**Why have I been asked to have a test?**

COVID-19 is a virus which affects people in different ways. Some people can become extremely ill while others can have the virus but show no symptoms at all and then unknowingly pass the virus on to others (known as ‘asymptomatic’). New technology has continued to be developed and move at pace and rapid lateral flow antigen tests have now launched as part of the Government’s targeted testing plan.

In Salford, we are one of the many localities to begin rapid targeted testing using lateral flow antigen tests. These tests can be used to test a higher number of asymptomatic people to help us identify people who have the virus but don’t know it. We can then advise them and their close contacts to self-isolate, which breaks the chains of transmission and stops COVID-19 spreading.

We are targeting our testing towards specific groups of people who are most at risk of exposure to the virus because of the employment sector they work in or their workplace and who, if they had COVID-19 without realising, would be at higher risk of spreading it to work colleagues or the general public.

We want to protect our workforce and the people we serve as much as possible so, in the coming weeks, we have identified a number of ‘frontline’ staff groups to focus the testing on whose roles require them to be in close contact with colleagues and members of the public. If your organisation has been identified as one of our target groups, we encourage you and your frontline staff members to be tested twice within every 7 day period, allowing where possible 3 days between tests.

All testing is voluntary, but we know up to one third of people who test positive for coronavirus have no symptoms at all (asymptomatic) and can therefore spread it unknowingly. That is why the testing is so important. By taking the personal responsibility to find out if you have COVID-19 and taking the right action to self-isolate, you will not only be protecting your own colleagues and your family members, but you will be helping the people of Salford go about their daily lives with a reduced risk of catching COVID-19.

**What is a lateral flow antigen test?**

Lateral flow antigen tests are a new kind of technology that can be used to test a higher proportion of asymptomatic people (no symptoms), better enabling us to identify and isolate more COVID-19 cases and to break the chains of transmission.

It is a nose and throat swab which you will do yourself. You will be given full instructions, but you simply swab the back of your throat and nose for 10-15 seconds each, and then pass over to the testing team who will process the result.

Once you’ve done your test, you can leave the testing centre and you will be contacted via a text, email or app message to confirm your result. If you choose to volunteer for the lateral flow testing, you will need to register on an app using an email and/or mobile phone number to receive your lateral flow test result.

The Lateral Flow Test (LFT) detects the presence or absence of coronavirus by applying your swab 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, much like the way a pregnancy test works.

**Are lateral flow tests less accurate than PCR tests?**

Lateral flow and PCR tests have different characteristics and different uses. PCR tests - which are the nose and throat swabs done in the national and local walk in or drive in testing centres - have higher specificity and sensitivity but require a laboratory to process results and are therefore slower and more expensive. They are therefore well suited to specific use cases, such as those with COVID-19 symptoms.

While lateral flow tests have lower sensitivity than PCR, they deliver results far faster and do not require a lab, making them more scalable. As such, they allow us to test far larger numbers of asymptomatic people and get them their test result faster than with PCR technology. This will enable us to capture a large percentage of people who are infected and infectious, but have no symptoms and unaware of the fact that they are possibly spreading COVID-19.

We recommend repeating the test twice in a 7 day period, every three to four days, as this allows more infections to be detected.

**What if I refuse to be tested?**

All testing is voluntary, however, we hope as many frontline staff working for our targeted partner organisations as possible will recognise the benefits to testing and will want to play a role in reducing the spread of COVID-19 across our city and help protect their colleagues and service users.

**What if I test negative?**

If your test result is negative, you don’t need to self-isolate (unless you develop symptoms of COVID-19, are a contact of a positive case or otherwise indicated).

However, the lateral flow antigen test cannot detect very low levels of COVID-19, so if you have only recently been infected or are in the incubation period, you may test negative. Therefore you must continue to follow the social distancing guidance by wearing a face covering, sanitising your hands, staying 2m apart from others and we recommend that you repeat the test twice a week.

