

# NHS Test and Trace – Southend-on-Sea

## Communications plan

### 1. Background:

On 27 May 2020 Health Secretary Matt Hancock announced that NHS Test and Trace would launch at 9am the following morning.

He said that a Test and Trace programme is crucial to being able to release lockdown measures to get the country and the economy moving again and to prevent a second wave of infections, ahead of a vaccine or cure becoming available.

The government is urging everyone to follow a three-step plan:

**Step 1** - If you have one or more of the symptoms of coronavirus – a fever, a new continuous cough or a loss of taste or smell – you and the people you live with must immediately self-isolate.

**Step 2** – You then must book a test on the [www.NHS/coronavirus](https://www.nhs.uk/coronavirus) website and if you don't have internet access dial 119. Do not leave home for any other reason. If you test positive, you will then be contacted by the NHS Test and Trace service within 24 hours.

**Step 3** – If you do test positive, NHS Test and Trace will help you establish who you have been in contact with and might have infected. This could be members of your own household already isolating or someone you have had close contact with.

Significant contact is defined as below:

- had face-to-face contact of any duration (less than 1 metre away)
- were coughed or sneezed on
- spent more than 15 minutes within 2 metres of each other
- travelled in a car or other small vehicle (even on a short journey)

You will also be given clinical advice and support for dealing with the virus. NHS Test and Trace will then contact those contacts anonymously. If you are one of those contacts, you will be advised to isolate for 14 days, even if you don't have symptoms or feel perfectly well. If you developed symptoms, you would be required to get a test. Even if negative they still have to self-isolate for 14 days. Your household doesn't need to self-isolate with you, if you do not have symptoms, but they must take extra care to follow the guidance on social distancing and handwashing both inside and outside the home.

Initially NHS Test and Trace includes a nationally-run contact centre staffed by in the region of 25,000 call handlers and 7,000 health professionals. Eventually it will also include a smart phone app.

A Test and Trace programme should dramatically slow the transmission rate of coronavirus by tracking cases of it. Research suggests there is significant

transmission that goes on before people get symptoms and indeed some people will never get symptoms. Contacting people who have been in contact with someone with symptoms – many of whom may not have symptoms themselves – and asking them to test and self-isolate, should significantly reduce the spread of the virus.

Testing capacity also continues to increase and the time taken to get a result is becoming quicker, which is crucial to the tracing programme.

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council is responsible for the promotion of NHS Test and Trace. There will need to be appropriate messaging to strongly encourage people to use the programme correctly. This will involve communications which are tailored and targeted to specific groups as well as traditional communication channels.

The council's communications strategy and activity falls under three key headings:

### **Prevent, Respond, Support**

#### **Prevent:**

- Prevention - how can we prevent the spread of the virus and encourage local people to use test and trace?

#### **Respond:**

- Management of local outbreaks
- Local action in response to local outbreaks/data and insight – to prevent the further spread of the virus

#### **Support:**

- Providing support to those self-isolating through established local and national systems and support networks

The Test and Trace programme involves effort on the national, regional and local level to ensure all of these outcomes are achieved.

It is clear that for the programme to be a success it will require well managed communications so that people use the contact tracing programme correctly and take action to protect themselves and the people they care about. This will help to protect the NHS and all front-line workers, allow the Government to progressively lift lockdown measures and help to prevent a second wave of the virus.

### **2. Communication objectives:**

- Provide clear guidance on how people use NHS Test and Trace and encourage this by highlighting importance of test and trace to reduce transmission rate, preventing a second wave and helping the country and local area to gradually move out of lockdown
- Highlighting the importance of social distancing through continuation and nuancing of the local 'stay safe, stay apart messaging

- Dispel concerns and worries that might discourage people taking part in Test and Trace through clear messaging
- Encourage those who receive notification that they need to isolate and get tested
- Support those who are isolating and need help to access support and encourage others to consider support they will need if they are required to isolate
- Ensure key messages reach groups that are socially excluded and do not engage with public services and are likely to have a high risk of infection.
- Present clear messages in the media and from trusted sources
- Clearly explain and promote why a decision has been made to enact 'local containment' and the process of that

