

## Press Release from Buckinghamshire Council

08 February 2021

# Rapid community testing initiative to launch in Buckinghamshire

- Community testing initiative to launch to drive down transmission rates
- Testing to begin in Aylesbury and High Wycombe to help protect people most at risk, using rapid turnaround tests supplied by NHS Test and Trace

The community testing initiative, in partnership with the Department of Health and Social Care, is launching at Buckinghamshire in Aylesbury and High Wycombe to help drive down transmission rates.

Around one in three people who are infected with COVID-19 have no symptoms so could be spreading the disease without knowing it. Broadening testing to identify those showing no symptoms will mean finding positive cases more quickly, and break chains of transmission.

With its targeted approach, community testing aims to reduce the prevalence of the virus in the highest risk areas.

Buckinghamshire will receive lateral flow tests, provided by NHS Test and Trace, as part of a new pilot to enable local public health leaders to start testing people who are leaving home to go to work or volunteer and are public facing.

Rapid-turnaround lateral flow tests are a new type of technology, which provide results within an hour, and will be used to proactively test asymptomatic individuals. Lateral flow devices do not require a laboratory to process the test.

Testing will be available for asymptomatic individuals' - people who are leaving home to go to work or volunteer and are public facing from Monday 8 February. For more information on how to get a test, visit <https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/coronavirus/bookarapidtest/>

All efforts to find people without symptoms work hand in hand with the existing free testing service for those with symptoms. Anyone with one or more of these symptoms – a high temperature, a new, continuous cough, or a loss or change to sense of smell or taste – should book a test at [nhs.uk/coronavirus](https://nhs.uk/coronavirus) or by calling 119.

Gareth Williams, Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Health said:

“Lateral flow testing is an easy and practical way to help keep our frontline workers and those they come into contact with safe. It is essential that we do everything in our power to break the chain of transmission.”

‘It’s important to remember that even with a negative test result you will still need to take the same safety measures – hands, face, space as you may pick up the virus after leaving the test site.’

Health Minister Lord Bethell said:

“We’ve already come so far since first setting up a national testing programme at an unprecedented pace to help counter COVID-19, but we continue to strive to go further, faster.”

“Around one in three people have the virus without symptoms so could be spreading the disease without knowing it. Broadening testing to identify those showing no symptoms will mean finding positive cases more quickly, and break chains of transmission.

“I’m delighted that Buckinghamshire are working with us to roll out community testing, and I look forward to seeing the results.”

Baroness Dido Harding, Interim Executive Chair of the National Institute for Health Protection, said:

“NHS Test and Trace continues to play a leading role in the fight against COVID-19. Increased community testing is a vital additional tool at our disposal to help identify those who are infected and infectious, but unaware that they might be spreading the disease.

“The work of Buckinghamshire will be essential in driving down transmission rates. I urge all those living in areas where community testing is offered to come forward and get tested.”