

School Testing Guidance and FAQs

Updated: 10 March 2021

What is the current policy?

This pack provides guidance on when confirmatory PCR testing applies for people taking LFD tests in both supervised and unsupervised settings. In particular the document will clarify how the guidance is applied to schools now that they have reopened.

LFD tests will either be assisted or home tests:

- An **assisted test** is where the individual being tested swabs themselves under supervision of a trained operator, and the trained operator processes the test, reads and reports the result.
- A **home (self-reported) test** is where the individual swabs themselves, and reads and reports their own result. These tests are unsupervised and are not conducted in a controlled environment (i.e. they may be taken at home).

The below summarises the settings for LFD tests, and when confirmatory PCRs are recommended:

Type of test	Confirmatory PCR advised	Legal Duty to self-isolate
Assisted test	No	If LFD is positive
Home test	Yes	If confirmatory PCR is positive
Assisted test in a VOC postcode area	Yes	If LFD positive
Home test in a VOC postcode area	Yes	If confirmatory PCR is positive

The questions and answers provided on this and the following pages will be fed into the FAQ guidance for call handlers:

Question	Response
<p>Why is it that positive LFD tests taken in schools don't need a confirmatory PCR, but LFD tests taken at home do?</p>	<p>Tests taken on test sites, such as on school and college grounds, do not need a PCR confirmation. This is because these tests are done in a supervised environment.</p> <p>Assisted testing is where the individual being tested swabs themselves under supervision of a trained operator, and the trained operator processes the test and reads the result. PHE has validated the use of the test in an assisted testing model.</p> <p>All results from rapid tests taken at home need to be confirmed with a standard PCR test.</p>
<p>What is the rationale behind this?</p>	<p>This is because these tests are done in a supervised environment. Tests at home are not conducted in a controlled environment and will not have trained staff on hand – for this reason confirmatory PCR tests should be taken.</p>
<p>What happens if a confirmatory PCR follow up test to a home positive LFD is negative?</p>	<p>Following a home LFD positive test, a confirmatory PCR test should be booked online or via 119. If the PCR test is negative, it overrides the LFD test (at home only) and a child can return to school.</p>

Question	Response
<p>What happens if a supervised school-based LFD test is positive, but the parent takes child to a PCR test centre and obtains a negative result?</p>	<p>If the child received a supervised school-based LFD test and it was positive, then they and other members of their household must continue to self-isolate.</p> <p>PCR testing is not advised if you have received a positive result from a supervised LFD test. If a parent was to do this and it returned a negative result, the policy remains that child and other members of their household must still self-isolate.</p> <p>Extensive clinical evaluation has been carried out on the lateral flow tests. Evaluations from Public Health England and the University of Oxford show these tests are accurate enough to be used in the community. LFD tests identify the most infectious individuals. These individuals tend to spread the virus to many people and so identifying them remains important.</p>
<p>Is there a legal obligation to self-isolate for all positive LFD test?</p>	<p>If the positive LFD test is undertaken under supervised conditions (such as at school), the legal obligation to self-isolate commences right away.</p> <p>If the positive LFD test is undertaken at home, a confirmatory PCR test should be undertaken. The legal obligation in this circumstance would commence once a positive PCR test is confirmed, but anyone who has received a positive LFD result – and other members of their household – should still self-isolate as soon as they get that result.</p>

Question	Response
Has there been a policy change here?	No. The policy has remained unchanged since 27 January, when confirmatory PCR was suspended for LFD supervised tests.
Does a negative PCR result override a positive lateral flow result when it comes to self-isolating?	<p>If the negative PCR result was undertaken following a positive LFD test taken at home, then this would override and release an individual from self-isolation.</p> <p>However, if the LFD positive test was conducted in a supervised setting, such as a school, a confirmatory PCR test should not be taken – and, if it is taken, a negative result does not release the individual from the need to self-isolate. The self-isolation period must be commenced from the positive LFD test in a supervised environment and this is a legal obligation.</p> <p>Extensive clinical evaluation has been carried out on the lateral flow tests. Evaluations from Public Health England and the University of Oxford show these tests are accurate enough to be used in the community. LFD tests identify the most infectious individuals. These individuals tend to spread the virus to many people and so identifying them remains important.</p>
Why are there not PCR confirmatory tests for all LFD tests?	Tests taken on test sites, such as on school and college grounds, do not need a PCR confirmation. This is because these tests are done in a supervised environment.

