

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

DEPUTY LEADER

COVID-19 – TESTING POLICY

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To outline and seek approval for a new COVID-19 Testing policy which will support safe working during the COVID-19 outbreak. This policy formally sets out the process around the testing of employees and their household members during the COVID-19 outbreak.
- 1.2 An urgent decision is required to ensure the Council has formal arrangements in place to support the recent government's guidance on the use of local and regional staff testing arrangements.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 The council recognises the dedicated and committed response of its workforce and also its responsibility to keep the workforce safe and well as far as is reasonably practicable.
- 2.2 As part of keeping the workforce safe and well, a formal COVID-19 Testing policy has been developed to formalise the existing guidance. This will ensure that employees are clear about the circumstances in which they, and their household members, can be tested and which route is appropriate for their circumstances.
- 2.3 The policy will ensure that all employees are clear on their roles and responsibilities around testing. This will ensure that they, the wider workforce and community of North Lincolnshire are kept safe and well as far as is reasonably practicable.
- 2.4 The policy will robustly reflect the very latest information and guidance as the situation continues to evolve. This policy will be updated by way of delegated decision to ensure this in the future.

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 To approve the new COVID-19 Testing policy or;

- 3.2 To recommend amendments to the new COVID-19 Testing policy or;
- 3.3 To reject the new COVID-19 Testing policy.

4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

- 4.1 Approving the new COVID-19 Testing policy will provide assurance that the council has in place a clear and effective process for the testing of employees, and their household members. This will help support the workforce, the delivery of council services and ultimately the wider North Lincolnshire community. This policy will further ensure that there is immediate access to the most up to date information in one place with regards to testing for COVID-19.
- 4.2 Recommending any amendments to the new COVID-19 Testing policy will delay the provision of a formal policy on the process and responsibilities around testing during the COVID-19 outbreak.
- 4.3 Rejection of the new COVID-19 Testing policy will mean the council does not have adequate assurance by way of a formal policy on the process and responsibilities around testing during the COVID-19 outbreak.

5. FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (e.g. LEGAL, HR, PROPERTY, IT, COMMUNICATIONS etc.)

- 5.1 The new COVID-19 Testing policy will apply to all of the council's workforce during the COVID-19 outbreak.

6. OTHER RELEVANT IMPLICATIONS (e.g. CRIME AND DISORDER, EQUALITIES, COUNCIL PLAN, ENVIRONMENTAL, RISK etc.)

- 6.1 N/A

7. OUTCOMES OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IF APPLICABLE)

- 7.1 N/A

8. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION AND CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS DECLARED

- 8.1 The trade unions have seen and raised no issue with the current guidance in operation for COVID-19 testing.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 That the proposed formal COVID-19 Testing policy is approved.

DIRECTOR: BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Church Square House
30 – 40 High Street
Scunthorpe
North Lincolnshire
DN15 6NL

Author: Rebecca Stanford
Date: 28 May 2020

Background Papers used in the preparation of this report – None

Testing for coronavirus (COVID-19)

Principles.

We are committed to ensuring that employees have clear and accessible routes to coronavirus testing where they meet the eligibility criteria in order to:

- Ensure the safety and wellbeing of our workforce
- Provide assurance that robust processes for testing are in place to control transmission of the virus
- Facilitate the safe return to work from self-isolation in line with public health guidance to minimise the impact on workforce capacity and delivery of essential services.

As an employee, I will:

- Agree to have a test for COVID-19 if required at, either local or regional testing sites.
- Discuss the test results with my manager so that they can ensure my safety and that of others in the workplace.
- Co-operate with my manager to facilitate a safe return to work if I have had to self-isolate in line with government guidance.
- Follow all government and council [guidance](#) relating to COVID-19 to support my own wellbeing and that of the wider community.

