

Read our FAQs

The Liverpool pilot aims to inform a blueprint for how community testing can be achieved, and how fast and reliable Covid-19 rapid testing can be delivered at scale.

Whole-city smart testing aims to protect those at highest risk and find asymptomatic cases. This will help prevent and reduce transmission in the community, helping the city get back to normal as soon as possible.

What is Smart?

It stands for Systematic Meaningful Asymptomatic Repeated Testing (Smart) which is the model we are using for community testing in the city.

Smart testing will pick up from the successful mass testing pilot that helped Liverpool City Region to secure Tier 2 status.

One of the key objectives now is for the city to stay in that Tier, or even move down into Tier 1.

It has 3 clear aims:

'test to protect' our most vulnerable and those who care for them. This includes care homes, those identified as extremely vulnerable and their carers.

'test to release' people from self-isolating earlier than the guidelines advise, allowing them to return to key roles and employment.

'test to enable' the city to reopen sooner and more safely to support people, jobs and businesses. This could include testing for those who work in leisure and hospitality.

We are encouraging people to get tested before mixing with others so we can go about our everyday lives safely, opening up the economy and getting life going again in Liverpool.

Who can get tested?

Tests are available to anyone who lives or works in Liverpool, regardless of their age. Children under 18 will need parental consent.

How quickly will I get my result?

This depends on the type of test you had. The 'lateral flow' tests are point of care tests, so don't need to be processed in a lab. Results are ready very quickly – from 30 minutes to a couple of hours. You will receive your results by text or email soon after you leave the test centre.

The standard PCR swab test may take longer, as they are processed in a lab. You can expect to receive your result from a standard PCR swab test within a few days.

How many tests can I have?

We advise you get tested, and get tested again. Please wait at least five days between your tests.

If you get a positive result to a symptom-free test, you must self-isolate and book a PCR test via www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test to confirm you have the virus. The message you get with a positive result won't automatically tell you to do this.

It is important that you complete the PCR test and return it according to the instructions.

Are schoolchildren being offered tests?

Parents of pupils aged 11-18 are being sent letters asking if they are willing to consent to their children being tested. The council is working with partners and the school nursing service to facilitate the voluntary programme within schools.

During the pilot, the military are helping to set up and run the testing process in schools.

If parents do not want their children to have a test, that is fine.

Do I have to have a test?

Absolutely not. We are hoping that many people will recognise the benefits of getting involved in the pilot to reduce the spread of the virus in their communities.

Why should I take part?

This pilot will help test the approach of repeat testing of the population on a large-scale for Covid-19. The pilot will enable us to gather lessons to inform use of this approach going forward for communities.

Through this pilot, we aim to identify people who do not have Covid-19 symptoms but who are infectious and could spread the infection to others unknowingly. Identifying and supporting infectious people to isolate before they develop symptoms will help reduce spread.

The pilot will also help us explore the use of new rapid testing technology – known as 'lateral flow tests' - and their potential application in a range of scenarios. These could include releasing key workers from quarantine, enabling children to stay at school, or, protecting care home residents from infection.

The lessons we learn will help us over time to reduce the impact of Covid-19 control measures, as well as reduce the spread of the virus, and protect the vulnerable.

What tests are being used?

Lateral flow tests are rapid turnaround tests that are processed at the community testing sites without any need for sending samples to a laboratory. The staff at the testing sites have received special training to carry out the processing. Results are ready very quickly – from 30 minutes to a couple of hours. You will receive your results by text or email soon after you leave the test centre.

How accurate is the new lateral flow test?

The pilot in Liverpool will be used to validate the sensitivity and specificity levels of the lateral flow tests when performed in a large population of asymptomatic people. We are not using LAMP tests as part of the mass-testing pilot.

The type of lateral flow test being used in Liverpool is called Innova. Results of the Innova evaluation published on 11th November 2020 show:

the specificity of the test was recorded as 99.68% – the overall false positive rate was 0.32%, although this was lowered to 0.06% in a lab setting

the sensitivity is 58% for all PCR-positive people when performed by self-trained individuals and 73% when performed by health care workers but detects over 95% of individuals with high viral loads, and minimal difference between the ability of the test to pick up viral antigens in symptomatic and asymptomatic individuals

Sensitivity means the proportion of people with a disease that have a positive test, whereas specificity means the proportion of people without the disease that have a negative test.

What happens if I test positive?

You will receive your result from NHS Test and Trace, via text message and email.

As part of the pilot, if you test positive using a 'lateral flow' test you must self-isolate and book a PCR test to confirm if you are infected with the virus - the message you receive won't automatically advise you to do this. You can do this at: liverpoolccg.nhs.uk/confirmatory-pcr-test.

This is because there is a possibility that some people who test positive with LFT are 'false positive' and the gold standard PCR test will identify these.

If the confirmatory PCR test result is negative, then you will no longer be required to self-isolate, and your contacts will no longer need to quarantine. You will still need to adhere to the national restrictions in place at that time e.g. lockdown restrictions.

If the confirmatory PCR test comes back positive, then you must continue to isolate for 10 days since your initial 'lateral flow' test. Everyone in your household will be a 'close contact' and must also self-isolate for 14 days. Contact tracing will be initiated through the NHS or local contact tracing team and other close contacts will be advised to quarantine for 14 days. For most up to date information go to <https://liverpool.gov.uk/communities-and-safety/emergency-planning/coronavirus/how-to-get-tested/testing-faqs/>

Can I get financial help if I test positive?

Eligible individuals who test positive through the pilot will be entitled to the £500 Test and Trace Support Payment in the same way as a regular swab test through NHS Test and Trace. Please note the government has laid down eligibility criteria. Find out more and apply for a Test and Trace Support Payment.

What happens if I test negative?

You will continue to follow the preventative measures currently recommended for stopping the spread of the virus.

To protect yourself and others, you must remember:

Hands – wash your hands for 20 seconds with soap and water often, and as soon as you get home - use hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available.

Face – wear a face covering in indoor settings where social distancing may be difficult, and where you will come into contact with people you do not normally meet.

Space – stay at least 2 metres away from anyone you do not live with, or who is not in your support bubble.

Liverpool is currently in Tier 2 (High alert) local restrictions.

If my result is negative, can I go and visit my mum in her care home? Or meet up with my friends?

A process is being piloted to allow safe visiting in 11 care homes in Liverpool following a strict testing regime for registered visitors. Lateral flow tests will be used in these care homes to reduce the risk of spread of infection to residents. Find out more about the care home testing pilot.

A negative lateral flow test does not constitute a 'green pass' and does not change the current rules we all need to follow during local restrictions.

Liverpool is currently in Tier 2 (high alert) local restrictions and you should follow the guidance set by government for Tier 2 areas.

How does it work with the NHS Test and Trace app?

Positive results from tests will be collected by NHS Test and Trace and published as part of the daily case numbers, including how many positive cases are detected with this new method of testing. NHS Covid-19 app users should input their results into the app.

Is that long enough to make a difference?

Like with any other pilots, the findings of the pilot will be reviewed before understanding if this has made a difference to virus transmission in Liverpool.

Will this be rolled out to other areas of the city region, or the rest of the country?

The Liverpool pilot aims to inform a blueprint for how community testing can be achieved, and how fast and reliable Covid-19 rapid testing can be delivered at scale.

I have been offered a test which I have to pay for – is this one of yours?

No. All the Covid-19 tests that are part of the pilot scheme are free.