

Coronavirus (COVID-19): testing for key workers in Scotland

Summary: Guidance on expanding access to testing for symptomatic key workers.

Testing of key workers

The UK government has established a new network of Covid testing facilities for key workers. This programme runs alongside the existing programme of testing in the NHS for clinical purposes and testing of key workers in Health and Social Care.

Testing will allow symptomatic key workers and their household members to know whether or not they have the virus. This will in turn keep essential services running.

What the changes mean for keyworkers in Scotland

Access to Covid testing in Scotland has been widened and will now be determined via a prioritisation matrix for key workers that includes a broader range of private sector workers and essential services.

Priority for health and social care workers

Health and social care workers will continue to be primarily routed through NHS testing at local NHS facilities.

The UK Government programme in Scotland is additional capacity to supplement NHS testing.

Current testing of key workers

Health and social care workers in Scotland already access testing to enable them to return to work. Additional sectors who are currently able to access testing, including through the UK programme, include health and social care staff, police officers, prison officers, fire service, ambulance service, and NHS 24 staff.

Who can be now be tested

We need to ensure those critical to the sustained functioning of the economy and public services have access to testing that enables them to continue their vital work.

All symptomatic people categorised as key workers and members of their household can be tested.

The list of workers able to access testing comprises:

- **Staff delivering NHS services, providing social care to protect and care for the most vulnerable**, all NHS staff and independent contractors working for the NHS, including community pharmacy and emergency dental care, and all social care staff work with vulnerable people and the social care system, including care homes, care at home and children's services.

- **Staff with face-to-face roles in residential institutions with people in the care of the state**, those who are working essential services with niche roles, where service resilience is at risk, including operational staff in prisons, staff working with looked after children, those working on critical national infrastructure (e.g. energy supply) with niche skills essential to maintain services safely and defence staff living in Scotland who fall within the MOD's very highest priority category for testing.
- **Essential workers in critical national infrastructure fundamental for safety and security, and life-line services.** This includes defence personnel, environmental protection, animal health and welfare, funeral industry and staff working for third sector organisations supporting people and children who are vulnerable, including grant aided schools, food supply chain and food processing workers, and workers on medicines and pharmaceutical supply, chemicals supply, energy and water supply.
- **Staff directly involved in delivering other essential services.** This includes staff providing child care for key workers, public transport workers, postal services, financial services, supermarket workers, construction and essential public services, court and Crown Office staff.
- **Staff involved in volunteering**, or in nationally or locally significant industry important to economic sustainability and growth.

Key workers who do not have symptoms

The test is only guaranteed to be accurate if someone is symptomatic.

Testing is still targeted at those key workers who are self-isolating because they are symptomatic, or have household members who are symptomatic, to help enable critical workers to return to work as soon as safely possible.

[More detailed UK government guidance on the circumstances where a test is appropriate can be found here.](#)

When to get tested

You should get tested in the first three days of coronavirus symptoms appearing, although testing is considered effective up until day five.

No testing should be undertaken after day five, unless it's for a specific reason which will be agreed on a case by case basis by local microbiologists.

If you are self-isolating because a person you live with has symptoms, you can refer them for testing.

By testing the household member(s), we can be much more certain that you should either be self-isolating or can return to work.

Negative tests and returning to work

Even if a key worker has had a negative result, it's important to still apply caution. If everyone with symptoms who was tested in their household receive a negative

result, the employee can return to work if their work cannot be done from home, providing they are well enough, and have not had a fever for 48 hours.

If, after returning to work, they develop symptoms they should [follow the NHS Inform guidance and self-isolate](#). Employees should discuss their return to work with their employing organisation.

Test results and staying safe

The test will confirm if an individual who is showing symptoms of the virus actually has it. It will not confirm whether they have had it and have now recovered.

It is vital those who test negative continue to [follow Scottish Government guidance including precautions related to social distancing and handwashing](#).

What happens to the test results

Results under the UK testing programme are communicated to individuals directly by text message and are intended to be fed back into public health records in due course.

Arranging a test if you are a key worker

Eligible key workers will be notified of where to go to get their test through the booking arrangements described below.

Testing under the UK programme in Scotland is currently conducted in drive-through sites operating at:

- Glasgow Airport
- Edinburgh Airport
- Aberdeen Airport
- University of the Highlands and Islands campus in Inverness

These facilities are run by private sector organisations on behalf of the UK Government. This guidance will be updated as additional testing capacity is deployed on Scotland.

A limited number of home test kits are also available.

Employer portal

A new website has been established to improve the process of booking tests. This website is experiencing high volumes of demand and access is being carefully regulated to ensure the systems can continue to function effectively.

Eligible employers can register and refer staff for appointments or eligible key workers will be able to book a test directly for themselves or members of their household.

After they have entered their details on the portal, individuals will receive a text or email the same day inviting them to either book an appointment, or offering a home self-testing kit.

Those using self-referral can indicate their preference prior to registering details.

The UK programme currently covers up to 50 drive-through testing sites across the country and is expected to include an option for booking a home-test to be delivered where attendance at a drive through centre is not practicable.

There are currently four drive-through testing centres in Scotland. The target for sending results is by text within 48hrs. A call centre is available by phone, to help people with the process and deal with test result queries.

Obtain a login for the employer referral portal

In order to obtain a login, employers of key workers should email portalservicedesk@dhsc.gov.uk with two email addresses that will primarily be used to load key worker contact details. Once employer details have been verified, two login credentials will be issued for the employer referral portal

Employers should then login at <https://coronavirus-invite-testing.service.gov.uk/DaraTestDemand/Login> to make referrals.

Self-referral portal

Go to <https://self-referral.test-for-coronavirus.service.gov.uk/> to sign up if you are a key worker and you or a member of your family is symptomatic.

Any questions from employers or key workers about accessing testing, the website, or results should be made through opshub@dhsc.gov.uk.

Home tests

Home test kits are an option where key workers are unable to attend a drive-through centre, subject to availability. This option is covered in the booking process.

Essential workers who have completed a self-referral may have the option, depending on available capacity, to book a home-test kit.

How home testing works

After you complete a self-referral and order a home-test kit, the test would then be delivered the next day, and the essential worker or household member would self-administer the swab, packing it up as per the included instructions.

A Royal Mail courier will arrive the day after to collect it and take it to the lab. The aim is that results will then be received via text within 48 hours.

Reliability of home testing

Evidence suggests that those with no clinical background or training should be completely able to secure an effective sample.

International peer-reviewed evidence suggests that self-swabbing is just as effective at securing a valid sample as clinician-administered testing.

Each kit comes with comprehensive instructions to guide you through how to administer the swab yourself. Test kits come with further instructions and a short video to take you through the process step by step.

Protection of personal data

Amazon and Royal Mail are the commercial partners who are using their world class logistics systems to deliver Home Testing nationwide. They do not have access to the results or any health data.