

***Issued on behalf of the Lancashire Resilience Forum (LRF) ***.

Testing for people without Covid symptoms has been agreed for Lancashire from next week, which will help to reduce the spread and protect people.

Up to a third of people may display no symptoms, but are still infectious. It's vital to break these chains of transmission, so we can bring infection rates down and bring back some normality for people and businesses.

More details will be announced in the coming days and weeks about how people can access these tests in the county, as the programme is rolled out.

Known as a Lateral Flow Test, the results can be given in around thirty minutes, as they don't need to go to a laboratory for testing.

This method of testing is similar to Liverpool, but will focus on working with communities and areas with high numbers of infections, in order to try to bring our rates down and help the move to a lower tier of restrictions. Wider public testing is planned as part of the later stages.

The tests are not compulsory, but people are encouraged to get a test if offered one. This is one way we can all do our bit and help to get our lives and the economy in Lancashire back on track.

A sustained programme will be carried out over the next few months, including more local contact tracing, as well as additional support for communities and individuals who are struggling.

This new testing programme is being co-ordinated by the Lancashire Resilience Forum, and involves logistics support from the army. It is part of the government's national drive to continue to increase testing capability.

The Lancashire Resilience Forum brings together support including the police, fire, local authorities and health, to respond effectively

to the Covid pandemic.

Angie Ridgwell, chair of the LRF said: "By testing people who aren't showing symptoms, we can help to reduce the spread of infection in Lancashire. We'll be increasing the number of tests over the coming weeks, as more venues become involved.

"Across Lancashire, our public sector organisations are working together to support and protect the public by reducing the spread of the virus. A lot of very complex work has already been taking place to understand the testing that we need, ahead of this programme being rolled out.

"It is really important we continue to disrupt the virus, even though we now have a vaccine. It will take time to get everyone vaccinated and while that takes place we remain at risk of getting Coronavirus.

"Testing is still important and remains one of our key defences to tackle the virus. We remind people to keep following the guidance to keep each other safe – hands, face, space."

As part of a pilot programme, similar testing has already been taking place in Lancashire County Council-run day centres, some fire stations and at Myerscough College.

In Blackpool, this included emergency housing managed by Blackpool Coastal Housing, the council's frontline staff and Blackpool Transport Services.

In Blackburn with Darwen, 24 adult social care staff have been trained to carry out the analysis of lateral flow tests and are delivering regular staff testing initially across four teams - Home First, Respite Care, Day Services and Re-ablement.

If you have symptoms, then you can book a free test by calling 119, book online at www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test or through [the government's NHS Covid app](#).