### **3. Stakeholders and key audiences:**

#### **The public:**

- General public
- People who have English as an additional language
- People without a smart phone or internet connection
- People from complex groups: these include groups that are known to have high risk and also those who are socially excluded, who may not be known or do not readily engage with public services but also have high risk of infection or serious illness.
- Children in care
- Elderly
- Care homes
- Rough sleepers and homeless
- Gypsies and Travellers
- Migrant communities
- Offenders
- Domestic violence victims
- Children and young people criminally exploited
- Those experiencing mental health issues
- Black and minority ethnic
- Sensory impairment

#### **The media:**

Tradition print and digital local and regional media and also hyper-local sites and groups

**Elected members:**

Councillors and MP's

**Employees:**

Local authority staff and commissioned services

**Workplaces/businesses:**

In particular those people in jobs which are unstable or do not automatically receive sick pay and those workplaces that are deemed to be high risk.

Schools

**Key stakeholders:**

Voluntary sector and community groups

Local Resilience Forum members

Southend Business Partnership

Essex Chamber of Commerce

Leigh Town Council

Schools a

South Essex College

University of Essex

**4. Strategy:****The right messages, to the right audience, at the right time**

We will use a combination of national assets and material and locally targeted activity to deliver relevant, timely and open messages.

The Government is providing lots of information and resources to promote the NHS Test and Trace scheme nationally and to support local authorities to communicate about Test and Trace locally.

We are using that content, and will localise it where needed, and then share and communicate through relevant channels and methods. Of importance will be using the data available to us to identify communities we need to target (both geographical, demographic etc), and how best to tailor this messaging. This insight will be crucial to ensure we are targeting where we are seeing emerging issues and areas that are not adhering to social distancing measures

The language used will be simple to understand with clear messages about what we need people to do and why it is so important.

**Key messages:****Prevent:**

- ***Do your bit and help prevent local outbreaks:***  
*Keep on social distancing and if you do get symptoms, contact test and trace.*  
To protect your friends and family, testing and tracing must become a new way of life. It is crucial to be able to prevent a second wave of infections and

to release lockdown measures, ahead of a vaccine or cure becoming available. Keep on social distancing and if you do get symptoms, contact test and trace

- ***Do it for those you love and care about:***  
*Keep on social distancing and if you do get symptoms, contact test and trace.*  
The more people that use Test and Trace correctly, the more effective it will be at stopping the spread of the virus, the safer it will be for you and your loved ones and the faster the lockdown can be eased further. Do it for the people you love and care about, for your community, for the NHS and all those frontline workers who have done so much and put themselves at risk to keep you and your family safe.
- ***Do it for yourself***  
*Keep on social distancing and if you do get symptoms, contact test and trace.*  
If you observe social distancing, you will not be considered a contact by the test and trace programme and will not need to self isolate.

#### **Respond:**

- We have a local programme and process in place and we are taking this action to prevent further spread of coronavirus
- Please be assured that we have a professional, experienced and dedicated team to manage outbreaks and prevent the further spread of coronavirus
- We understand local containment is inconvenient, but please abide by the process for the good of the community, for the good of those you love and care about and for yourself

#### **Support/hubs key messages: to be agreed**

We are here to support you if you have no support network in place

If you need help whilst having to isolate, please visit [www.southend.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.southend.gov.uk/coronavirus) or call Southend Coronavirus Action Line on 01702 212497.

Be a good neighbour and support your local community. If you know someone who is self-isolating because of the virus, please check that they are ok and whether they need any support.

#### **5. Implementation:**

##### **Channels**

- Media relations - media releases and interviews/radio/print media
- Digital - social media/targeted paid social media/boosted posts/website/digital bus stops/e-comms/local Facebook groups
- Direct communications – letter to affected stakeholders

- Marketing - marketing material/outdoor advertising in targeted locations/print advertising

To reach the various stakeholders, there will be a need to target communications using a variety of means and focus on **prevent, respond and support**.

Other channels:

- Community Facebook groups.
- Schools weekly newsletter
- Community centres
- Children's centres
- Residents' associations
- Parish councils
- South Essex Community Hub
- Publications produced by partner organisations
- Banners and outdoor sites
- Voluntary and community sector
- Care home noticeboards and newsletters
- Homeless prevention workers
- Housing association newsletters
- GP practice notice boards and call holding/answerphone messages
- NHS and care home staff, to stress the importance of self-isolation

### **Reaching diverse communities**

One of the key areas to consider, to ensure as many people as possible use the track and trace system, will be reaching diverse communities.

