing data from NHS labs & National Testing Programme is available in GP records and to PHE colleagues to support contact tracing.

Antibody test – detects if a person has previously had COVID19 by doing a blood test. Result - yes / no if antibodies present but does not infer immunity status.

- Testing process to be announced on 22 May 2020 with ambition to scale to 40,000 per day nationally by end of May.
- Early testing will focus on patients and staff working in priority clinical areas
- The Health Advice Group has raised concerns about lack of clear purpose and protocol for testing; shared with NHSE and national implementation team.