

Coronavirus testing FAQs

Please see below Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on coronavirus testing.

NB: Where regular testing is in place in a workplace - or where there is an outbreak - all colleagues are expected to participate in the testing process.

1. When would I have a test?

a. Individual Tests

Individual tests are available for anyone who has symptoms of Coronavirus or who has been asked to get a test. If you have symptoms it is important to self-isolate and arrange to get a test. The main symptoms are:

- a high temperature
- a new, continuous cough
- a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste

You can read more and book a test [here](#)

b. Management Referral Testing

This type of testing is used when there is a potential or confirmed outbreak in a service or location. An outbreak is where two or more people have tested positive within 14 days. Managers can refer their service (registered care and supported living) for tests. This applies whether or not a person has symptoms and covers both people we support and colleagues. You can refer your service for tests [here](#).

c. Regular scheduled testing for Registered care homes (England)

This type of testing helps identify colleagues and people we support who may not have symptoms but are still able to pass the virus on.

Regular scheduled testing has now been introduced for Registered Care homes and also in some of our other services. Registered care home managers and other relevant managers should have been contacted by the DHSC and been given a unique identifying number to enable them to order the tests. If any manager has not received their unique identifying number they should follow [this link](#).

Tests can then be [ordered here](#).

Please note – there have been some admin issues with the process which we anticipate will be resolved shortly. It is likely the testing will be broadened to other services in time – we will keep colleagues updated on this.

2. What types of Covid tests are available?

- **Polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests** - check for the genetic material (RNA) of the virus in the sample. You send a throat and nose swab for processing at a lab and usually get the results in around 48 hours.
- **Lateral flow device (LFD) tests** - which detect proteins called 'antigens' produced by the virus. They give rapid results without the need for a lab within 30 minutes of the test.

- **Antibody tests** - these tests act as a confirmation that someone has had coronavirus and must not lead to a change in practice. There is no clear evidence that people who have had coronavirus cannot be infected again. These tests are not currently widely offered or used.

3. What is Test and Trace?

The NHS Test and Trace service:

- ensures that anyone who develops symptoms of coronavirus can quickly be tested to find out if they have the virus, and also includes targeted asymptomatic testing of NHS and social care staff and care home residents
- helps trace close recent contacts of anyone who tests positive for coronavirus and, if necessary, notifies them that they must self-isolate at home to help stop the spread of the virus

If you are contacted by Test and Trace (or a local Public health authority) and told to self-isolate – you must follow these instructions and can be fined if you don't.

If you work in a service and the person you have been in contact with is one of your colleagues or a person we support – and you were wearing full PPE – you are exempt from these requirements. Please make sure the contact tracer you speak to is aware of this. You can escalate this to your manager if there is an issue.

4. Should I use a Coronavirus tracing app?

England, Northern Ireland and Wales have launched contact tracing apps. We would like as many of our colleagues as possible to download the app relevant to the country they live or work in. It will play a significant role in helping the UK control the transition of the virus and is in all of our interests.

Colleagues using the App and wearing full PPE in services have been asked to turn off their Bluetooth when they are working as this activity is exempt. Their Bluetooth should be re-enabled when colleagues leave the service or accompany a person we support in the community.

[England & Wales app](#)
[NI app](#)

5. About individual tests (booked independently by you)

a) How do I book a test?

You can book either a test that will be couriered to you and collected, or you can go to a drive in or walk through test site. You can read more and book a test [here](#)

b) What ID or authorisation will I need if I go to a test site

If you've booked a test at a test site location, you will need verification of your test appointment. This will be sent to you via text or email (or both). Show this when you arrive for your test. You also need to take a mask.

c) How does the test work?

This will be explained as you go through the registration process. You will normally need to self-administer the test. There are people on hand to help you if required.

d) How and when do I get the results?

This will vary depending on the test option you select. You will normally receive a text or email with your results within a specified timeframe. This will be made clear to you when you book and undertake the test. When cases are high, there may be some delays to results due to lab capacity.

e) Do I need to notify Mencap of the outcome of a test?

If you arrange a test please record your outcome – positive or negative – on MyView as a matter of urgency. The purpose of the testing is to protect your colleagues and people we support, and to enable you to return to work safely as soon as possible. Recording your test outcome ASAP means that we can spot an outbreak quickly and take urgent action to keep everyone safe.

Whilst we can't compel colleagues to tell us the outcome of an individual test – we hope everyone will do right thing here.

If you are receiving payment from Mencap for a period of self-isolation and unreasonably refuse to notify us of the outcome of a test, we reserve the right to review any payment for your period of self-isolation.

f) Will Mencap pay my expenses if I need to travel to have a test?

Employees can claim expenses for any travel required to get a test, in line with our travel policy. We will only pay for any travel relating to a test that you are getting – please do not claim if you are just driving a member of your household to get a test.

g) Would Mencap pay expenses if a member of my household drives me to the test site?

Yes, you can claim expenses in these circumstances in line with our travel policy.

h) Is travelling to a test counted as working hours and will I get paid?

Yes, these hours will be paid at your normal hourly rate

i) Can I be forced to take an individual test?

No, we can't force you to get an individual test (though we do expect you to take part in regular testing in your service). Testing is crucial if we are to get the virus under control. We hope that all our colleagues understand that testing is in the interests not just of our colleagues and the people we support – but our wider families and other people we love.

If you are receiving payment from Mencap for a period of self-isolation and unreasonably refuse a test, we may review the payment for your period of self-isolation.

6. Regular scheduled testing in our services

a) How often are colleagues in services be tested?

If you work in a registered care home (and in some other face to face services), regular testing is in place. This happens once a week but this is increased to daily in services where there is an outbreak

b) Do I have to take part in regular testing in my workplace?

We expect all colleagues to take part in regular/scheduled testing where it is in place in our face to face services. Testing can stop people becoming seriously ill or dying but is only completely effective if everyone participates. If you have any concerns or worries about the testing process – please speak to your manager urgently and hopefully your concerns can be resolved.

c) What type of tests are used in the workplace?

Both PCR and LFD tests are used in services. Speak to your manager to understand what is used and when in your own service.

7. What happens if I test positive?

You will need to follow the self-isolation guidelines and isolate for 10 days from the date of the test. If this means you cannot work – you will be paid for this time in line with the Coronavirus policy.

If you are worried about the result then do talk to your manager and our Employee Assistance Programme, Care First, can support you with any concerns you may have. They can be contacted on 0800 015 5630.

8. Are there different rules around self-isolation for testing? For example – if I had a test which was negative but live with a person who is symptomatic – should I still adhere to the 14-day rule?

If you are tested and this is negative but another person in your household has not been tested and their symptoms continue – then the self-isolation rules continue to apply, as they could still infect you.

9. A person we support has symptoms, can support workers based at that service be tested as a result?

Yes, if referred through the management referral process outlined in Q1.

10. I am worried about taking a test, what should I do?

We know that tests can be a concern to some people. Talk any concerns through with your manager or colleagues. Our Employee Assistance Programme, Care first, can also support you with any concerns you may have. They can be contacted on 0800 015 5630.

11. Are the arrangements the same in Northern Ireland and Wales?

Arrangements in Northern Ireland and Wales may differ in some respects to the above, these differences are detailed in the following links:

- [Northern Ireland](#)
- [Wales](#)

12. Are there resources I can read about the different types of testing for social care?

You can read the Government guidance on social care testing [here](#).