You may be aware that government has now extended the Coronavirus testing programme so that **everyone, over the age of 5, who is showing coronavirus symptoms, is eligible to book a swab test** to find out if they have the virus.

This is an important step in the national testing programme that will not only help support people to know their diagnosis and take appropriate action to keep themselves and others safe, but will prevent further spread of the virus and give us a better national picture that will support the decisions on the easing of lockdown restrictions.

There is very high demand for tests at the moment and so people in hospital and [essential workers](https://liveworkinvest.us13.list-manage.com/track/click?u=c82daebd778d6cd9667beed7e&id=4c5f748956&e=7ab728a9f9), including NHS and social care staff, will need to be prioritised while allowing as many tests as possible for the wider population.

**As a business in the borough, you can support this effort by encouraging your staff to book of swab tests when they have symptoms. This will prevent people from being off work through self-isolation when it isn’t necessary, protect the whole of your workforce and help speed up the lifting of the lockdown.**

Testing should be carried out when a person is **symptomatic** and is most reliable for people who have had symptoms of COVID-19 for between two and five days. It’s best to apply for the test in the first three days as it may take one or two days to arrange. Your employees can ask for a test themselves if they have symptoms, or you can use the employer referral process below.

For further details and information on testing please visit [https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-getting-tested](https://liveworkinvest.us13.list-manage.com/track/click?u=c82daebd778d6cd9667beed7e&id=9be14ae37d&e=7ab728a9f9) for priority testing or [https://www.nhs.uk/ask-for-a-coronavirus-test](https://liveworkinvest.us13.list-manage.com/track/click?u=c82daebd778d6cd9667beed7e&id=e5da93d66b&e=7ab728a9f9) for testing of the wider population.

Symptoms of coronavirus include:

* a high temperature – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)
* a new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)
* loss/change in your normal sense of smell or taste

**Employer referral**
Businesses employing [essential workers](https://liveworkinvest.us13.list-manage.com/track/click?u=c82daebd778d6cd9667beed7e&id=e83894af4c&e=7ab728a9f9) who have symptoms can use the referral portal to get them tests. It is a secure portal for employers to use to upload the full list of names and contact details of self-isolating essential workers.

If referred through this portal, essential workers will be invited to book a test for themselves (if symptomatic) or their symptomatic household member(s) at a regional testing site or mobile unit.

To obtain a login for the portal, employers of essential workers should email portalservicedesk@dhsc.gov.uk with:

* organisation name
* nature of the organisation’s business
* region
* names (where possible) and email addresses of the 2 users who will load essential worker contact details.

[More details and guidance on the employer portal can be found here](https://liveworkinvest.us13.list-manage.com/track/click?u=c82daebd778d6cd9667beed7e&id=6cc698015d&e=7ab728a9f9).

You can also email COVID-19@tameside.gov.uk if you have any questions regarding testing and our team will get back to you.