

19 August 2021

COVID-19 testing learners prior to return in September & contact tracing

Dear Learner, Parent / Carer,

As you are aware, the Department for Education has stated that all learners in secondary schools / colleges will need to be tested twice in their educational establishments – once prior to their return in September and again three to five days later. These tests will help staff and learners to remain in college safely. Up to one third of people who have coronavirus experience no symptoms. By testing we will help to stop the virus spread and help to keep our college open as safely as possible. The test is voluntary, but we would encourage everyone to take it.

We will be testing all learners on **Wednesday 01 September** and **Thursday 02 September** between the hours of **9am and 3pm** on the college site. There is no need to book but we would strongly encourage all our learners to come on one of those days. The College will be open to learners on these two days for the purpose of COVID testing only, once the learner has taken the test, they should leave the college site promptly and are free to go about their day as usual while awaiting the test result.

If your child is a new learner to LDE UTC, or we do not already have consent for on-site testing for your child, then please visit our COVID HUB website (tinyurl.com/LDECOVIDHUB) and click “Consent to Rapid Testing” to confirm if you give consent or not.

If you are a learner over the age of 16 you may provide consent yourself after discussion with your parents / carers.

Those taking the test will be supervised by trained staff. The ‘lateral flow’ tests are quick and easy using a swab of your nose and throat. For under 18s, staff can oversee the swab process. A second test will be offered to all learners on the 6th, 7th or 8th September. These will be performed on-site during normal lesson time. Learners for whom we have consent will be escorted by a member of staff in class groups to our on-site testing centre, and then return to their normal lessons once the test has been taken.

Results (which take around half an hour from testing) will be shared directly with learners participating. Where participants are under 16, parents or legal guardians will also be informed. For positive results, we will contact you directly shortly after the test result, for negative or void results you can expect to receive the results within 24 hours direct from NHS Test & Trace.

We know these tests work - in validation studies conducted by Oxford University and Public Health England, they were shown to be as accurate in identifying a case as a PCR test (99.68% specificity). The tests have lower sensitivity, but they are better at picking up cases when a person has higher viral load, hence the need to test frequently.

Contact Tracing

Another key change that has taken place over the course of the summer in education / childcare settings is that we are no longer going to conduct routine contact tracing.

As with positive cases in any other setting, NHS Test and Trace will work with either the positive case – or in the case of children – the parents, carers or guardian of the positive case to identify close contacts.

NHS Test and Trace already manages the contact tracing process for the rest of society – including children who have recorded a positive PCR test – and has expertise in supporting people to identify close contacts.

If your child gets a positive PCR test result, NHS Test and Trace will contact you, using the details you registered when ordering the PCR test. You and/or your child will be asked a series of specific questions designed to identify who your child has been in close contact with.

Being in an education or childcare setting with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 will not necessarily mean a person is identified as a close contact.

You will be asked to provide the contact details, if you know them, of any of the individuals – or their parents or guardians – who have been identified as close contacts. NHS Test and Trace will then get in touch with these close contacts and provide appropriate instructions or advice. Since the 16 August, if the close contact is under 18, they will not have to self-isolate (in line with the policy for fully vaccinated adults) but will be asked to take a PCR test immediately, other than for very young children identified as non-household contacts, and they will not need to self-isolate while awaiting the results of the test. If the PCR test is positive, they will be required to self-isolate for 10 days from the date of the test. NHS Test and Trace will then get in touch to identify close contacts (as per information above).

What if someone tests positive during on-site testing at LDE UTC?

Participating learners who test positive will be informed about their results individually. Where participants are under 16, parents or legal guardians will also be notified. Guidance on safe travel and additional precautions will be provided along with test results.

Learners will need to take a further 'PCR test' (similar to those done in local and regional testing sites) on the same day (or as soon as possible). LDE UTC will be able to provide these

PCR test kits to perform at home, or you can go to www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test or call 119 to book a follow-up test. If ordering a PCR test yourselves, they should choose to visit a drive-through test site if possible, as it is faster than requesting a home test. During this time while they wait for the PCR result (via text / email) they will need to self-isolate.

If the PCR test returns a positive result you will have to self-isolate and follow the guidance from NHS Test and Trace.

What happens if the test is negative?

They will be able to resume their activities as normal. The College will only contact you if you test positive on a 'lateral flow' test, so if you do not hear you can assume it was negative. A small number of learners may need to repeat the test if the first test was invalid or void for some reason.

What if I / my child develops symptoms?

This testing programme at college is for people with no symptoms. If you / your child develops symptoms at any time (such as a high temperature; a new, continuous cough; or a loss or change to their sense of smell or taste) they must immediately self-isolate, and book a test by calling 119 or visiting <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>.

We will support our learners throughout, but please contact us if you need this information in any other language or format or if you have any questions. You can call the office on 0203 019 7333 or email our Covid dedicated line on covid@ldeutc.co.uk

We recognise how difficult the past 18 months have been and the sacrifices that all families, education and childcare settings have had to make. This has been an enormously challenging time for everyone and we would like to take the opportunity to thank you for everything you have done and continue to do to ensure our college community stays safe.

Yours sincerely,

Gloria Gold
Vice Principal – Personal Development