



Skipton House
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To: Regional Directors, Regional Medical
Directors and Regional Chief Nurses

29 October 2020

Following the recent announcement that the NHS is expanding testing of staff for COVID-19, I am writing to confirm the arrangements we will putting in place to support local systems.

Our approach is consistent with the DHSC's published testing prioritisation hierarchy dated 21 September, which can be accessed at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/allocation-of-covid-19-swab-tests-in-england/allocation-of-covid-19-swab-tests-in-england>.

The expanded testing programme will consist of:

- Regular weekly testing of all patient facing NHS staff within areas of high community infection rates. Currently these are **geographical areas designated by the government as very high risk (tier three)** for the period for which this designation remains in place.
- In other geographical areas, targeted testing of NHS staff will continue in trusts with high nosocomial rates **when recommended by local and regional infection prevention and control teams**, in line with our letter of 24 June.

Testing capacity will be provided locally by the NHS ('pillar 1') and where applicable by the government Test & Trace laboratories ('pillar 2'). In addition, new technology based on the testing of saliva is rapidly being introduced and we anticipate that this will become the predominant methodology used for staff testing programmes.

Local determination should be applied to identify the cohort of staff eligible for testing, in discussion with regional testing teams. As testing capacity expands, in addition to initial testing in acute trusts we intend to expand the programme to other settings including mental health trusts, community health trusts and primary care.

Testing programmes will be supported by regional testing teams who should be contacted for further information.

Thank you for your commitment to enable this expansion of NHS staff testing.

Yours sincerely

Professor Stephen Powis
National Medical Director

Ruth May
Chief Nursing Officer