As a manager, I will:

- Complete [testing referrals](#) as appropriate
- Discuss test results with employees to ensure their safety and that of others.
- Listen to employees and deal with any concerns they raise in a timely way.
- Follow all government and council [guidance](#) relating to COVID-19 to support employees' wellbeing and that of the wider community.
- Ensure all employee absence is correctly [reported](#), including testing and returns to work, so that there is an accurate picture of workforce resilience.
- Complete and adhere to risk assessments as required, both after testing and before employees return to workplaces, paying particular attention to employees within higher risk groups and measures required to mitigate the risks of false negative test results.

As an employer, we will:

- Provide the latest information on how you can access testing and how the outcome of testing affects your work.
- Maintain an oversight of the testing routes available to employees including making referrals through the Employer Referral Portal for regional testing.
- Communicate any changes to testing you need to be aware of in your work.
- Report any [RIDDOR incidents](#) due to cases of confirmed COVID-19 in line with HSE requirements.

Testing for coronavirus (COVID-19)

Process.

1. Accessing coronavirus testing

a) Testing for individuals with symptoms

- i. If a key worker or a member of their household is displaying any of the COVID-19 symptoms they must self-isolate in line with latest government guidance as set out in the [COVID-19 FAQs document](#) available on TOPdesk. Symptoms include a high temperature, a new, continuous cough or anosmia (loss of, or change in, taste or smell).
- ii. Employees must notify their line manager that they are self-isolating and a discussion must take place regarding suitability for testing. Wherever possible, testing is strongly advised where the following applies:
 - The employee is a key worker and they, or a member of their household, are **displaying COVID-19 symptoms**, and;
 - The individual is in the first **three days** of the start of COVID-19 symptoms, (ideally swab testing should take place within the first three days although it is considered effective up until day five).
- iii. The local testing service based at the North Lindsey College site in Scunthorpe is the preferred testing route for individuals displaying COVID-19 symptoms.
- iv. Line managers are responsible for making a referral by completing a [Staff Testing Referral Form](#) and submitting it to nlccg.nlnelstaffswabbing@nhs.net and copied to HRpolicyteam@northlincs.gov.uk. Managers should refer to detailed guidance on this process provided in *Appendix 1 - Guidance on testing for coronavirus*.
- v. Referrals made via this route will be prioritised for testing. For this reason, employees should be discouraged from self-referring for testing as this is likely to take longer for results to be obtained.
- vi. Managers must ensure that a [COVID-19 Notification](#) form is completed for any employee who is self-isolating which includes information on testing.

b) Testing for individuals without symptoms

- vii. If a key worker or a member of their household does not currently have symptoms but requires access to testing they can do so via the regional testing route, which is based at the Humber Bridge site in Hessle. If an employee lives closer to another regional site they may have the option to book an appointment at another location.
- viii. Line managers can request a referral by completing a [Request for COVID-19 testing via regional service form](#). HR will submit referrals to the regional testing service via the Employer Referral Portal. Forms submitted by 10.00am will be

Testing for coronavirus (COVID-19)

referred the same day. Any submissions after 10.00am will be referred the next day

- ix. Managers should refer to the more detailed guidance on this process provided in *Appendix 1 - Guidance on testing for coronavirus*.
- x. Referrals made via this route will be prioritised for testing. For this reason, employees should be discouraged from self-referring for testing as this is likely to take longer for results to be obtained.

2. Managing test results and fitness to work

- i. In most cases, only the individual who has been tested will receive their results. Therefore, employees are required to discuss test results with their line manager at the earliest opportunity in order to ensure that the council can meet its duty of care under health and safety legislation.
- ii. The safety and well-being of employees, their colleagues and clients/customers are paramount in determining an employee's fitness for work following testing. Managers must consider the latest government guidance as set out in the [COVID-19 FAQs document](#) at all times. Supplementary guidance on test results and fitness for work is provided in *Appendix 1 - Guidance on testing for coronavirus*.