**How long does a negative test last?**

If your test result is negative, it is likely that you were not infectious when the test was done. We recommend repeating the test twice a week, every three to four days, as this allows more infections to be detected.

**What if I test positive?**

You’ll need to have a follow-up test on the same day (or as soon as possible). You will be given instructions on what to do and need to book your follow up test through the Spirit of Salford helpline, via 0800 952 1000. Your test will be done at our local facility, [Winders Way COVID-19 Testing Site](https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2Fmaps%2Fsearch%2FWinders%2BWay%2C%2BOff%2BFrederick%2BRoad%2C%2BSalford%2BM6%2B6AR%2F%4053.4910233%2C-2.2822185%2C15.5z&data=04%7C01%7C%7Ca29b960eca24475ccb2708d892247176%7C68c00060d80e40a5b83f3b8a5bc570b5%7C0%7C0%7C637420032522092552%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=Z8FXs9UZvEUYZOasqyelJ1Hs7BimQa57CaIot6Oh7Wk%3D&reserved=0), off Frederick Road, M6 6AR. In the event we have limited / no capacity at Winders Way, you will be directed to [book a test via the national portal](https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test) where you should click the box that you were asked to “book a test by the council or by public health”.

We strongly advise you to have a follow-up test to confirm your positive result. A key part of the testing process is NHS Test and Trace, informing everyone you’ve been in close contact with that they need to self-isolate. ‘Close contact’ means having face-to-face contact with someone less than a metre away (even if a face covering is worn) or being within 2 metres of an infected person for 15 minutes or more. Getting a confirmatory test will make sure this happens quickly so we stop the virus spread.

You must self-isolate immediately for 10 days and everyone in your household must self-isolate for 10 days. You should only leave home for your follow-up test.

If you test positive, you are advised to:

* Go home immediately, wearing a face covering
* Wherever possible you should travel home in your own vehicle or by walking or cycling
* If that’s not possible, you should arrange for a member of your household to pick you up
* Please avoid public transport or a taxi service. If you have no other option, arrange for a taxi to take you home preferably equipped with a protective screen between yourself and the driver
* Your close contacts that are not showing COVID-19 symptoms should go home as they would normally do. If your contact develops symptoms, they should follow the same travel advice as above (fever, a new continuous cough or a change/loss to sense of smell/taste)
* It is really important you follow Government guidance on hygiene, including sanitising your hands throughout your time at a testing site and before you leave

**Who will be informed if I have a positive test?**

You will be given your test result via a text, email or app message. Public Health England and the NHS Test and Trace service will also be informed so they can offer advice on how to self-isolate as well as help identify who you’ve been in close contact with so they can also be advised to self-isolate and stop the spread of the virus.

**What will happen to my information?**

You will book your appointment via a local app. Information on how we use your data is here: <https://www.salford.gov.uk/gdpr>

Your test registration and result will be linked to the national app and you can access the Data Privacy Notice for this app via [www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-testing-privacy-information/testing-for-coronavirus-privacy-information-quick-read--2](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-testing-privacy-information/testing-for-coronavirus-privacy-information-quick-read--2)

**How often am I expected to have a test?**

Best practice is twice within any 7 day period, allowing where possible 3 days between tests, as this allows more infections to be detected.

**Do I need to book an appointment for a test?**

Yes, you will need to book an appointment via a local booking app which can be found via the following link: <https://contactus.salford.gov.uk/?formtype=BOOK_LFT>

**Is this linked to the national portal?**

Yes, your registration and test result will be linked to the national portal.

**Where are the sites?**

Salford City Council targeted staff groups will be able to access lateral flow testing at the Civic Centre and Turnpike House. In addition, testing sites will be opening across Salford and we aim to have them as evenly spread across the city as possible. The first site to open will be at Eccles Old Town hall, followed by Beesley Green Community Centre and Wardley Community Centre, with more to open shortly.

