

Testing more staff to help them back to work caring for local people in Devon, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly

Organisations across, Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly are working together to improve COVID-19 testing for health and care staff, so more can get back to work helping local people in vital frontline health and care roles.

Led by the Peninsula Pathology Network, they have agreed a shared approach using a combination of locally and nationally run testing sites (as below), which will:

- Quickly increase the number of swabs for testing being taken
- Ensure results are received as fast as possible
- Reduce journey times for staff who can use their nearest site
- Enable better data collection to identify hotspots and outbreaks
- Simplify the process to speed it up and reduce administration

NHS and care staff – including NHS hospital, community and mental health staff; GPs and practice staff; pharmacists, ambulance workers and care home and domiciliary care staff – in Devon, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly are being encouraged to contact their employer if they need a test.

There are currently two main types of testing facility across Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly:

1. In-house laboratories and testing at NHS trusts and foundation trusts, supported by local swabbing centres

- Each of the peninsula's five acute trusts* has this capability in-house for staff and patients
- As well as their on-site testing capability, there are additional off-site 'drive through' swabbing facilities for NHS and care staff (and people in their household) who have been given an appointment via their employer:
 - Liskeard and Threemilestone – run by [Kernow Health](#)
 - [Sandy Park](#), Exeter - Royal Devon and Exeter NHS Foundation Trust
 - McDonald's, Barnstaple - Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust
 - On site at Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust
- Results are normally available within 24 hours and are sent to the individual tested and their GP
- Tests are by appointment only

2. Drive-through sites run by Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC)

- There are two in Devon for use by keyworkers across the peninsula who have been given appointments, via the local coordination processes or via self-referral:
 - Seaton Barracks, Plymouth

- [Honiton Road Park and Ride](#), Exeter
- Each of these sites will also be allocated a mobile unit to provide additional services covering the more rural parts of Devon and Cornwall.
- Yesterday, (23 April 2020), Secretary of State Matt Hancock announced that these facilities would be available to more keyworkers, who can self-refer via a Government online portal – [full details here](#).

Working together as part of the Peninsula Pathology Network, which was established in December 2017, local partners have put in place referral routes for health and care staff to use the in-house facilities in the first instance, using the additional capacity of the DHSC sites where needed.

Currently, about 500 patients and 150 staff are being tested per day via the Peninsula laboratories. Total testing capacity is now 2,000 tests per day but will be extended to 3,500 tests per day as needed.

Ann James, Chief Executive Officer of University Hospitals Plymouth NHS Trust and chair of the Peninsula Pathology Network, said: “Testing plays a vital role in supporting the wellbeing of our health and care colleagues, helping them get back to work as quickly as possible and helping track the spread of the virus. By working together across the peninsula, we are making best use of our combined testing capacity and are making the testing process simple and fast.”

Laboratories in the network have the ability to share work during periods of high demand. The in-house facilities are open seven days a week and two of them can be expanded to 24-hour access if needed.

Kieran Bignell, Consultant Paramedic and Head of Integrated Urgent Care in Cornwall added: “We know our dedicated staff are working extremely hard so we wanted to make it easy and fast for them to be tested for COVID-19. Our in-house testing is for any frontline health or care workers, including NHS hospital, community and mental health staff, GPs, pharmacists, ambulance workers and care home and domiciliary care staff. If you are eligible and are symptomatic, contact your employer for a referral.”

Staff and keyworkers can only attend an in-house or DHSC testing site if they have been given an appointment – people will not be accepted without one.

For staff who can't get to testing sites, mobile and postal testing will be available.

A wider list of [essential workers](#) can access the DHSC testing provision.

ENDS

Notes to editors

*The five acute trusts in the peninsula

- Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust

- Royal Cornwall Hospitals NHS Trust
- Royal Devon and Exeter NHS Foundation Trust
- Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust
- University Hospitals Plymouth NHS Trust

Staff who can use the in-house testing facilities are:

- All NHS hospital, community and mental health staff
- GPs
- People who work in or alongside GP practices
- Pharmacists
- Care home staff
- Domiciliary care staff
- Ambulance staff

About the Peninsula Pathology Network

Peninsula Pathology NHS Network Board was established in December 2017 and is comprised of the five acute trusts across Devon, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly, together with representatives from CCGs and primary care.

The Network's vision is *"to provide high quality, innovative pathology services, which will be at the heart of new models of patient centred care"*.