

Test and Protect Management Guidance / Contingency planning

Test and Protect is the Scottish Government led strategy which is aimed at breaking the chains of transmission of COVID-19 in the community.

The approach, now known as Test and Protect, will continue to ask people who have symptoms of the disease to self-isolate for 7 days, and members of their household need to self-isolate for 14 days. The NHS will now also be asking people who do not have symptoms but have been in close contact with someone who has been confirmed by testing to have the virus to self-isolate for 14 days. If they later start to develop symptoms, the process will begin again to test, trace, isolate and support any close contacts they have had whilst in the isolation period.

It is not known how long Test and Protect will be in place, however the planning assumption is that it will be for **the foreseeable future, or until a vaccination programme is delivered**. Managers will need to consider the impact Test and Protect may have on their own workforce as part of their ongoing resilience efforts locally.

How does it work

Everyone who tests positive for COVID-19 will be contacted by the local contact tracing team so that other close contacts can be identified. These close contacts will be asked to self-isolate for 14 days.

A close contact is someone who has been physically close enough to the confirmed person for a long enough period of time (15 minutes or longer) that they may have had the virus transmitted to them. The risk of the virus being transmitted is higher the closer the contact, the greater the exposure to respiratory droplets (for example from coughing), and the longer the duration of the contact.

It will be important that everyone, and especially the people identified as close contacts, remain in self-isolation for the full length of time they are asked to.

People in the household of individuals who are self-isolating but do not have symptoms will not be asked to self-isolate along with them, unless they have also been in close contact with the person who is a confirmed case, and in which case they will have also been informed by the NHS.

Implications for managers

It is possible that a member of your team will be contacted by the NHS with the message that they required to self-isolate for 14 days because they have been in close contact with someone who tested positive. They will receive an email or text with a leaflet about self-isolation. Managers can ask for a copy of the email or text to validate their 14 days absence request.

If the member of staff is working from home, they should continue to do so as long as they feel well.

If the member of staff is working in an office, school, depot etc, they will immediately inform their manager and arrange to leave their place of work. If possible, they should work from home if they feel well. If their role is not suitable for home working they can be offered appropriate alternative work that can be done from home, or if this is not appropriate or suitable they will get 14 days paid special leave.

If the member of staff does not develop any symptoms, they can should return to work after 14 days.

If the member of staff does develop symptoms, absence needs to be recorded as sick leave and they will need to get tested as soon as possible. Please find testing guidance [here](#). HR will need to be informed of the test result.

If the test is positive, the NHS will contact all the colleagues this person has been in close contact with. In that case it is possible that more members of the team will have to self-isolate for 14 days. It is therefore important that managers think about contingency plans to cover this scenarios – see table below

Scenarios:	Self-isolation of the member of staff following NHS advice:	Develop symptoms and test positive for COVID case in the team:	Contingency plan?
Staff are working from home	Self-isolation of a member of staff (asymptomatic) for 14 days. Member of staff can continue to work from home.	Member of staff is required to self-isolate for 7 days from onset of symptom and report sick.	Manager may be required to arrange cover for period of sickness – unlikely contingency plan is necessary.
Staff are working in or from a council base, ie office, depot or school	Self-isolation of a member of staff (asymptomatic) for 14 days. Member of staff works from home if possible or gets paid special leave.	<p>If one team member tests positive that member of staff is required to self-isolate for 7 days and report sick.</p> <p>The NHS will contact all colleagues in the team who have been in close contact with this person. It is possible that colleagues have to self-isolate for 14 days. This could affect more members of the team</p>	Contingency plan necessary.

Possible contingency plans:

- The service delivered by the team can stop for 14 days without significant impact on service users. In that case no immediate action necessary and wait for staff to return after self-isolation.
- The service delivered by the team can be reduced without significant impact on service users. Need to ensure staff from other parts of the service/organisation are available to step in if required.
- The service needs to continue 100%. Need to ensure immediate backup is available.

Please speak to your line manager and HR Business Partner if you believe an enhanced contingency plan needs to be in place for your team.

Our Resource and Deployment team will also be able to help to deploy staff into critical functions if no solution can be found within the Service. Telephone **01463 702820**.

The HR helpline can be contacted for any COVID-19 related questions and process testing-referrals. Telephone **01349 886610**.

Please remember that the Test and Protect scheme is expected to be in place for the foreseeable future, or until a vaccination programme is rolled out. This means that your team could be affected more than once.