

## Distribution and collection of Coronavirus testing kits

Dear all

During these unprecedented times we are proud that together we are working to protect our people, our country and our business. You will be aware that the government has just announced that coronavirus test kits will be sent to NHS and social care frontline staff currently in isolation. It is important that they test whether they have the COVID-19 virus or not, and therefore whether they will be able to return to work to relieve the pressure on our NHS. A great deal of trust has been placed on us to carry out this important work and we are proud to support this national effort during this time of crisis.

The test kits will be sent out via an Amazon depot in Darlington and jointly distributed through their network and Royal Mail. At first, the kit will return to a central laboratory in Northern Ireland via Royal Mail Tracked 24 service. Soon after, two more locations on the UK mainland will be confirmed.

Conveying medical supplies through our network is something we do daily, and this is no different. 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 important thing to know is that these samples have a forty-eight-hour life span, so it is critical that they are collected and moved through our network at pace. NHS workers will post their sample into one of 13,000 priority post boxes by 9am during Monday to Friday only. Recipients are being asked not to post back their samples over the weekend as they will deteriorate. We expect the first of these kits to start appearing in post boxes from **TBC** but volumes will grow as the distribution of these kits increases. It is critical that all collections are completed daily, as these samples must be returned within 48 hours.

There will be clear instructions in the testing kit explaining to people how to package their sample safely to prevent any cross-contamination. 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.

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. There will be specific labelling and packaging to allow everyone in our operation to easily identify them. To ensure we are doing everything possible to keep our people safe throughout the handling of these items, we are adding an extra precautionary step. 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 will be issuing more detailed guidance very soon to all units, so everyone understands what these items look like and how to handle them safely. This guidance should be printed out and distributed to all colleagues as soon as it is received.

We want to thank everyone for their continued efforts to keep delivering for our customers. We are now being called upon to safely transport these high priority items that will enable these key workers to return to work and provide a vital service for our country.

Your health and safety is our top priority and will continue to be so during these challenging times.