# Prioritisation Protocol for staff testing for COVID-19

Access to staff testing to confirm the presence of COVID-19 is available to staff working within the Oxfordshire Health and social care system. There have been some limitations to the supply of testing reagent and staff testing is therefore **authorised on a priority basis** to ensure that it does not jeopardise clinical care for patients and to ensure the most appropriate use of this resource **for those in frontline roles within the health and social care system**.

The intended benefit to services through use of this protocol is to enable self-isolating members of staff to have peace of mind and to return to work if obtaining a negative test (or a negative test on a family member or cohabitee where they consent and where their symptoms have led to the staff member's self-isolation).

Testing for staff in the base (Churchill hospital) and at home (on rare occasions when required) is provided by the Community testing Team employed by Oxford Health.

These criteria will be applied to staff working in General Practice in Oxfordshire, Oxford Health, Oxfordshire County Council, NRS, Community Pharmacy, Domiciliary care and nursing/residential care home staff within Oxfordshire, Oxford University Hospitals and South-Central Ambulance Service in Oxfordshire.

In line with national guidance, testing is expected to take place between days 2 and 4 of symptom onset.

1.  **Organisational prioritisation**

     Staff roles will be prioritised for testing based on the following priorities:
     a) A role which is critical to the saving of life or limb, in any setting
     b) Those involved in caring for the unwell and housebound, where absence of a test result prevents this role being delivered (i.e. tests will not be prioritised for staff who can work equally as effectively whilst in isolation)
     c) Delivery of routine frontline health and care services, taking into account staffing levels and risk to service delivery where the absence of staff will fundamentally affect the ability for the wider health and social care system to function

2.  **Criteria and timing of referrals**

Testing for staff is now available for those in key roles as staff members or their household contacts who fall into one of the 3 groups below:

1.  Group 1: within days 2- 4 of a staff member self-isolating with a fever and/or new persistent cough (testing for the staff member)

2. Group 2: within the first 2- 4 days of a staff member's household contact self-isolating with a fever and/or new persistent cough (testing for the household contact)
3. Group 3: within the first 2-4 days of a staff member developing a fever and/or new persistent cough while self-isolating with a known COVID positive household contact (testing for the staff member)

It is critically important that staff pay particular attention to the date of onset of their symptoms as **there is a greater risk of returning a false negative result if the test is taken too soon.**

3. **Referral Process**

   **Referrals for testing should follow the following process;**
   a. **Where staff work for a large organisation with an occupational health department- Staff or line managers will refer themselves or staff members** who met these criteria **to their individual organisation's Occupational Health service.**
   b. **In the event that staff do not have an occupational health department** to support them, **they should self-refer to the email address below** or request that their line manager does so on their behalf in the event that they do not have an email address.
   c. **In the event that you do not have an email address** or line manager you can **speak to the community testing team on 01865 222890**. Please note that calls will be taken between 08:00 and 16:00 daily. There is no ability to leave messages.

   Where suitable arrangements exist within the organisation's Occupational health department to secure relevant tests etc, arrangements will be made to undertake this. **In the event that no such arrangements exist** the **individual/s will be referred to the Community Testing Team by emailing the** following address;

   **Ouh-tr.covid@nhs.net**

   Practice Managers, GP Federations (in the case of primary care visiting services) and those who are not supported by an occupational health department will refer directly to the Community Testing Team. In all cases, a direct line phone contact must be provided for the referring manager/line manager.

4. **Exceptions**

   Occupational Health Departments and the Community Swabbing Team reserve the right to consider individual cases outside these criteria where there is a compelling clinical or operational reason.  These will, however, be exceptional circumstances and may involve approval from Infectious Disease teams and/or Microbiology.

This service involves testing for 'active' COVID 19 using nasal and throat swabs and should not be confused with 'Antigen testing' which is yet to be available at scale across the NHS.