



From National Medical Director of NHS England & Improvement, Professor Stephen Powis

Sent by email

Rt Hon. Jeremy Hunt MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

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Dear Mr Hunt

ASYMPTOMATIC NHS STAFF TESTING

Further to the letter from myself and the Chief Medical Officer of 3rd November, I am writing to provide the Committee with a further important update.

Following further scientific validation of the lateral flow testing modality last week, and confirmation over the weekend from Test and Trace that they can now supply the NHS with sufficient test kits, I am pleased to confirm asymptomatic testing of all patient-facing NHS staff. The first 34 trusts will deploy this technology this week, benefiting over 250,000 staff, and full roll out should be in place by the end of next week.

Staff will be asked to test themselves at home twice a week with results available before coming into work. Lateral flow devices have a lower specificity and sensitivity than rt qPCR tests. Testing twice weekly helps mitigate the sensitivity considerations, and to mitigate the lower specificity, all positive results will be retested via PCR.

As you know, this builds on the extensive asymptomatic staff testing already occurring in parts of the country with outbreaks – over 70,000 NHS staff have been tested asymptotically in those areas in recent days.

In addition, as previously notified, NHS trusts will continue to use their own PCR lab capacity for appropriate staff testing, and LAMP saliva testing is being made available to hospitals by Test and Trace in November and December.

Yours sincerely

PROFESSOR STEPHEN POWIS
NATIONAL MEDICAL DIRECTOR, NHS ENGLAND AND NHS IMPROVEMENT