

## **GDS Practice Engagement with Test & Protect Teams During COVID-19.**

As part of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, effective and timely contact tracing supports the aims for sustained reduction in new cases and a reduction in transmission. In Scotland, this is achieved through a programme of community testing, contact tracing and isolation (promoted as ‘**Test and Protect**’ to the public).

As social interactions in communities increase, it is possible interactions with dental services will involve individuals who have been identified as COVID cases and/or close contacts. This may result in dental practices being contacted by Test and Protect teams, in the first instance. Dental practices are considered to be complex settings (along with other Health & Social Care settings).

Health Protection Scotland has published guidance for [COVID-19 contact tracing in complex settings](#).

**It is important the practice maintains the appropriate risk assessments and protocols in place for both clinical and non-clinical areas of the practice (including waiting rooms, communal areas and staff areas) as set out in SDCEP guidance for [COVID-19 Practice Recovery](#). Please ensure there is a consideration of behaviours inside and outside the workplace.**

The Test and Protect Team may not have a full understanding of the dental setting and the necessary protocols as set out in guidance. The Oral Health Directorate can provide support through the Dental Practice Advisors and Consultant in Dental Public Health when engaging with Test and Protect, if required.

There are two main scenarios for Test and Protect teams contacting a dental practice:

- A patient (or close contact of a patient) who has tested positive, has attended your practice
- A member of the practice staff has tested positive and has provided the Test and Protect team with occupational details

If the appropriate practice risk assessments and protocols are in place, it would be anticipated most contact trace enquiries involving dental practices could be resolved in an uncomplicated manner. In more complex investigations, such as a possible cluster of cases or health care worker to patient transmission, this may be escalated to the Board’s Public Health Protection Unit. The Occupational Health Team will be able to provide advice and support to GDS practices if this occurs.

Further information on Test and Protect is available at <https://www.nhsggc.org.uk/your-health/health-issues/covid-19-coronavirus/for-nhsggc-staff/test-and-protect/faqs-for-healthcare-staff/>

### **TEST AND PROTECT ENQUIRY LINKED TO PATIENT:**

The Test and Protect Team would be expected to ask the practice questions on the following themes:

- Any potential contacts during consultation
- Any time spent waiting in waiting room, and any contacts/exposures generated from this
- Any contact with admin/other staff
- Use of PPE by health staff
- Decontamination procedures

**Staff wearing appropriate PPE during exposure to COVID-19 cases, where there has been no breach in that PPE,** should have no significant exposure risk so **should not be classified as contacts** by Test and Protect – with a simple resolution to the enquiry.

**Staff who have not been wearing appropriate PPE during exposures to COVID-19 case, including a failure to comply with requirements for non-clinical areas** and who meet the definition of a close contact, **should be excluded from work and self-isolate in line with advice for general members of the public** – such an enquiry may result in the Test and Protect team escalating the enquiry to the Public Health Protection Unit for further investigation.

**Any symptomatic staff must not report for duty and should self-isolate and arrange to be tested** – such an enquiry may result in the Test and Protect team escalating the enquiry to the Public Health Protection Unit for further investigation.

As part of an investigation the Test and Protect team or Public Health Protection Unit may request additional information relating to other patients who may have attended the practice for example appointment lists. The Oral Health Directorate will liaise and support during this process (if requested) through the Dental Practice Advisors and Consultant in Dental Public Health via the GDS Team

If there are no concerns, then the case can be closed. If there are any concerns, particularly around the protocols in place in the practice or related to Aerosol Generating Procedures, the case may be escalated to a Public Health lead.

## **TEST AND PROTECT ENQUIRY LINKED TO MEMBER OF STAFF:**

In the event of a member of practice staff receiving a positive COVID test, the practice is likely to be informed by the member of staff, or through Occupational Health. The practice may need to take action in advance of any contact by Test and Protect.

Key steps and sources of information and guidance are summarised below:

- The member of staff with the positive test should self-isolate immediately
- If the staff member was last in work **more than** 48 hours before symptom onset (or test date if asymptomatic) then no additional action is required in the practice.

The Public Health Protection Unit will not routinely contact the practice unless there are contacts identified through Test and Protect or a significant concern. Occupational Health will lead on any risk assessment or processes involving practice staff.

Practices may need to make decisions on the impact on other staff or services prior to any public health contact.

Please revisit your risk assessments and protocols to ensure they remain robust and revise where appropriate and ensure your business continuity plan is up to date. Non-clinical areas are potentially a greater risk for transmission as PPE and IPC are unlikely to be as stringent as in clinical areas and should include consideration of behaviours in and out of the workplace.

Other members of practice staff who are contacts should self-isolate in line with guidance ([COVID-19 contact tracing in complex settings](#)).

Advice and guidance is available from Occupational Health if there are any particular concerns or uncertainty and support is available through the Dental Practice Advisors and Consultant in Dental Public Health.

Such support may include (but is not limited to) if you are in a shared building such as a Health Centre, in liaising with the Centre administrator and informing the relevant HSCP. Communication to NHS GG&C PDS colleagues is important when the practice is co-located in the same building and shares communal spaces. In the event of a positive case, arrangements will be required for any necessary cleaning within the practice or communal areas.

**The Public Health Protection Unit should always be contacted if there are 2 or more staff cases in a 14-day period.**