a) Determining fitness for work: positive test results

- iii. Employees with positive results should complete self-isolation until 7 days (from first day of symptoms) are over in line with government guidance as follows:
 - Employee is **feeling well** after 7 days self-isolation: If clinical symptoms have improved and no fever for 48 hours (cough may be only persistent symptom left), the employee can return to work.
 - Employee is still **feeling unwell** after 7 days self-isolation: Must remain in isolation until clinical symptoms have improved and no fever for 48 hours (cough may be only persistent symptom left) before they can return to work.
- iv. If a household member tests positive, but the employee tests negative, they can return to work on day eight from the start of their symptoms if they feel well enough and have not had a fever for 48 hours.
- v. In line with the latest public health guidance, an employee or household member who has tested positive for COVID-19 during one episode of illness could reasonably be assumed to have at least medium-term immunity to the virus, so the employee/household do not need to self-isolate again for a further symptomatic episode of cough or fever in that person.
- vi. If another person in the household develops symptoms and they have not previously tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19), then they need to isolate

Testing for coronavirus (COVID-19)

along with all other members of the household except for the individual who previously tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19).

b) Determining fitness for work: negative test results

- vii. Employees with negative results should only return to work if they feel well enough to do so. There is a risk of false negatives as no test is 100% accurate. For this reason, current public health advice is that where an employee has symptoms of COVID-19 they should complete the full 7 days of self-isolation before returning to work even if the test result is negative.
- viii. If everyone with symptoms who was tested in the employee's household receive a negative result, the employee can return to work, providing they are well enough, have not had a fever for 48 hours **and** an individual risk assessment has been completed and documented. The manager must carry this out prior to the employee returning to work in order to determine whether the potential risks of false negative results can be mitigated. A [Return to Work Suitability Checklist](#) is available on TOPdesk to assist managers in doing this.

3. Reporting requirements

- i. Managers must use the [COVID-19 reporting forms](#) to provide updated information on testing, confirmed COVID-19 cases and fitness for work. Full details on reporting requirements are included in *Appendix 1 – Guidance on testing for coronavirus*.
- ii. HR will notify the Health and Safety Team of all cases where an employee has been reported as 'Confirmed COVID-19' as a result of positive test results.
- iii. The Health and Safety Team will be responsible for determining whether the case should be reported to the HSE in line with [BPS 4.5.1.F9 Guidance on RIDDOR reporting of COVID-19](#).

Version Control	
Author	HR Policy Team
Status	V0.1 Draft
Date approved	
Last updated	20 May 2020

Appendix 1 - Guidance on testing for coronavirus (COVID-19)

1. How can key workers and their household members access COVID-19 testing?



*The individual should be in the first **three days** of the start of COVID-19 symptoms at the time the swab is taken, although testing is considered effective up until day five.

2. How do we refer an employee or household member(s) displaying COVID-19 symptoms for testing?

Line managers must complete a [Staff Testing Referral Form](#) to request testing via the local testing service. When completing the form:

- State whether this is a referral because the employee is symptomatic or whether the employee has a member of their household that is symptomatic
- All staff member details must be completed for all referrals
- Details of person to be swabbed: Where the staff member is symptomatic, this must be the staff member's details. If it is a household member that is symptomatic then it is the household member's details that must be completed.
- Consent: The consent must be from the person to be swabbed, so if this is a household member it must be from them not the staff member. It must also be the person to be swabbed details that are added here for contact to be made.

Appendix 1 - Guidance on testing for coronavirus (COVID-19)