The communications team will work with the engagement team to reach out to faith and community groups and ensure we communicate with 'hard to reach' groups.

### **Media protocol:**

The council's usual media protocol will apply which is based on the principles of being open and transparent. It is a flexible protocol that ensures the right sign offs are achieved quickly and avoid 'no-comment' scenarios. Media materials should reinforce key messages and support the communications objectives and approach.

### **Spokespeople**

The following people have been agreed as talking heads on the Test and Trace programme locally:

- Cllr Ian Gilbert, leader of Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

- Cllr Trevor Harp, Southend-on-Sea Borough Council cabinet member for health and adult social care
- Krishna Ramkhelawon, Director of Public Health for Southend-on-Sea Borough Council
- CCG

## **6. Evaluation:**

We will continually evaluate the communications activity as follows:

Social media sentiment tracking and analytics

Media monitoring

Local data from the test and trace programme – percentage of population using the system etc

Health data on the prevalence of infection in our area/R value.

## **Appendix 1: Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What is contact tracing?**

Contact tracing is a well-established method for controlling the transmission of conditions – for instance, it is used with food poisoning and sexually transmitted diseases, including [HIV infections](#). The process involves a person who is infected recounting their movements and activities to build up a picture of who else might have been exposed to.

This is crucial with Covid-19 as the virus is highly infectious, symptoms can take several days to first appear and people can pass it on 48 hours before symptoms occur.

The system launched by the Government includes a website, contact centre staffed by 25,000 call handlers, 7,000 health professionals and eventually a smartphone app.

### **How will it work?**

#### **Test and Trace follows a three step plan:**

**Step 1** - If you have one or more of the symptoms of coronavirus – a fever, a new continuous cough or a loss of taste or smell – you and the people you live with must immediately self-isolate.

**Step 2** – You then must book a test on the [www.NHS/coronavirus](https://www.nhs.uk/coronavirus) website and if you don't have internet access dial 119. Do not leave home for any other reason. If you test positive, you will then be contacted by the NHS Test and Trace service within 24 hours.

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### **What information will I be asked to provide?**

The website or call handler will want to take information about your symptoms so that advice can be given on the need to self-isolate and/or test. You and those you live with will be asked to self-isolate for 14 days from the time symptoms appear.

If you were to take a test and it was returned positive, you would be asked to input into the website the details of people you have made significant contact with, i.e



have been within 2 metres of for more than 15 minutes in the past few days. Those without the internet would be able to undergo this process this with a call handler.

Regardless of how the contacts were recorded, NHS Test and Trace would then make contact with each of those people to notify them of the need to self-isolate for 14 days and to take a test.

### **Do I have to take part in test and trace?**

Test and Trace is voluntary. There is no obligation to use it, but the more people that do so, the more effective it will be in helping monitor the spread of the virus and easing lockdown conditions.

The Government has said that participation in the programme will be voluntary at first, but it will be made mandatory if needed.

### **I am worried about how my data is being used. Has this been considered?**

Your information would not be shared with anyone else without your permission.

The privacy and security of people's data is a priority and NHSX has involved experts from the National Cyber Security Centre to advise on best practice through the app's development. Data will only ever be used for NHS care, management, evaluation and research and the NHS will comply fully with the law around its use, including the General Data Protection Regulation.

### **What do I do if I am told that I need to self-isolate and I have to be at work or have made other commitments?**

If you are advised to self-isolate then we strongly recommend that you do. Using Test and Trace correctly will help to control the virus until we have a vaccine, if that is possible, and allow people to take action to protect themselves, the people they care about and the NHS. It would also prevent a second wave of the virus.

### **How will I be notified that I need to self-isolate or test?**

You will be alerted by one the NHS Test and Trace call handlers, advising you to self-isolate and offering public health advice.

### **Will I be given any information about where and when I may have been in contact with someone?**

No, this information will not be shared with you, in line with our commitment to protecting people's data and identity.

