

NEWS RELEASE



**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Date: 21 January 2021
Issued by: Augusta Henning

Issue No: 11/21
Version: 0.1

COUNCIL EXPANDS RAPID TESTING PILOT TO COVER KEYWORKERS

Private nursery staff and childminders, postal workers and supermarket staff will be among those offered rapid Covid-19 tests by Wokingham Borough Council as it extends its pilot scheme.

Around one in three people who have coronavirus have no symptoms and will be spreading it without realising it. To help break the chain of transmission, Wokingham Borough Council is now expanding its Lateral Flow Testing (LFT) pilot at its Shute End office to include all critical and keyworkers who are required to leave home for work or a crucial activity.

Widening community testing to those showing no symptoms (called 'asymptomatic'), will help find people who are infected and infectious but unaware that they might be spreading the virus. The Council is inviting keyworkers forward for testing, covering a range of professions; from blue light and health and care services, including voluntary sector services; to early years and essential retail. Please note this is not an extensive list. A full list of the keyworkers that are eligible, and details on how to book a test (including a link to the [electronic booking system](#)) can be found on its [website](#).

Professionals who are regularly leaving their home to go to work are advised to book in for a Lateral Flow Test twice a week at the Council's Shute End office; while those who go to work less frequently are asked to get tested once a week; ideally on the same day that they are due to go to work.

Cllr Charles Margetts, executive member for health, wellbeing and adult services says: "Breaking the Covid chain is so important to stop the virus from spreading and we urge residents that need to leave home for work to come forward for a test. These tests should be done once or twice weekly, depending on how frequently you are leaving home to go to work, for maximum effectiveness. By offering regular rapid testing to keyworkers who do not currently have access to it through National testing programmes, we wish to lower the risk of Covid-19 to this group and help restrict the spread of the virus within the borough.

“We were one of the first local authorities in Berkshire to undertake a Lateral Flow Testing pilot and a tremendous amount of effort has gone into its organisation. As we continue to expand our pilot and help even more people get tested, we’ve also created a number of additional job opportunities for local people to help with administering these tests, and we have been overwhelmed with applications. Thank you to our residents for their ongoing support.”

The Council is in the process of finalising two additional Lateral Flow Testing sites on its locality borders, as well as a mobile outbreak response unit. Over time, and as the national lockdown is lifted, it will seek to develop its offering and continue to take a targeted approach to community testing.

“We will keep our residents informed about our LFT programme as and when it is necessary. We must stress, however, that a negative LFT result does not give people immunity and should not be used as an excuse to bend the rules under current Covid-19 restrictions,” says Cllr Margetts. “This is very important as you could put others at severe risk. If you test negative, you can continue to go to work, however you should follow social distancing guidance and the rules under the current Covid-19 restrictions.

“We understand how difficult this can be and have a range of support measures in place to help residents; from access to food and help through our One Front Door scheme, to a one-off Self Isolation Support Payment for people who cannot work from home.”

For support on a range of measures, including emergency food deliveries and help with paying heating bills, call One Front Door on 0300 330 1189, or visit the website:

<https://citizensadvicewokingham.org.uk/coronavirus>

If you need to self-isolate, you might be entitled to a payment of £500 if you are unable to work from home, are losing income, or facing financial hardship as a result of not being able to go to work. Find out more by visiting the Council’s dedicated webpage: <https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/health/public-health-campaigns/coronavirus-grants-and-payments/apply-for-discretionary-test-and-trace-support-payments>

Find out more about Wokingham Borough Council’s Lateral Flow Testing programme on its website:

<https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/health/public-health-campaigns/lateral-flow-testing>

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Further information:

1. More from Cllr Charles Margetts on Charles.margetts@wokingham.gov.uk