

Coronavirus (Covid-19) testing – North East

A Government announcement has been made about the increase in testing capacity and that more people have been made eligible to book into the system.

Testing for Covid-19 is now available to people in the North East at a range of locations. Testing sites can be accessed by anyone who is an eligible essential worker, including health and social care staff only (including the independent and voluntary sectors).

Testing is available for:

- all eligible essential workers,
- anyone over 65 with symptoms
- anyone with symptoms whose work cannot be done from home (for example, construction workers, shop workers, emergency plumbers and delivery drivers)
- anyone who has symptoms of coronavirus that lives with those identified above

Testing process for essential workers in the North East

People should go through the process below to secure an appointment. This has been agreed by all health, care, and other organisations in the North East as a way to ensure that staff and the people they care for are offered the best advice and support.

NHS Trust staff can support us by continuing to access testing through their own organisation. Whilst there is a choice of other routes, the process for frontline testing at NHS trusts is now well established and we need all employees to continue following it so we can process the tests as quickly and efficiently as possible, without putting pressure on the national system aimed at other key care workers. This is in the best interests of managing the health and well-being of our population.

The national GOV.UK process allows a range of employer organisations with eligible key workers to submit lists of their employees who are self-isolating and are linked to identified critical functions, directly onto a national portal and facilitate access to on-line booking.

North East Commissioning Support Unit (NECS) are supporting the local health and care system in securing access to this portal and is able to undertake bookings on behalf of organisations. Use of the NECS single point of contact approach will allow the region to more effectively manage testing and support for health and care workers.

Where possible, the staff will be booked to receive tests by local NHS labs; if local arrangements are not yet in place staff will be booked to the national testing programme site at Gateshead IKEA car park or the mobile testing sites which are being set up around the region. This is available to key workers in North East and North Cumbria who are aged over 18.

Testing is most effective in the first 3 days of COVID-19 symptoms appearing. Testing is considered effective up until day 5. No testing should be undertaken after day 5, unless for a specific reason.

Other local arrangements are as follows:

- Locally agreed arrangements to test residents of North East residential or nursing homes have been developed between Public Health England, and the North ICS COVID-19 Strategic Testing Group on behalf of the local health and care system.

The North East Health Protection Team (HPT) will arrange for swabs to be sent to homes for the residents who have symptoms at time of reporting. Testing of further symptomatic residents will be undertaken by local community teams in each local authority area.

- Other additional temporary testing facilities may also be offered to meet demand – these include mobile testing units operated by the Ministry of Defence which are available to the local area to increase capacity where needed.

In the North East and North Cumbria we have tested as many patients and staff as capacity has allowed, and we have grown our testing capacity as quickly as possible. We continue to test those who are a priority to make most effective use of our local laboratory capacity until at such time we are able to meet wider testing requirements.

Key points

- Staff from NHS Trusts in the North East are asked to access the testing being provided by their own organisations, rather than via the routes described below.
- **Other Health and Social Care staff (including VCS and independent providers)** are asked to email the NECS single point of contact to be booked to NHS labs where possible, and using the Gateshead IKEA centre* as needed.
Email necsu.covid19keyworkertesting@nhs.net
- All other **non-health and social care essential worker groups** are asked to go to the via the Government's online portal: self-refer / national booking sites.
Go to <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-getting-tested>

For information about testing in North Cumbria, please go to <https://www.northcumbriaccg.nhs.uk/covidtesting>

See the **green** and **blue** lists below to help you decide where to go.

Who is eligible for testing?

- ✔ **Frontline / essential workers with suspected COVID-19 symptoms who have been self-isolating for five days or less**

In this instance the frontline worker is the only eligible person in their household to receive a coronavirus test. No other members of their household are eligible. Symptoms of COVID-19 include a fever and persistent new cough or a combination of symptoms including shortness of breath, fatigue, loss of taste/smell. Anyone who has had symptoms and been self-isolating for more than five days is **not** eligible for testing. Testing must take place 1-5 days from the onset of symptoms to be reliable.

- ✔ **A member of an essential worker's household who has suspected COVID-19 infection and has been self-isolating for five days or less (which has resulted in the member of staff self-isolating as well).**

In this instance only the household member(s) of the critical key worker is eligible to receive a coronavirus test with the frontline worker's name noted. The frontline worker will not receive a test as they are not symptomatic.

List of essential workers and those prioritised for testing (England only)

Where do I go?

