



## Addresses

### For Action

LFD Leads

All Independent Contractors (Dental, Pharmacy, General Practice and Optometry)

### For Information

Chief Executives NHS Boards

Primary Care Leads

Directors of Dentistry

Directors of Pharmacy

NHS Board Optometric Advisors

## Enquiries to:

[PrimaryCareLFD@gov.scot](mailto:PrimaryCareLFD@gov.scot)

23 April 2021

Dear Colleague

## **Asymptomatic Lateral Flow Device Testing – Primary Care Workforce**

Twice-weekly lateral flow device (LFD) testing has now been rolled out to the patient-facing primary care workforce in general practice, dentistry, community pharmacy and optometry.

### **Benefits of Participation in Testing**

The testing of staff is offered on a voluntary basis. However, over 97% of primary care premises across Scotland are participating in the testing programme and I would strongly encourage all eligible staff to undertake the testing on a routine basis, given the benefits to staff, your families and your patients. Asymptomatic and pre-symptomatic people can transmit infection to others so routine twice weekly testing and reporting is important for identifying positive cases early so that staff members can self-isolate as soon as possible and contact tracing can commence.

Research shows that the Innova LFD test will identify more than three quarters of positive cases of COVID and this rises to over 95% of those with high viral loads – who are those most likely to be infectious.<sup>1</sup> However, while current LFD tests for COVID-19 are less than 100% sensitive, this means that negative results do not rule out COVID-19 and existing Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) measures - including the use of PPE, the extended use of face masks, physical distancing,

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<sup>1</sup> Preliminary report from the Joint PHE Porton Down & University of Oxford SARS-CoV-2 test development and validation cell: Rapid evaluation of Lateral Flow Viral Antigen detection devices (LFDs) for mass community testing, 8 November 2020, [https://www.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/oxford/media\\_wysiwyg/UK%20evaluation\\_PHE%20Porton%20Down%20%20University%20of%20Oxford\\_final.pdf](https://www.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/oxford/media_wysiwyg/UK%20evaluation_PHE%20Porton%20Down%20%20University%20of%20Oxford_final.pdf)

increased environmental cleaning, symptom vigilance and good hand and respiratory hygiene – all remain critical to minimise the risk of transmission of COVID-19. However, expanding routine testing provides an additional layer of protection to staff, your colleagues, your patients and clients, and will identify a large proportion of asymptomatic infections which would otherwise not be detected and allow earlier identification of some pre-symptomatic infections.

It is estimated that 5% of all COVID-19 cases in the UK have been in Healthcare Workers (HCWs) and the risk is 6-fold higher than that of the general population.<sup>2</sup> A study by Imperial College London estimates that weekly PCR screening of HCWs and other high risk groups is estimated to reduce their contribution to SARS-CoV-2 by 23%, on top of reductions achieved by self-isolation following symptoms, assuming results are available within 24 hours.<sup>3</sup> A modelling study from Public Health England indicates that periodic testing of staff can reduce infection in other staff by as much as 64%.<sup>4</sup>

While LFD tests have lower sensitivity and slightly lower specificity than the PCR test, testing twice weekly helps mitigate the sensitivity consideration, and to mitigate lower specificity, all positive results will be followed up with a confirmatory PCR test.

I recognise that testing can be uncomfortable, and inconvenient for staff, who are continuing to provide excellent care for patients. I would not be asking staff to participate in the testing if I did not believe that it would be beneficial to the safety of staff and patients.

## **Recording Test Results**

Please ensure that you record your test results on the online portal (<https://nhsnss.service-now.com/covidtesting>). Negative and inconclusive test results are as important to record as positive results. The data suggests that whilst uptake of test-kits has been very high, recording of results on the portal remains low.

Please note that you can now register on the portal (using the “Login/Register for Rapid Testing (LFD)” option). Registering makes the process of recording your test results quicker and easier. Please ensure that you record your reason for testing as “Primary Care and Independent Contractors”.

Results are collected primarily to assist in protecting your health and the health of others. They are used to contribute to the public health effort including contact tracing, providing information to local Health Protection Teams in Health Boards and highlighting areas where local NHS incident management teams may need to take urgent action.

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<sup>2</sup> Grassly NC, Pons-Salort M, Parker EPK, White PJ, Ferguson NM, on behalf of the Imperial College COVID-19 Response Team Comparison of molecular testing strategies for COVID-19 control: a mathematical modelling study. *The Lancet Infectious Diseases* 2020. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1473-3099\(20\)30630-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1473-3099(20)30630-7)

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Evans S, Agnew E, Vynnycky E, Robotham J. The impact of testing and infection prevention and control strategies on within hospital transmission dynamics of COVID-19 in English hospitals. <https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2020.05.12.20095562v2>

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your commitment to providing exceptional care to patients and for your ongoing support for the testing programme.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gregor Smith', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Dr Gregor Smith**  
Chief Medical Officer for Scotland

## **Appendix 1: Administrative Information**

### **Roll out of LFD Testing**

The initial roll out of test-kits was completed at the end of March 2021. If your practice or pharmacy has not yet received an initial supply of test kits or would like to order additional test kits please contact [nss.PrimaryCareLFDOrderKits@nhs.scot](mailto:nss.PrimaryCareLFDOrderKits@nhs.scot).

Practices or pharmacies who have previously opted out of the testing program but now wish to opt back in can do so by contacting [nss.PrimaryCareLFDOrderKits@nhs.scot](mailto:nss.PrimaryCareLFDOrderKits@nhs.scot). Please note that practices are expected to have consulted with all patient-facing staff before deciding to opt-out, and if eligible staff subsequently wish to participate in routine testing practices are expected to support them in doing so. Information on individuals choosing to participate or not participate in testing is protected under data protection, however business level information about whole practices who decide not to participate may be subject to an FOI request.

Please note that due to high volumes of correspondence NSS may not provide a response to all emails sent to [nss.PrimaryCareLFDOrderKits@nhs.scot](mailto:nss.PrimaryCareLFDOrderKits@nhs.scot). Please be assured they are nonetheless acting upon all requests as soon as possible.

### **Training**

Staff within the Primary Care Workforce who intend to undertake LFD testing are reminded that they must complete the necessary training before doing so.

This is available via TURAS at the following link:

<https://learn.nes.nhs.scot/28079/coronavirus-covid-19/protecting-yourself-and-yourworkplace-environment>

### **Additional Information**

Further information and guidance, including Frequently Asked Questions, are available online: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-healthcare-worker-testing/>