

Coronavirus – government tightens testing rules

The First Minister announced today at Holyrood that there will be a tightening of rules around testing of close contacts from Thursday.

Anyone who is identified as a close contact of someone who has tested positive for Covid-19 will be asked to get tested. This step will ensure that any asymptomatic cases which might otherwise be undetected, will be identified. This will also be protection for those who are close contacts who are at a higher risk because of their exposure to someone with Covid-19.

Before this Incident Management Teams were able to order testing of close contacts, but only on a case by case basis.

Now everyone who has been identified as a close contact by the Protect Scotland app or by way of manual tracing will be provided with instructions on how to book a test. This is not intended to replace self-isolation and close contacts will have to self-isolate for 10 days. The incubation period for the virus means that the risk of developing Covid-19 is only significantly reduced after 10 days.

The advice is clear – not to leave self-isolation early as you could expose others to the virus.

Public Health Minister Mairi Gougeon said: “Testing close contacts is a significant step in enhancing our public health response, as it will enable us to find asymptomatic cases that would otherwise go undetected, helping us to stop the spread

of this virus through our communities.

“This is especially important given new Covid strains are more infectious, and not everyone who has coronavirus will have symptoms, so people could be spreading the disease to those around them without knowing it. And close contacts who test positive will be asked to self-isolate for a further 10 days from the time of their test result, to ensure they are no longer infectious when they leave self-isolation.

“This expansion is possible because of increases in our testing capacity, delivered through our new regional hub laboratories, which will help us suppress Covid to the lowest level in Scotland.

“However, it’s important to remember the incubation period of Covid means that a person could still test positive at a later stage in their isolation period – so a negative test does not mean you should stop self-isolating, and everyone should continue to follow the restrictions that are currently in place.”