



10<sup>th</sup> June 2021

## **COVID-19 ASYMPTOMATIC TESTING PROGRAM FOR HEIs (HOME TESTING)**

I am writing to let you know about the new college and HEIs Asymptomatic Testing Programme (Home testing), which is being put in place as part of the package of COVID-19 risk reduction mitigations in colleges and HEIs across Scotland, and to give you more information about how the programme will operate in SAMS.

### **Why is SAMS participating in the programme?**

Along with the other protective measures we are implementing to keep the SAMS community safe, regular testing of staff and students will help to further reduce risks for staff and students in SAMS.

It will do so by helping to identify asymptomatic individuals at the earliest possible opportunity, and asking them and their close contacts to self-isolate, thus minimising the likelihood of them passing on the virus.

### **Who can take part?**

The testing is open to all SAMS' staff and students who are regularly attending the premises.

### **Does everyone have to take part?**

Testing is voluntary. No-one who is otherwise permitted to come to SAMS will be prevented from doing so just because they do not wish to participate. However, we are strongly encouraging all staff and student who are on site to participate wherever possible, in order to contribute to the wellbeing of our community.

However, if staff or students are working or learning from home, they should not participate. This is because the programme is intended specifically to reduce risks in the HEI environment.

### **What will the testing involve?**

SAMS is being provided with a supply of Lateral Flow Device (LFD) test kits by the Scottish Government and the UK Department of Health and Social Care for use at home. We will give each participating staff member and student a supply of these test kits to take home, together with the 'Instructions for Use'. Each staff member and student will be asked to sign for these in a log at the point of handover. Completion of this test kit log is a regulatory requirement. We will then ask individuals to test regularly at home, twice a week (every three to four days, ideally in the morning before attending site).

The tests supplied do not require laboratory processing and can provide a quick result in around 30 minutes. Comprehensive guidance on conducting self-testing is contained in the 'Instructions for Use' leaflet which will be provided with the test kit. There is a useful video showing participants how to administer the test here:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLvaBZskxS7tzQYIVg7lwH5uxAD9UrSzGJ>.

Once the test has been conducted individuals must log the test result – whether positive, negative or void – online at [www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result](http://www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result). Tests are free of charge and will be provided by SAMS.

**NB:** It is important to note that this regular testing is only for individuals without symptoms. Those with symptoms must continue to follow the usual guidance. They must self-isolate and book a PCR test at a test centre or via a home test kit at the earliest opportunity. People with symptoms must not rely on a negative LFD result to continue to attend SAMS.

**NB: A negative test result must not be taken as leave to relax or ignore physical distancing or other measures intended to reduce transmission – testing is an additional intervention that contributes to reducing risk.**

**What happens next?**

We intend to start distributing test kits to staff and students in week commencing 7<sup>th</sup> June  
We are inviting you to complete and return the enclosed Consent Form to [COVIDtest@sams.ac.uk](mailto:COVIDtest@sams.ac.uk) You will then receive a date and time in which to collect your home testing kits. Kits will be issued from the Sheina Marshall Building using the on-site testing facility that is already set up. You can then begin testing at home as soon as possible.

**What about the on-site testing already in place?**

We will be encouraging staff and students to begin to make use of the home testing kits and hope that gradually, their use will replace the need for on-site testing. However, we intend to retain the on-site testing facility for the foreseeable future.

While it isn't mandatory, we also are encouraging staff and students to have completed three on-site tests before they start using home testing kits, just to ensure that you have the confidence to complete the test. If you are unable to complete on-site tests, this should not delay collecting and starting home testing.

We will continue to support and communicate with our staff and students as we implement this programme. Please let us know if you have any questions. In the meantime, some Frequently Asked Questions can be found in the annex to this letter.

Chris Clay.

## Annex – Frequently Asked Questions

### How will I know how to use the tests?

SAMS will provide those participating with the most up to date Instructions for Use along with their test kits. Participants will be asked to ensure they use these, and not the ones that are pre-packaged in the test kits.

The Instructions for Use set out clearly how to use the test kits. They also provide a number to call if there are any problems with the test kits.

### Are the tests safe and accurate?

LFD tests have been widely and successfully used to detect COVID-19 in asymptomatic individuals. No test is perfect, but the speed and convenience of LFD tests supports detection of the virus in asymptomatic individuals who would not otherwise be tested. They are clinically approved and are crucial in the fight against the virus. The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has approved the use of these at-home tests for these purposes.

LFD tests are very accurate, which means that only a very small proportion of people who do not have coronavirus will receive a positive result (false positive). The tests are better at picking up true positive cases when a person has a higher viral load and is more contagious. There is a risk of returning a false negative result when viral loads are low (e.g. in the early stages of infection). This is why Public Health Scotland recommend two LFD tests 3 to 4 days apart, or regular testing, to enhance detection by picking up any cases which were not detected during the first test and to catch any new infections.

If someone tests positive using an LFD, it is likely that they are infectious at that moment, whereas people testing positive on a 'Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR)' test could be in the less infectious early or late stages of disease. This means that by using the LFD, we can identify people with a high viral load who are the most likely to spread the virus further.

### What happens if there is a problem with the tests?

Any incidents that could potentially impact the quality or safety of testing should be reported to the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).

For incidents occurring in a home setting, please report any issues (for example: something damaged, or missing or difficult to use in the kit, you are unable to log a result) to **0300 303 2713**.

If there is a clinical incident which led to, or has the potential for, harm (e.g. swab breaks in the mouth, bleeding, allergic reaction on using the kit etc.) please report it on <https://coronavirusyellowcard.mhra.gov.uk>.

This is not for seeking immediate medical care. Medical care should be sought through the usual route of contacting 111 or 999.

### What happens if I test positive?

If you receive a positive result on your Lateral Flow Device at home, you must report the result online at [www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result](http://www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result), self-isolate and book a confirmatory PCR test. This can be done via <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>. We advise visiting a community or drive-through test site as this is the quickest way to get tested, or you can order a home test kit.

It is important that you begin self-isolation immediately after you receive the positive result from the LFD test, and do not wait until the result of your PCR test.

**What happens if I test negative?**

You must report the result online at [www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result](http://www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result). Individuals who test negative will be able to stay at SAMS and continue activities as normal.

**What happens if the test result is “void”?**

This means the test has not run correctly. You must report the result online at [www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result](http://www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result). You will need to take another test. Use a new test kit, and do not reuse anything from the first kit.

**What if I have been in close contact with someone who tests positive?**

If a student or member of staff has tested positive, they will have to self-isolate as per government guidelines. The student or member of staff should also inform SAMS of their absence, and are strongly encouraged to report a positive case to SAMS to support contact tracing activities.

Both Test and Protect and, once informed, SAMS will get in contact with staff members and students who were in close contact with a positive case to inform them that they need to self-isolate.

**What if I develop symptoms?**

This testing programme at SAMS is for people with no symptoms. If you develop symptoms at any time (such as a high temperature; a new, continuous cough; or a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste) you must immediately self-isolate, and book a test by calling 0800 028 2816 or visiting <https://www.nhsinform.scot/>. People with symptoms must not rely on a negative LFD result to continue to attend SAMS.

**Can staff/students’ families get tested too?**

No, this asymptomatic LFD testing is aimed at staff and students only. The tests will be handed to staff and students for personal use and should not be used for anyone else. Family members of staff or students taking part are not eligible for this programme.

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