

ALL EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION FROM THE MANAGING DIRECTOR - COVID-19, NO 28, 4 SEPTEMBER 2020

I hope that this latest briefing finds you and your family well. This briefing provides some further important information with regards to the new Managing Director and a new option in relation to COVID-19 testing for our school-based employees.

New Managing Director – Start Date

I am absolutely committed to ensuring that my handover to Tayside Contracts' new Managing Director, Keith McNamara is as smooth and comprehensive as it possibly can be. Keith has now confirmed that his start date with Tayside Contracts will be **Monday 2 November 2020** which importantly means that there will be no gap between me retiring from the organisation and Keith starting. I have already started the handover process with Keith and will continue this process for the next 2-month period as far as reasonably possibly and with the agreement of Keith and his current employer, Perth and Kinross Council.

COVID-19 Testing for School-Based Employees

The Scottish Government has recently extended the options for COVID-19 testing for employees in schools and local authority ELC settings. Now, as well as having priority access to testing when experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, school-based employees who are concerned that they may have been exposed to COVID-19 can chose to access testing even if they do not have symptoms of the virus.

Unless you are symptomatic or are advised to get a test by a healthcare professional, then testing is not a requirement. However, if you are on occasion, concerned that you have been at risk from infection, then you may request a test whether or not you have symptoms. There are however limitations of testing when an individual does not have symptoms and these are set out below to assist employees make an informed choice as to whether or not to proceed and understand what the test result means.

If you believe you have been exposed to COVID-19 and wish to take up this offer, you should make the request via your line manager who will liaise with an HR Adviser to book a test using an employer portal. This route is the only way an individual can access a test if they do not have symptoms. Testing individuals who do not have symptoms but are concerned that they may have COVID-19 is not available to the general public or non-school based employees.

Information to Note When Considering a COVID-19 Test in the Absence of Symptoms:

COVID-19 is the illness caused by a new strain of coronavirus first identified in late 2019 in China. It can cause a range of symptoms, including a new continuous cough, fever, or loss or change in sense of smell or taste.

COVID-19 has an incubation period of 2 to 14 days. This means that someone who is exposed to the virus, for example by having close contact with another person who is infectious, may take from 2 to 14 days to develop symptoms. Through the NHS Test & Protect approach, people who are identified as close contacts are asked self-isolate for 14 days, in order to reduce the risk of spreading it to others if they themselves develop the infection. No testing is required unless symptoms develop, or they are specifically advised to get tested by their NHS Health Protection Team or an NHS contact tracer.

Before proceeding with a test in the absence of symptoms individuals should consider the pro and cons as follows:

Some individuals, out of concern for their own health or that of others, seek a test even when they have no symptoms. This may give a sense of assurance but can be misleading and cannot exclude the possibility that the virus is present, or that the individual may go on to be infected or to develop the illness.

The COVID-19 tests used in Scotland work by detecting evidence of the virus in an individual's nose and throat sample (which is collected using a nasopharyngeal swab to collect secretions from the back of the throat and then the back of the nose). These tests cannot determine whether or not an individual is incubating the disease, but only if evidence of the virus is present at the time when they are tested.

This means that testing is a single point in time assessment of whether an individual may be infectious but it cannot determine whether an individual is going to become ill in the future. Therefore, a negative result cannot reliably be used to inform individual risk or as the basis for reducing mitigations to reduce the risk of transmission such as hygiene and distancing.

Sometimes when the test is taken and returns a positive result, it needs to be repeated. Self-isolation must continue until the repeat result is available and further advice provided thereafter by your NHS team.

Individuals who are concerned they may have come into contact with an infected person, but are unsure about undertaking testing, also have the alternative option of approaching NHS Inform for further information: <https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/test-and-protect/coronavirus-covid-19-testing> or by calling 0800 028 2816.

Should you have any questions about any of the topics covered in this briefing or are seeking support please do not hesitate to contact your line manager. Please continue to refer to Tayside Contracts' website www.tayside-contracts.co.uk/covid-19 on a regular basis to check for further updates.

If you have not already done so and wish to provide your email address to us in order to benefit from electronic access to communications such as these, please forward your email address to Communications@tayside-contracts.co.uk We will not forward your email address onto any third parties or use it for any other purpose other than to communicate with you.

Iain C Waddell, Managing Director, 4 September 2020