Question	Response
<p>Why are you using LFDs if they give false positives? Won't this mean thousands of children isolating unnecessarily?</p>	<p>It is vital we use all the tools we have to catch positive cases of coronavirus, ensure that individuals and their households self-isolate, and prevent the virus being passed on.</p> <p>Extensive clinical evaluation has been carried out on the lateral flow tests. Evaluations from Public Health England and the University of Oxford show these tests are accurate enough to be used in the community. LFD tests identify the most infectious individuals. These individuals tend to spread the virus to many people and so identifying them remains important.</p> <p>Find out more about LFD testing here: Understanding lateral flow antigen testing for people without symptoms - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</p>
<p>Why are you home testing school children if it is less accurate?</p>	<p>At-home testing is still likely to be highly accurate, but confirmatory PCR is still advised given it is not carried out in a supervised environment.</p>
<p>When an LFD test is self-administered – is a confirmatory PCR required?</p>	<p>Following a home LFD positive test, a confirmatory PCR test should be booked online or via 119. If the PCR test is negative, it overrides the LFD test (at home only) and a child can return to school.</p> <p>All results from rapid tests taken at home need to be confirmed with a standard PCR test.</p>

Question	Response
How do we know if someone has a positive LFD result?	Self-reported LFD tests do not flow into NHS T&T web tool as we are not contact tracing off self-reported tests. Citizens will receive advice to self-isolate if there is a positive LFD test and to get a follow-up PCR test (for self-administered tests).
How do we ensure that a confirmatory PCR test is booked?	Cases are encouraged to get a confirmatory PCR test for self-administered LFD tests. There is no way of guaranteeing a PCR confirmatory test is booked.
What is the process to book a PCR test?	Follow the normal process by going online or calling 119 to book a test.
Do parents count as the supervisor enabling home tests to be classified as assisted?	Tests at home are not conducted in a controlled environment and will not have trained staff on hand therefore they are not classed as assisted-testing. If the LFD has a positive result then a confirmatory PCR test is advised.
What is the process for assisted LFD testing in schools?	<p>Assisted testing is where the individual being tested swabs themselves under supervision of a trained operator, and the trained operator processes the test and reads the result. PHE has validated the use of the test in an assisted testing model.</p> <p>Tests taken on test sites, such as on school and college grounds, do not need a PCR confirmation. This is because these tests are done in a supervised environment.</p>

Question	Response
How do LFD test results enter NHS Test and Trace?	Self-reported (home testing) LFD test results do not flow into NHS T&T. Assisted-tests flow into NHS T&T and will trigger contact tracing.
The positive LFD result flows into the system for VOC areas, have we got a mechanism if a follow-up PCR result is negative in a VOC area?	<p>If a case in a VOC area tests positive with an assisted LFD test then they will be encouraged to get a PCR test.</p> <p>If the follow-up PCR test is negative then will receive an isolation call as the case will be in the NHS T&T system as a positive case based on their initial positive LFD test (as positive LFD tests results flow directly into NHS T&T for contact tracing).</p> <p>If on the isolation call the case flags that they had a negative PCR test and are located in a VOC area then the NHS T&T case worker should advise the case to dispute the result via 119 Disputes and Enquiries call line.</p>

Question	Response
<p>What happens if a supervised school-based LFD test is positive, but the parent takes child to a PCR test centre and obtains a negative result?</p>	<p>If the child received a supervised school-based LFD test and it was positive then they and other members of their household must self-isolate.</p> <p>PCR testing is not advised if you have received a positive result from a supervised LFD test. If a parent was to do this and it returned a negative result, the policy remains that child and other members of their household must still self-isolate.</p> <p>Extensive clinical evaluation has been carried out on the lateral flow tests. Evaluations from Public Health England and the University of Oxford show these tests are accurate enough to be used in the community. LFD tests identify the most infectious individuals. These individuals tend to spread the virus to many people and so identifying them remains important.</p>