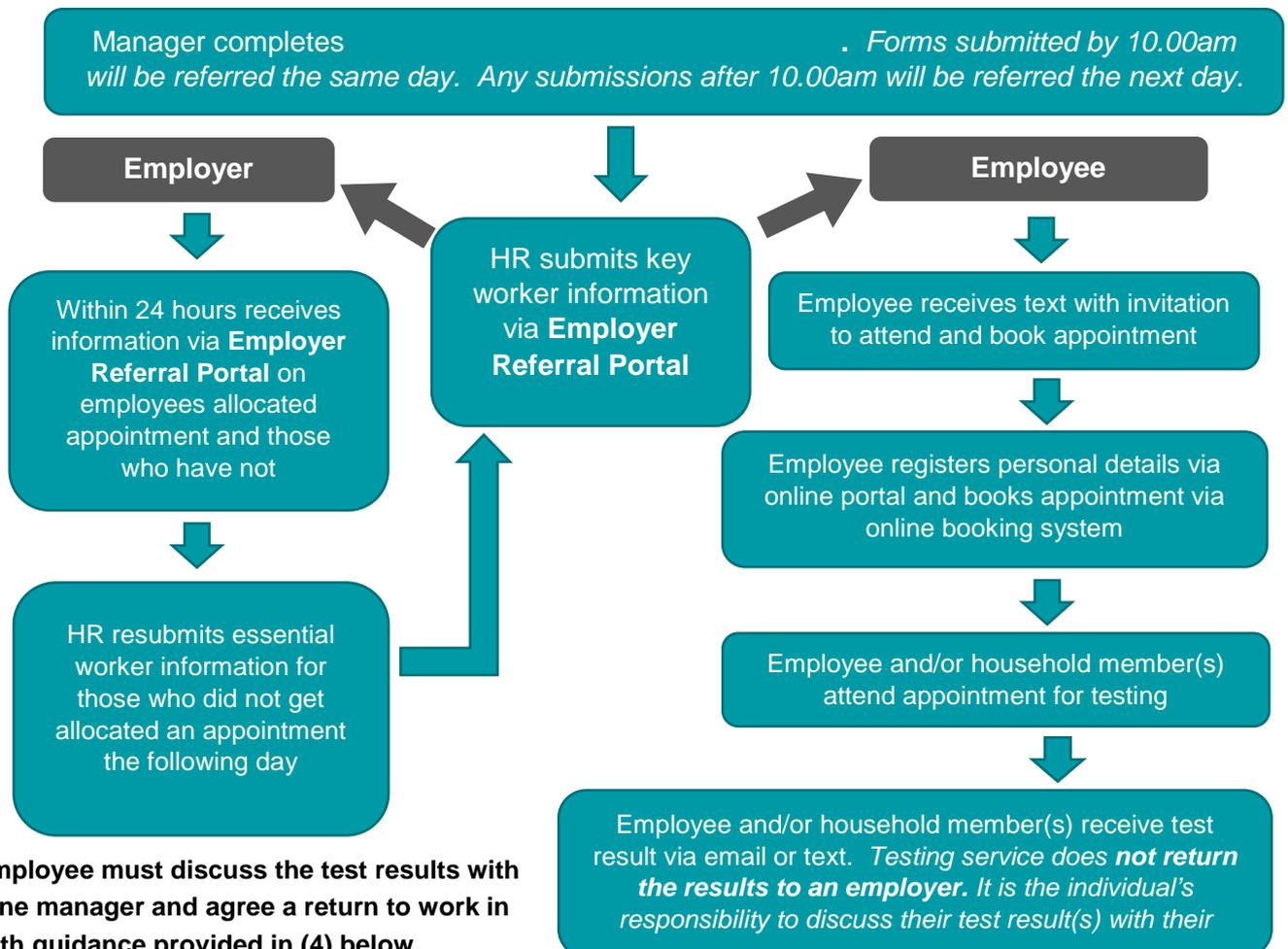
- The staff member will be contacted directly to arrange swabbing appointments. Where consent has been given (recorded on the referral form) result will be communicated to the line manager after the individual has been given their results.
- Once completed forms should be returned to nlccg.nlnelstaffswabbing@nhs.net and copied to hrpolicyteam@northlincs.gov.uk.

If the employee or household member meets the national criteria for swabbing, they will be invited to attend a drive through swabbing service. This means that the person to be swabbed must be able to drive themselves there or be driven by only someone that lives in their household. Staff cannot travel on foot, by taxi, bus or with anyone that lives outside of their household. If they are not able to travel then swabbing will not be possible via this route and the line manager should contact HR to refer for home testing via the Employer Referral Portal outlined in Section 3.

A person can only attend for swabbing via prior appointment. Anyone attending without an appointment will not be swabbed.

