

**From:** [redacted]  
**Sent:** 15 March 2022 14:34  
**To:** [redacted]  
**Cc:** [redacted]  
**Subject:** Test and Protect Transition Plan Publication Today

Dear Colleague,

As committed in the refreshed Strategic Framework, the Scottish Government today published its Test and Protect Transition Plan ([Test and Protect Transition Plan - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/test-and-protect-transition-plan/pages/introduction.aspx)), details of which were provided by the First Minister to Parliament.

The Transition Plan sets out the timelines for moving away from population-wide testing aimed at reducing transmission, towards a more targeted approach to testing. It set out a new strategic intent for Test and Protect, which is:

*To adapt Test & Protect to support the effective management of Covid-19 as it becomes endemic, to support patient treatment and care; protect those in highest risk settings; monitor prevalence and the risk of new variants, respond to outbreaks, scale if required for future health threats, and build a legacy for wider population health benefit.*

From 18 April, we are no longer asking the general public to test themselves regularly if they are asymptomatic. From the end of April, routine population-wide testing will end, including for those who have symptoms. Contact tracing will end at this point too - although people with symptoms of respiratory illness will be advised to stay at home.

Expert advisers are now of the view that, at the current time, the population has much stronger protection against COVID-19 than at any other point in the pandemic, due to the vaccination programme and the development of natural immunity to the infection. In addition, severe health outcomes are now far less likely to arise due to this protection, availability of and access to antiviral treatments, and increased scientific and public understanding about how to manage risk.

Public Health Scotland advice is that asymptomatic people are less likely to transmit COVID-19 than symptomatic people, and that children and young people are less likely to transmit than adults (both amongst themselves and to adults). At this stage in the pandemic, it is considered proportionate to no longer undertake asymptomatic general population testing, in non-healthcare workplaces and education settings.

Throughout the transition period, anyone who experiences COVID-19 symptoms should continue to book a PCR test as they would currently do at present.

It is important to note that while work is moving at pace, we will continue to support the workforce during this period.

We continue to express our gratitude to the staff across the country who have worked tirelessly and with such dedication and professionalism throughout the pandemic. The work of employers and staff to quickly scale-up an entirely new Test and Protect system and to remain agile to emerging response needs of the pandemic is commendable.

We have always said that it is the people working to respond to the pandemic which has enabled such swift action to be taken at various peaks of the pandemic and that includes those in the Test and Protect system.

However, it is now necessary to make changes to how the Test and Protect system will operate, ensuring a proportionate approach is taken to managing the virus.

All of these proposed changes will have an impact on the workforce and the number of staff required to continue to provide the proportionate service. We continue to work with all employers to ensure they are well-equipped to support staff to transition into different roles either within their existing employer or with another employer/ sector.

Now that we have indicative dates for the proposed changes, we will work intensively with employers to explore all possible opportunities to retain employment opportunities for staff.

We have established a workforce sub-group which is continuing to review how we support staff during the transition phase and to explore on-going or new employment opportunities for staff both in the public and private sector. We have available the infrastructure of the Partnership Action for Continuing Employment (PACE) to provide bespoke and individualised support for all staff impacted. We ask that you circulate the details of PACE to all staff in any messages you issue to ensure they can quickly move to adapt any offering to provide support to those impacted by the changes.

We are grateful for your on-going support which will be crucial to managing the transition phase and to continue to provide the support to all of your workforce.

I know you will all be issuing messages to staff involved in Test and Protect to highlight the changes being proposed. In doing so, you may wish to draw on the following key points noted below when localising the national message.

Thank you for your on-going support as we continue to manage our necessary and proportionate approach to the pandemic and as we look to the next phase of transition.

The Test and Protect Workforce Sub-Group will continue to meet to discuss any changes, how we manage the transition phase and how we continue to support the workforce.

In the meantime, if you have any queries, please get in touch.

Kind regards,

[redacted]

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*Test and Protect has been one of the key interventions over the course of the last two years in Scotland to reduce the impact of Covid-19 on our health, and on the wider social and economic harms caused by this pandemic.*

*This intervention has been possible thanks to all of you – the dedicated workforce across testing, contact tracing, and supporting isolation.*

*This change means we will need to change how we proportionately staff Test and Protect during the transition phase. It is likely we will begin to see a gradual reduction in the need for the same scale of workforce than at the start of the pandemic.*

*Your professionalism and dedication, as well as agility to meet the demands of the ever-changing response requirements of the pandemic is truly valued. Without you all, we simply would not have been able to respond in the way we have. You have worked tirelessly to support this necessary intervention and for that the country is truly grateful.*

*As we move through the transition phase we will continue to support all of you to move into new roles, either within our organisation or with another employer or sector. We are actively reviewing the terms of existing contracts and will do all we can to find on-going employment opportunities. However, it is likely some change will be required.*

*You will wish to consider your next steps and how we as an employer can support you. In doing so, you will want to be aware of the Scottish Government's Partnership Action for Continuing Employment (PACE), run by Skills Development Scotland and in partnership with a range of organisations, which can support you by providing individualised and tailored support. I would encourage you to have a look at the support available - [www.redundancyscotland.co.uk](http://www.redundancyscotland.co.uk).*

*Finally, on behalf of everyone involved in Test and Protect and the wider Covid response, I want to thank you wholeheartedly for all of your support during what has been a challenging two years.*

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