



Department
of Health &
Social Care



*From the Chief Medical Officer & Chief Scientific Adviser
Professor Chris Whitty CB FMedSci
& the National Medical Director of NHS England
Professor Stephen Powis*

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

Victoria Street London
SW1H 0EU
www.gov.uk/

09 November 2020

Dear Mr Hunt

ASYMPTOMATIC NHS STAFF TESTING

Further to our letter of 3rd November, we are 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, we are pleased to confirm that 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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'C Whitty', written in a cursive style.

PROFESSOR CHRIS WHITTY
CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER AND DHSC CHIEF SCIENTIFIC ADVISER.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S Powis', written in a cursive style.

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