The employee must discuss the test results with their line manager and agree a return to work in line with guidance provided in (4) below.

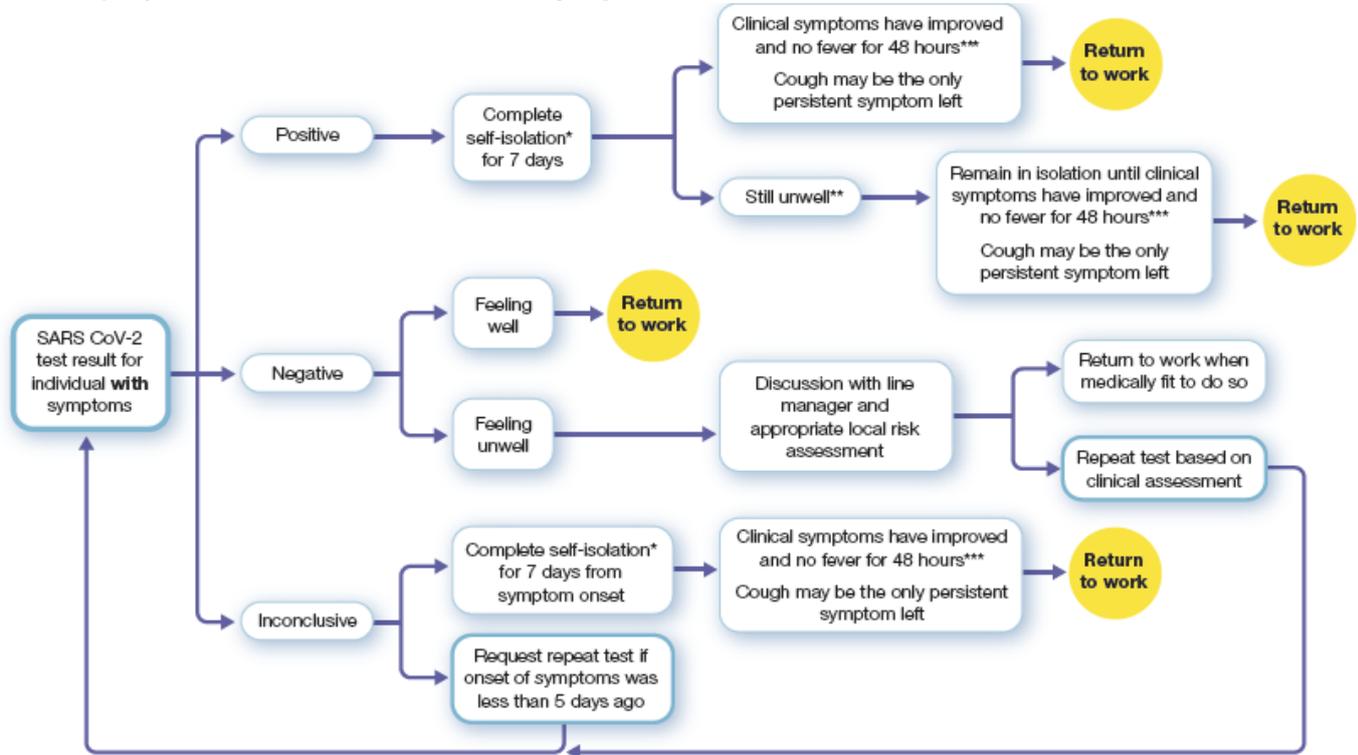
3. How do we refer an employee or household member(s) without symptoms for testing?



