

Shared messages for use by partners in NE London, Essex and Kent taking part in targeted testing

This Q&A accompanies the announcement [Targeted testing to be offered to children in north east London, Kent and Essex](#)

Why are we offering COVID-19 testing?

COVID-19 cases in parts of London, Essex and Kent have been rising rapidly, with the fastest rates among the 11-18 age group.

As many as 1 in 3 people who have coronavirus have no symptoms and could be spreading it without realising it. We want to identify as many positive cases as possible, especially those who may not have any symptoms and are unknowingly transmitting the virus.

As a result, we are offering tests to staff and students who attend certain schools and colleges and to their families.

We will ask anyone who tests positive to stay at home for 10 days and self-isolate, to help break the chain of infection.

This is vitally important to stop COVID-19 from spreading in the community, particularly to people who could become very sick if they catch the virus.

Testing is one of the ways we can stop the spread of COVID-19, but we continue to urge everyone to remember; hands, face, space. That means washing your hands regularly, wearing a face covering in enclosed public places and keeping your distance from people who aren't in our household.

What type of tests are being offered as part of this initiative?

PCR testing is being used (swab tests that are sent to a lab for processing), with people accessing this via either Mobile Testing Units deployed in their area or through home testing kits.

Does this mean all secondary school and college aged students in these areas will be tested?

We want to make sure as many young people as possible in these areas get tested. Extra Mobile Testing Units are being set up in these areas to make this easier.

Whilst tests are not compulsory, we strongly urge every student, parent and school and college staff in these areas to come forward as the more people who are tested, the better able we are to contain the virus.

If we can break the chain of infections in this way we can help reduce the number of COVID-19 cases, limit the number of people who might fall very ill, and protect the NHS.

Should children/students return to their place of education before they get their test result?

Yes. As long as they have no symptoms, pupils and students who have been tested should continue to attend their place of education while awaiting the result of their test.

Will teachers be testing pupils in schools?

No. The Mobile Testing Units will be set up in or near schools and colleges and they will be run by NHS Test and Trace.

I live in one of the areas but no-one in my family has any symptoms – do we need to get tested?

Yes. If you have secondary school or college-aged students in your family then we would like every member of your family to be tested whether or not they have symptoms.

How can I access testing through the national testing web portal?

As part of this testing programme in North East London, Kent and Essex people who are asymptomatic – not showing any symptoms such as a cough, temperature or loss of taste and smell – can book a test via the national testing website.

On the website, when prompted you should select:

- “no” to being an essential worker,
- “no” to having symptoms, and
- “no” to being part of a trial or pilot.
- Then select “My local council or health protection team has asked me (or someone I live with) to get a test, even though I do not have symptoms”

Selecting these options will allow you to book to access a COVID-19 test.

What if I test negative?

Anyone who tests negative does not need to self-isolate.

You should continue to remember; hands, face, space. That means washing your hands regularly, wearing a face covering in enclosed public places and keeping our distance from people who aren't in our household.

What should I do if I test positive?

If you have received a positive test result, have symptoms of COVID-19, or have been told you are a contact with someone who has, self-isolation is the only way to guarantee you won't pass COVID-19 to others.

If you are told to isolate, you should go home and start self-isolating straight away.

Self-isolation is one of the most important things we can do to help stop the spread of the virus and protect our friends and family, our community and the NHS.

What should I do if I need financial or other practical support?

Ask your employer, friends and family for help to access the things you will need while staying at home. More information on [accessing food and essential supplies](#) is available.

Check if your neighbourhood or local community has a volunteer system that could help bring you supplies or provide other support. Ask friends or family to drop off anything you need or order supplies online or by phone, making sure these are left outside your home for you to collect.

Tell your employer if you cannot work while you're self-isolating. They should tell you if you're covered by their sick leave or special leave policy. If you cannot get sick pay from your employer, you might be able to get Statutory Sick Pay or another type of financial support.

If you're asked to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace and you're on a low income, unable to work from home and will lose income as a result, you may be entitled to a payment of £500 from your local authority under the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme.

Find out more on GOV.UK about [what to do if you're employed and cannot work](#).

Find out more on GOV.UK about [claiming financial support under the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme](#).

What if I need help with my mental or physical wellbeing while self-isolating?

Staying at home for a prolonged period can be difficult, frustrating and lonely for some people and that you or

other household members may feel low. It can be particularly challenging if you do not have much space or access to a garden.

Remember to take care of your mind as well as your body and get support if you need it. There are many sources of support and information, such as guidance on looking after your [mental health and wellbeing](#) and on [supporting children and young people](#).

Many people find it helpful to remind themselves why what they are doing is so important. By staying at home, you are helping to protect your friends and family, other people in your community and the NHS.

Things that you can do to help make staying at home easier:

- keep in touch with friends and family over the phone or through social media
- remember that physical exercise can be good for your wellbeing. Look for online classes or courses that can help you take light exercise in your home
- plan ahead and think about what you will need to be able to stay at home for the full duration
- ask your employer, friends and family for help to access the things you will need while staying at home
- think about and plan how you can get food and other supplies, such as medication, that you will need during this period
- check if your neighbourhood or local community has a volunteer system that could help bring you supplies or provide other support
- ask friends or family to drop off anything you need or order supplies online or by phone, making sure these are left outside your home for you to collect
- think about things you can do during your time at home such as cooking, reading, online learning and watching films