

The Government has outlined its testing strategy, which includes giving access to lateral flow testing for critical workers that must leave home for work. HMCTS has been working closely with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) to explore a suitable model for making tests available across our estate, thus supporting the national public health imperative to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

### **Background to Lateral Flow Testing (LFT)**

We currently have on-site testing pilots at Manchester Civil Justice Centre and Southwark Crown Court, where there have been no positive results to date. We have also been invited to participate in DHSC's pilot of home testing which will cover five further court sites. The five sites were selected based on the historic data of prevalence of Covid cases, footfall in these locations and Crown Courts are considered high priority in the HMCTS recovery plans. These pilots will help to inform our future plans for workplace testing.

It is acknowledged that asymptomatic testing may increase rather than decrease disruption from positive cases, however the overall public health benefit of greater testing might outweigh this. Testing will supplement our existing Covid secure measures, provide additional reassurance to staff and court users and help us identify asymptomatic people who need to self-isolate who would not otherwise be identified.

### **Home Testing**

Snaresbrook Crown Court and Croydon Combined Court have been identified as appropriate sites to take part in the home testing pilot, which will last for a duration of five weeks. Following the pilot period, an evaluation will take place to determine the most appropriate testing model for HMCTS.

Home testing will allow court users to test themselves before coming to court, meaning those who are asymptomatic but test positive can follow NHS advice and not come to court. This will help to keep courts and tribunals safe by reducing the risk of exposure/transmission.

Testing will be voluntary. We're proposing to offer staff, judiciary, contractors, jurors, professional court users – including legal professionals – self-administered test kits to be used at home. Each box will include seven tests that will enable two tests a week to be taken for a three-and-a-half-week period.

The tests detect the presence or absence of coronavirus by applying a swab or saliva sample to the device's absorbent pad. The sample runs along the surface of the pad, showing at the end a visual positive or negative result dependent on the presence of the virus.

Once the test gives a result, individuals are expected to register their results via NHS Test and Trace.

If the test gives a positive result, the court user will be required to follow [NHS advice on self-isolating](#).

If the test is negative, they can carry on as normal.

Full guidance is provided with the kit. The kits will be available for collection in person from a designated collection point within the court.

LFT detects whether the viral load for Covid is high enough to identify whether an individual is likely to be infectious. The result of the test is valid at the point in time that the test is taken. If the result is negative, then the viral load is not indicative of an individual being infectious. In the event of a positive result, individuals are required to self-isolate in accordance with the latest government guidelines before they can return to usual activities in line with government guidance.

### **Go-Live**

We plan to go-live with this testing arrangement with effect from Monday, 8 March 2021.

We will provide a further update with specific detail regarding how the home testing model will operate within our court and the start date of the pilot.