Appendix 1 - Guidance on testing for coronavirus (COVID-19)

4. Test results & fitness for work

For employees who have tested **with symptoms**:

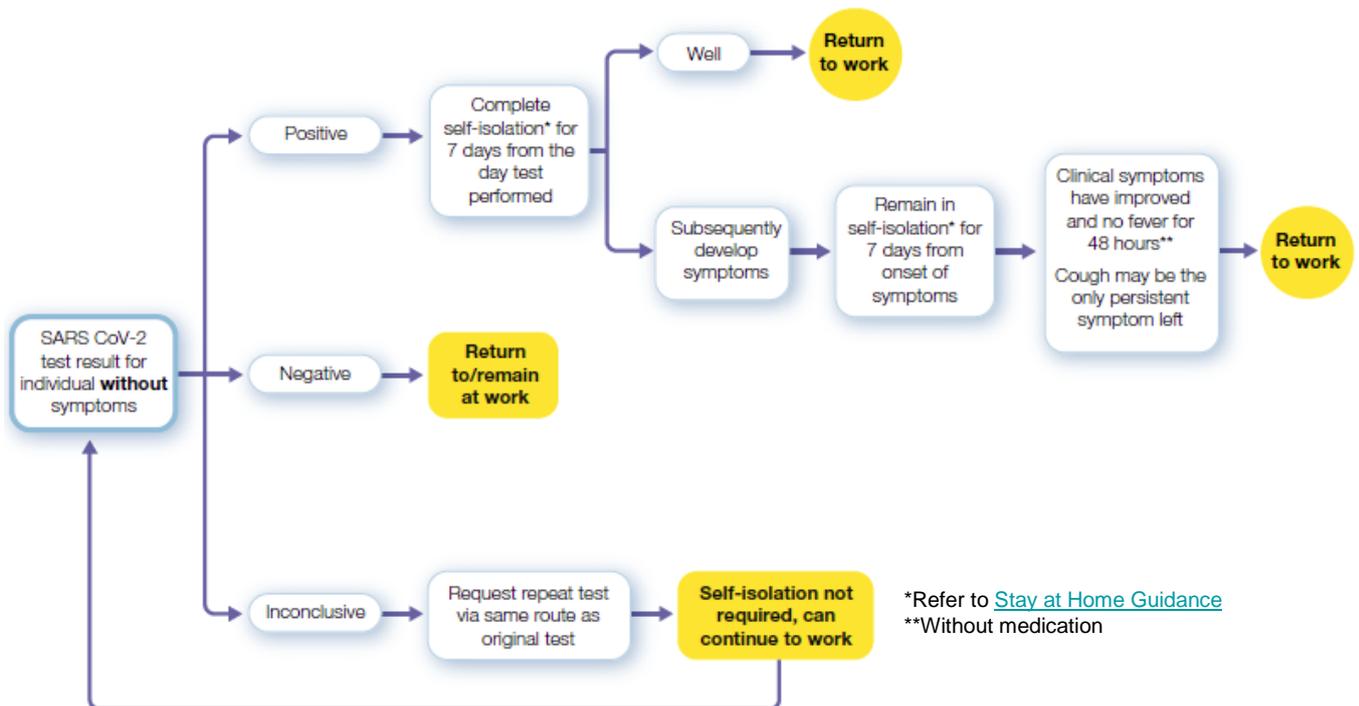


*Refer to [Stay at Home Guidance](#)

**Consider contacting the [NHS online coronavirus service](#), or in a medical emergency dial 999

***Without medication

For employees who have tested **without symptoms**:



*Refer to [Stay at Home Guidance](#)

**Without medication

Appendix 1 - Guidance on testing for coronavirus (COVID-19)

5. What is the manager required to report?

Managers are required to use the **COVID-19 reporting forms** to provide updated information on testing.

If the test is negative:

- If the employee is well and able to return to work, the line manager must complete a [COVID-19 Return to Work form](#)
- If the employee is feeling unwell and does not return to work, the manager should submit a further COVID-19 notification form providing updated details on the outcome of the test and the employee's current status. When the employee becomes medically fit to return to work, a [COVID-19 Return to Work form](#) must be completed.

If the test is positive:

- The manager should submit a further [COVID-19 Notification form](#) providing updated details on the outcome of the test and update the employee's current status to 'Confirmed COVID-19'.
- When the employee becomes medically fit for work, a [COVID-19 Return to Work form](#) must be completed.

Version Control	
Author	HR Policy Team
Status	V0.1 Draft
Date approved	
Last updated	20 May 2020