

From CEO and Principal to all Students

9 March 2021

NHS Test, Trace, Protect: COVID-19 Testing for Students

Dear Student,

The Welsh Government has recently announced that it will start a programme of asymptomatic COVID-19 testing in education and childcare settings across Wales through the use of Lateral Flow Devices (LFD). Testing is offered on an opt in basis, and you are not under any obligation to participate.

Along with the primary protective measures we are taking, such as social distancing and good hand hygiene, testing will allow us to take further measures to help you and other staff members to continue working in as safe an environment as possible. Up to one in three people who have COVID-19 have the virus without symptoms so could be transmitting the virus unknowingly.

Tackling the pandemic requires identifying asymptomatic, infectious individuals. Lateral Flow Device (LFD) tests have been widely and successfully used to detect COVID-19 in asymptomatic individuals. The speed and convenience of LFD tests supports detection of the virus in asymptomatic individuals who would not otherwise be tested. They are clinically approved and are crucial in the fight against the virus.

As the tests are more sensitive with higher viral loads, there is a risk of returning a negative result when viral loads are low (e.g. in the early stages of infection). This is why it is recommended that two LFD tests are taken 3 to 4 days apart, or regular testing, to enhance detection by picking up any cases which were not detected during the first test and to catch any new infections.

If you test positive using a LFD, it is likely that you are infectious at that moment, and you must self-isolate and book a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test. Contact tracing will be triggered following a positive LFD and your close contacts will be required to self-isolate until you receive your PCR test result, if the PCR test result is positive you and your close contacts will have to continue to self-isolate. A negative LFD result should not be read as a means to relax or ignore social distancing or other virus prevention measures intended to reduce transmission – LFD is an additional tool that contributes to reducing risk.

How the tests work

If you agree to take part, you will be allocated an appointment to collect your LFD test kit from Afan, Brecon, Neath or Newtown College. You would need to conduct the test at home, before coming into College, on a regular basis (twice a week 3-4 days apart). The LFDs supplied do not require laboratory processing and can provide a quick result in around 30 minutes.

Comprehensive guidance on self-testing is contained in the 'Instructions for Use' leaflet which comes with the test kit. There are further resources and guides on the Welsh Government Online Document Platform which we, as a setting, have access to. We have also made the information available on the COVID-19 section of our SharePoint site.

Each time you conduct your test you will be required to log the test result online at www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result. You will also be required to separately, inform the College

and arrangements are being made for you to be able to do that through the College's PROSPECT System.

A little bit about Consent and Privacy

Once you have understood the testing process and read the privacy notice, if you choose to participate, you are committing to self-administer the test and provide your results each time you test. You will be required to provide your results (positive, negative or void) to NHS Test and Trace via the self-report gov.uk page. Results will also need to be shared with the College to support the local contact tracing process the College already has in place.

With our primary protective measures and testing, we will help to reduce the spread in education and childcare settings. I am therefore strongly encouraging all students to take up this offer of testing. However, students who decline to participate can still attend their workplace or setting if they are **NOT** symptomatic.

People who decline to participate in this testing programme should follow the usual national guidelines on self-isolation and anyone should get tested if they show symptoms.

Yours faithfully,

Mark Dacey

Chief Executive Officer and Principal NPTC Group of Colleges