

## Managers brief – Antigen Test Kits

**You can use these bullet points to brief your team on an initiative expected to launch this week.**

- The Government announced on Friday that Royal Mail will be a key partner in the delivery and return of coronavirus tests to NHS and social care frontline staff.
- NHS staff who are self-isolating at home will be able to do a coronavirus test, and then return their sample for testing at a central testing lab.
- This is a really important initiative – it will mean NHS workers who don't have the COVID-19 virus will be able to return to work to relieve the pressure on our NHS. The Covid 19 Frontline NHS Test Kit Tracked 24 Returns are vital and as such are to be treated as a highest priority
- We are proud to be playing this key role in the fight against coronavirus. We welcome the support of CWU.
- In terms of how it will work: the test kits will be sent out via an Amazon depot in Darlington and then jointly distributed through their network and Royal Mail (Tracked 24).
- At first, the kit will return to a central laboratory in Northern Ireland via Royal Mail Tracked 24 Returns. Soon after, two more locations on the UK mainland will be confirmed.
- NHS workers will post their sample into one of 13,000 priority postboxes - Monday to Friday only. Recipients of the Testing Kit have been informed to only post returns back Mon to Friday however if a Test Kit Return is identified in collections during the weekend please continue to process as per the specification Mon to Friday so the item can be delivered to the laboratory asap.
- What is important is that we treat these items as the priority and take care when handling them to not damage the kits and protect our people.
- The samples have a forty-eight-hour life span, so it is critical that they are collected and moved through our network at pace.
- The health of our colleagues is our first priority and we have worked in partnership with the Chief Medical Officer to ensure that the process is safe for our colleagues.
- There will be clear instructions in the testing kit explaining to people how to package their sample safely to prevent any cross-contamination. The sample will be placed into a corrugated cardboard box and then into a plastic envelope. All packaging complies to World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines.
- NHS workers will be required to wash their hands immediately before and after sample collection, and again before packaging. They should also wipe the external packaging with a disinfectant wipe.
- We are adding an extra precautionary step to ensure we are doing everything we can do keep our people safe throughout the handling of these items. Collection drivers / postal colleagues collecting from postboxes will be issued with plastic bags so that they don't have to touch the item when they identify and remove them from the post boxes.
- We expect the first of these kits to start appearing in post boxes Thursday/Friday and volumes will grow as the distribution of these kits increases.
- We recognise that the provision of PPE is essential. Supplies are coming through and these are being distributed to all units.
- We understand that some colleagues will have concerns about handling the Covid 19 returns test kits. Please ensure where possible that you involve your unit reps and unit safety reps a) to explain the importance of the service we are providing and b) draw particular attention to the safety steps in the process to assure colleagues that may be concerned. If you are unable to resolve any concerns please raise with your SDL who will work with the Area / Div CWU Reps for further support and assurance.

## Next steps:

- Following the operational briefing you've just had with your Plant/ Operations Manager, we are providing you with some hand-outs to help you inform your team about the safe handling of the antigen test kits and the operational procedures that must be followed to ensure they move through our network at pace
- Please ensure you print these hand-outs as soon as possible and ensure each member of your team gets a copy. This includes all your full time and part time staff and any reserves or volunteers you have working with you
- Whilst you are unable to hold WTLs or huddles, you can speak loudly from your office or a central location or on a one to one basis, maintaining social distancing, to draw their attention to the handouts
- You should reinforce some of the key points around the process they should follow so there is no confusion around what they need to do if they spot any of these items
- Please engage your unit reps and local ASRs/unit safety reps to support our people deliver an excellent service
- Clear plastic bags should have arrived in your office, please ensure all collections staff have a good supply of these when they go out from Thursday onwards
- Whilst guidance on which post boxes to use will have been communicated to NHS staff, we need to be prepared that some may end up in other non-specified posting boxes so please ensure ALL collections staff and people performing collections on delivery are supplied with these bags
- You also need to keep some available on the shop floor or work area in all operational areas, in case any of these test kits fall out of process, are unbagged and your staff need to handle them
- The volumes will start to increase over the coming days and weeks, so keep a close eye on the number of these plastic bags and ensure you order more well in advance before you run out. We are confirming the process for this and will communicate further how you can order more.
- These test samples coming through our network expire within 48 hours so we must treat them as a top priority
- We are additionally sending out information through the WPC newsletter, please print these off for all WPCs so they can support you in briefing your team and running demonstrations on how to handle the items safely
- This is a critical piece of work for us in supporting our country through this crisis – please keep a watchful eye that everyone is observing the safe handling of these items and the operational processes that have been put in place to move them through our network at pace

## FAQs:

### **Q. Is there any risk to me from completing this activity?**

A. If you follow the procedures there is no risk from you carrying out this activity and the package will be just as safe as the other parcels in the network so you will be giving the benefit of the extra level of protection to your colleagues.

### **Q. If I am putting the kit into a further plastic re-sealable envelope, aren't I increasing the amount of handling I'm doing? Wouldn't it be easier to just 'throw' it into a separate sack?**

A. The packaging is specially designed with several layers so that the specimen cannot leak. Putting the kit into a further envelope is an additional precaution just in case the sender has contaminated the outer packaging by handling it. You should put the specimen into the additional bag without touching it, in the same way as if you were serving at a fish counter, into a polythene bag. If you find this difficult, wear gloves to put it into the bag.

### **Q. Can the virus live on the test kit packaging and if so, am I at risk when I handle it?**

A. Like any surface, the virus can live for a while, which is why we are taking the additional precaution, and why good hand hygiene is so important. Additionally, there is an instruction in the testing kits for people to wipe the package with an antibacterial wipe before it is posted in the pillar box. The medical advice is the risk to our frontline colleagues is low.