

3 March 2021

## REGULAR TESTING OF HOUSEHOLDS OF SCHOOL PUPILS

Dear Parent/Carer,

We are writing to you with information about a new national scheme which will enable households with a school-age child to access regular asymptomatic Covid-19 testing, and to encourage you to participate in this initiative. Any adults living in households with primary school, secondary school and college age children, including their childcare and support bubbles, are now able to access free Lateral Flow Tests (LFT) to take twice a week at home.

One in three people who test positive for Covid-19 do not have symptoms and so regular asymptomatic testing continues to be a vital part of our response to managing the virus. This new approach to household testing will also help to support the easing of restrictions set out by the Prime Minister last week, starting with the re-opening of schools and colleges from next week.

As children and young people return to the classroom, we need to be sure that potential Covid-19 cases are found as quickly as possible and that measures are put in place to prevent them from spreading throughout the school community. Although cases are declining generally, we all need to continue to play our part to keep the virus under control and ensure children and young people can remain in education.

LFTs detect cases quickly – in under 30 minutes – meaning anyone who tests positive but who is not showing Covid-19 symptoms will be able to self-isolate immediately and reduce the likelihood of unknowingly spreading the virus further. You can access a free LFT in a number of ways, including through your employer if they offer testing to employees, at the local LFT site in your district, by collecting a home LFT kit from a test site, or by ordering a home test kit online. More information about these options can be found here: [Rapid lateral flow testing for households and bubbles of school pupils and staff - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/rapid-lateral-flow-testing-for-households-and-bubbles-of-school-pupils-and-staff)

If you test positive following a LFT, you must inform your child's school or college and self-isolate along with the rest of your household. You will also be required to take a PCR Covid-19 test to confirm the result. If this happens, your child must remain at home with you during the isolation period and their school/college will provide access to remote education for them. There is support available if you are required to self-isolate, including financial support if you are unable to go out to work or work from home: <https://www.essex.gov.uk/support-if-you-are-self-isolating>

If your LFT is negative, this means the test did not find signs of Covid-19. It is vital that, even in this instance, you continue to follow all Covid-19 guidance around handwashing, social-distancing and wearing a face covering if you can, where

recommended.

This new regular testing approach for households is designed to minimise the spread of Covid-19 and support the successful return of more learners to face-to-face education. Testing is an additional measure, working in combination with other protective measures that are in place in schools and colleges to help protect students and staff. These measures together will help to support settings to remain a safe place to learn and work and ensure the learning of children and young people is not disrupted.

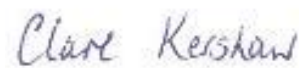
This new approach is for adults **only** and this includes a child's support bubble and childcare bubble. In addition to it, primary, secondary school and college staff are continuing to undertake regular testing. Secondary school and college pupils will also undertake regular testing which will be provided via their school or college. Primary school students are not being offered LFTs at this time but parents and carers should access a PCR Covid-19 test for them via the national booking system if they develop symptoms.

Thank you for your ongoing support to our schools and colleges and the wider community.

Best wishes



Mike Gogarty  
Director of Public Health and Wellbeing  
Essex County Council



Clare Kershaw  
Director of Education  
Essex County Council