Workers listed below use the [NECS single point of contact](#) to be booked to NHS labs where possible, and use the Gateshead IKEA centre as needed.

Email: necsu.covid19keyworkertesting@nhs.net

To book a test NECS require the following details of eligible staff.

SUBJECT FULL NAME	MOBILE (this is needed to text results)	ORGANISATION (the organisation of the KEY WORKER)	EMAIL ADDRESS (required for confirmation letter)	POSITION / ROLE (e.g. Social worker, Care assistant, etc.)

This is a booking service only and individuals should **NOT** turn up without a pre-booked appointment. Access is available **via household car ONLY**. Staff will be contacted by phone and registered for the national appointment booking system.

All NHS and social care staff who do not work for an NHS Trust in the North East, including:

- Doctors, nurses, midwives, paramedics, social workers, care workers, and other frontline health and social care staff including volunteers
- The support and specialist staff required to maintain the UK's health and social care sector
- Those working as part of the health and social care supply chain, including producers and distributors of medicines, and medical and personal protective equipment

Essential public services staff, including:

- Charities and workers delivering critical frontline services e.g. organisations providing substance misuse treatment and domestic abuse support
- Those responsible for the management of the deceased
- Frontline local authority staff, including those working with vulnerable children and adults, with victims of domestic abuse, and with the homeless and rough sleepers

Where do I go?

All other non-health and social care essential worker groups listed below are directed to the [self-refer / national booking sites](#).

Go to: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-getting-tested>

Essential public services staff, including:

- Prisons, probation, courts and tribunals staff, judiciary
- Religious staff
- Journalists and broadcasters covering coronavirus or providing public service broadcasting

Public safety and national security staff, including:

- Police and support staff
- Ministry of Defence civilians, contractors and armed forces personnel (those critical to the delivery of critical defence and national security outputs and critical to the response to the coronavirus pandemic)
- Fire and rescue service employees (including support staff),
- National Crime Agency staff, those maintaining border security, prison and probation staff and other national security roles, including those overseas

Utilities, communication and financial services staff, including:

- Essential staff working in the civil nuclear, chemicals, telecommunications (including but not limited to network operations, field engineering, call centre staff, IT and data infrastructure, 999 and 111 essential services), postal services and delivery, payments providers and waste disposal sectors

- Staff needed for essential financial services provision (including but not limited to workers in banks, building societies and financial market infrastructure)
- The oil, gas, electricity and water sectors (including sewerage)
- Information technology and data infrastructure sector and primary industry supplies to continue during the coronavirus response

Transport workers, including:

- Those who keep the air, water, road and rail passenger and freight transport modes operating during the coronavirus response
- Those working on transport systems through which supply chains pass

Education and childcare workers, including:

- Support and teaching staff
- Specialist education professionals

Critical personnel in the production and distribution of food, drink and essential goods, including:

- Those involved in food production, processing, distribution, sale and delivery
- Those critical to the provision of other essential goods, such as medical supply chain and distribution workers, including veterinary medicine
- Workers critical to the continuity of essential movement of goods
- Local and national government staff critical to the effective delivery of the coronavirus response, or delivering essential public services, such as the payment of benefits
- Public and environmental health staff, including in government agencies and arm's length bodies

Exclusion and return to work

Ensuring effective testing and advice about exclusion / return to work for staff working in health and care is crucial to the prevention of further infection within the care home / elderly population and other vulnerable groups.

In order to reduce the risk of transmission to vulnerable patient groups, the North East Strategic Testing Group has endorsed the following approach to results from staff testing:

1. For symptomatic individuals, guidance on self-isolation should be followed **regardless of test result** with return to work 7 days from onset of symptoms or until symptoms have clinically including 2 days free of fever, whichever is longer.
For care home **residents** the recommended isolation period is **14 days**.
2. For asymptomatic household contacts of symptomatic test positive cases, self-isolation should continue for the full 14 days prescribed in national guidance.

3. For asymptomatic household members of index cases who are, or have been symptomatic but the index case tests negative, the household members may return to work provided:
 - a. They first discuss their return with their HR department
 - b. They are themselves asymptomatic and
 - c. Neither they nor the index case worsens in health (in which case isolation should immediately be resumed)

4. For workers with high risk clinical groups and vulnerable groups such as care homes, it is recommended that ***neither index cases nor household members return to work, regardless of test result***, before completion of self-isolation periods.

These recommendations are the minimum that should be implemented across all health and social care organisations in the North East. Some Trusts and organisations have put more stringent requirements in place.