

**Asymptomatic testing to be available for property sector**

The Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) has been writing to stakeholders within the industry informing them of the current routes regarding asymptomatic testing to try and help organisations within the property sector, and various other sectors with people who need to leave home to work stay safe.

Iain McKenzie, CEO of The Guild of Property Professionals, says that according to the letter that was received by The Guild, the Government is currently in the process of expanding asymptomatic testing across the country to ensure as many people as possible have access to testing to identify and isolate positive cases to break chains of transmission, which will enable essential services and sectors such as housing to continue operating within a safe manner throughout lockdown.

“The letter states that there are two routes that those within the property sector can take for testing.  In the case where a business has more than 50 employees, workplace testing will be providing to employers. Workplace testing has already been in place in a number of sectors for some time, however, this has now been expanded further to all business with the minimum required number of staff. If the business has less than 50 employees, which will likely be the case for most independent estate and lettings agents, community testing will be provided through local authority sites.  According to the letter, all local authorities are expected to go live with community testing by the end of February,” McKenzie adds.

He notes that community testing will cover small or local businesses, sole traders and self-employed people within a profession that requires them to leave their home. “As a sector that works within other people’s homes it is important for agents to make use of the community testing provided by the Government to ensure that they keep vendors and buyers safe. According to Health Secretary Matt Hancock, roughly a third of people who have coronavirus do not show symptoms, which is why asymptomatic testing is so vital to minimising the spread of Covid-19 and breaking transmission chains. Every positive case that is found will help stop the spread of the virus and will allow agents to continue working in a safe manner,” says McKenzie. “Expanding the offering to all local authorities means that the testing will be more readily available to both local independent estate and lettings agents, as well as the vendors and buyers they come into contact with.”

McKenzie says that the letter from MHCLG also states that the long-term plan would be for home testing to be rolled out as another option for workforces to get access to testing. “At this point in time the delivery model for home testing is still being worked out, but with many agents based at home with staff members working remotely, home testing will be another easy and flexible option to ensure the spread of the virus is contained and both the agents and public are kept safe.”

Agents with fewer than 50 employees who would like access to testing for asymptomatic cases in their community can contact CommunityTesting.CentralOps@dhsc.gov.uk

Agents with more than 50 employees who would like to find out about applying for workplace testing can contact p-and-psector@dhsc.gov.uk

For general enquires about how these options for testing might work in practice within your office, contact: MHCLGTestingEnquiries@communities.gov.uk

**-ENDS-**

**Editors’ Notes**

The Guild of Property Professionals (The Guild)

The Guild is a network of 800 of the best independent estate agents from across the UK. The Guild is a sign of professional excellence that agents can use to differentiate themselves from their competitors and assure clients that they will act with knowledge and integrity to achieve results, the three core values of The Guild. To allow agents to perform a superior service, The Guild offers marketing, business and technology services to its members.