**What times are the tests available?**

To be confirmed.

**Do I have to go to an allocated site?**

Staff can book any of the neighbourhood sites currently available in Salford. More sites are scheduled to become available in the coming weeks.

**How long will it take to do the test at the testing site?**

We expect you to be on site for no more than 20 minutes. Once you’ve had your test, you do not need to wait in the testing area for your result, it will be sent to you by text message.

**What if I am displaying symptoms? Can I still go to one of the sites?**

No. This testing is only for people who **do not** have symptoms. Please do not go to one of these test sites if you have symptoms or feel unwell.

If you do feel unwell or have COVID symptoms, you should book a test through the Spirit of Salford helpline, via 0800 952 1000. Your test will be done at our local facility, [Winders Way COVID-19 Testing Site](https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2Fmaps%2Fsearch%2FWinders%2BWay%2C%2BOff%2BFrederick%2BRoad%2C%2BSalford%2BM6%2B6AR%2F%4053.4910233%2C-2.2822185%2C15.5z&data=04%7C01%7C%7Ca29b960eca24475ccb2708d892247176%7C68c00060d80e40a5b83f3b8a5bc570b5%7C0%7C0%7C637420032522092552%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=Z8FXs9UZvEUYZOasqyelJ1Hs7BimQa57CaIot6Oh7Wk%3D&reserved=0), off Frederick Road, M6 6AR. In the event we have limited / no capacity at Winders Way, you will be directed to [book a test via the national portal](https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test) where you should click the box that you were asked to “book a test by the council or by public health”. Please do not enter a test site if you have symptoms.

**Will PPE be provided to me when I arrive for a test?**

Everyone should wear a face covering when indoors. Should you forget your own face covering, we will have a small number to hand out.

**Does the current PPE that we are using in the workplace change as a result of targeted testing?**

No

**Can my family have a test?**

This testing is for staff only at present.

**Are the service users in our care able to have tests?**

This rapid targeted testing is for staff only at present. A number of other testing programmes are running for different groups within Salford.

**What about people who are on leave? Will a list of sites be published for them to attend an alternative site?**

Salford City Council targeted staff groups will be able to access lateral flow testing at the Civic Centre and Turnpike House. In addition, testing sites will be opening across Salford and we aim to have them as evenly spread across the city as possible. The first site to open will be at Eccles Old Town hall, followed by Beesley Green Community Centre and Wardley Community Centre, with more to open shortly.

**If I am pregnant, can I still have a test?**

Yes

**I am clinically extremely vulnerable, should I be having these tests?**

There is no harm in having a test when you are clinically extremely vulnerable. However, if you are shielding, you may decide that the risk of coming to a test site outweighs the benefit of being tested. Lateral flow tests are also only for frontline staff who are interacting with the public so, if you are shielding, we would assume you are not currently in a public-facing role.

**Can people who have been isolating for, say, 7 days because a child is positive but they don’t have symptoms go for a test and go to work if they are negative?**

No. If you are isolating because you are a close contact of someone who is positive, you need to self-isolate for 10 days. This is because it can take up to 10 days before symptoms start to appear, so we cannot risk someone coming to the test centre who may potentially be positive.

**If an employee has isolated for 14 days, do they need to attend a test centre and produce a negative test before returning to work?**

No

**Do I need another risk assessment as I am not being tested?**

No. All testing is voluntary and being offered as a way to keep you and those you work with, or are in contact with, safe. If we testing and find people who are positive but not showing any symptoms, it stops the spread of the virus as that person can then self-isolate.

**Who is responsible for the risk assessments at the testing sites?**

Salford City Council will be responsible for the risk assessments on the council sites

**Are there any costs to my service for the tests?**

No

**Do I get paid for going for a test?**

Tests should be done within normal working times and you need to arrange with your manager to be released to attend while maintaining service delivery.

If you would prefer to conduct a test within your own time you can also do so.