

Wirral: Mass asymptomatic Testing – Lateral Flow Antigen Testing

Introduction

Key points for Lateral Flow Tests (LFT):

- LFTs are a simple-to-use point of care solution for rapid COVID-19 testing. LFTs utilise the same swab test as PCR testing but offer rapid turnaround time (20-30 mins) without the need for laboratory processing.
- As part of the Tier 3 agreement with Liverpool City Region test kits are being offered to Directors of Public Health (DsPH), to enable local teams to direct and deliver community testing based on their local knowledge.
- NHS Test and Trace are offering to provide the Wirral with sufficient tests to enable up to ~10% of the population to be tested per week.
- LFT is a new kind of technology that could enable us to identify and isolate more asymptomatic people who are at high likelihood of spreading virus, whilst simultaneously minimising disruption for those who test negative.
- LFT have been validated in laboratory/ research settings. Their use now needs to be validated in real world settings, this is the rationale behind the current Liverpool City pilot project.
- This is a new technology, and it is important to recognise and anticipate potential unintended consequences through asymptomatic testing. This includes:
 - The risk of adverse consequences associated with false negatives and false positives.
 - The implications of finding more positive cases, this may lead to business continuity issues and additional pressure on contact tracing system.
- Testing is one part of the *Find, Test, Trace, Isolate, Support* model. Each component of this model is essential to sustainably limit transmission of COVID-19. Mass asymptomatic testing(MAST) is a different strategy for finding infectious people, it will be important we link plans to upscale local testing with contact tracing and support to enable people to self-isolate.
- Communication and community engagement to ensure local people understand the aims and objectives of MAST and trust the offer will be crucially important.
- There will be key learning from the national pilot in Liverpool we can utilise to inform our local planning.

National Ask:

Director of Public Health (DPH) to coordinate a significant local testing effort with national support that:

- Tests up to 10% of local population weekly using Lateral Flow Tests (LFT)
- Focuses on targeted populations at high risk (identified locally)
- Is locally led, directed, and coordinated

The table below outlines the role of local DPH and NHS Test and Trace Support. In summary:

- NHS Test and Trace will provide access to tests, training, clinical, operational and service design guidance and communication and engagement support.
- Local DPH will:
 - Identify cohorts for asymptomatic testing
 - Develop logistics to support programme delivery: workforce identification and training, sites, test distribution
 - Communication and engagement

No additional resources (financial or workforce) have been provided to support delivery in Wirral. We are exploring how we can utilise previously allocated funding towards LFT delivery in Wirral.

	Director of Public Health	NHS Test & Trace
Cohort targeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategy for LFT selection in line with priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirming approvals or restrictions on the populations that can be tested using these devices
Overall 'testing service'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creating a 'service' around lateral flow tests Clinical protocol Liability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring policy is in place for use of lateral flow devices including guidance on what to do with positive results Development of central clinical SOP to provide guidance to local areas
Site development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Site identification and management and all elements of the testing sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidance on bespoke build of test sites if necessary
Supply of tests and BOM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distribution of tests to testing sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivering LFT, PPE and associated BOM to a chosen site per DPH (48 hours notice required)
Workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsibility for identifying and recruitment and training of workforce to do testing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing guidance and training materials and give access to a network of workforce suppliers
Digital system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirmation of the digital system that is required as part of the service and the number of managed devices required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital solution for registration, result recording & notification and manual devices
Communication and engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Own and deliver <u>comms</u> and engagement to local people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support and advice

Proposed Wirral Approach

Based upon SAGE recommendations¹ we are proposing to utilise LFTs locally to:

- Identify & isolate infected people more quickly than relying upon symptomatic testing alone. Done well, this has the potential to reduce transmission.
- Reducing the probability that anyone present is infectious and allow more time-limited contact between people, supporting economic and social stability

In order to gain maximum population benefit from this new technology we are proposing to undertake multiple pilots within Wirral across a variety of settings. This approach will allow us to evaluate the benefits and consequences of the use of LFTs within different settings across the Borough. Rapid feedback loops will ensure learning is embedded and the approach adapted as required. If successful it will allow for rapid roll out across the identified cohorts. In this way we will build in a phased way towards mass asymptomatic testing within the Borough.

Proposed delivery models:

We are proposing to evaluate different delivery models to undertake LFT for identified cohorts. This includes:

- The development of a fixed asymptomatic testing site: Identified cohorts invited to the site for testing. Initial planning has commenced to explore the use of the satellite testing site in Bidston.
- Mobile asymptomatic testing service: Trained staff attend different setting across the Borough to undertake testing.
- Distributed model: LFTs are provided to settings. Staff within setting are trained to undertake testing of their identified cohort.

Priority Cohorts for LFT pilots

Priority groups for mass testing to reduce transmission should be identified according to their likely contribution to reducing R and outbreak risks, and improving health, social and economic outcomes including reducing inequalities.

When determining which groups should be prioritised, we have considered the following two factors:

- A. The risk that people in the group become infected
- B. The severity of the consequence of onward transmission if people in the group become infected.

Initial priority cohorts identified for LFT pilots in Wirral include:

- Front-line social care staff: including care homes, supported living and domiciliary care and affiliated visiting professionals. We are also proposing we pilot LFTs to enable safe care home visiting.
- Other high-risk residential settings: Wirral Hospice, homeless hostels

¹ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/914931/s0712-tfms-consensus-statement-sage.pdf

- Emergency service staff, to ensure we can maintain the public services that provide civic resilience.
- Children and Young people services: Children's social workers, school transport staff, Wirral Met College
- Key workers to maintain essential services: e.g. Refuse collection service, Highways
- Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic population: Building on work to date with Wirral Multicultural Organisation and Wirral Change
- Local large employers

Note: The NHS is currently rolling out asymptomatic testing of NHS staff. We will ensure we work closely with NHS colleagues to ensure we develop a Wirral system approach to MAST.

Next steps:

A task and finish group has been established to oversee the implementation of this new technology. This group will ensure each pilot has an identified lead, clearly set objectives, an evaluation framework, and a communication plan.

Locally we have been provided with a nationally signed off clinical standard operating procedure for the delivery of LFTs. This includes training requirements for staff processing the test and processing of results to ensure uploaded onto the national test and trace system and communicated to the user.

We are being supported in our local implementation by the Cheshire and Merseyside Testing Group. This provides direct access to national Test and Trace leads for escalation of local concerns and issues.

Recommendation

- Note the recent developments regarding Lateral Flow testing, and support the proposals for the roll out of Lateral Flow Testing in Wirral