

Media report

2 May 2021

Health minister confirms contact tracing in Wales will be extended to March 2022

Contact tracing in Wales is to be extended by 12 months, it has been announced. Health and Social Services Minister Eluned Morgan announced that a further £32m will be invested to extend the service to March 2022. Test Trace Protect (TTP) was introduced last year to reach those who been identified as a contact of someone who had tested positive for coronavirus to help stop the spread of the virus. The latest figures show that almost a year after TTP was launched in Wales, contact tracers have reached 99.7% of the positive cases that were eligible for follow up. They successfully contacted almost 95% of the close contacts that were eligible for follow up, and provided them with advice, or helped to resolve their cases. Local authorities have also approved more than 12,500 self-isolation support payments to help people to stay at home and reduce the risk of coronavirus spreading in their local communities. Contact tracers and advisers working for the TTP service are now undertaking enhanced contact tracing to tackle variants of concern. They also:

- Manage and provide assurance to almost 18,000 travellers from amber list countries who must quarantine and take tests;
- Take vaccination programme calls from the public, arrange bookings and follow up on those who do not attend;
- Act as the contact centre for the Welsh Vaccination Certificate Service;
- Contact large businesses and local employers to encourage them to take up the Welsh Government offer of asymptomatic lateral flow tests, (LFTs);
- Contact local business, including licenced premises, hospitality and care homes, to establish correct contact details and establish if any support is needed in relation to COVID-19 measures, regulatory requirements and other public health issues;
Support community testing sites.

Health and Social Services Minister Eluned Morgan said: “Test, Trace, Protect has been extremely effective at supporting people who have tested positive and their contacts to isolate and providing advice, guidance and support. It is critical to stopping the virus spreading in our communities. “It’s a year since we set up Test, Trace, Protect from scratch – at what the Auditor General for Wales described as an extraordinary scale and at pace. A great deal of hard work across NHS Wales, local authorities, the voluntary sector and partner organisations has created a highly-effective programme to help us keep Wales safe. Everyone involved can be extremely proud of their efforts. “I want to thank everyone involved, including Public Health Wales and Digital Health Care Wales. In particular I want to thank the contact tracers and those providing Protect services who have provided much-needed support to people at an extremely difficult time in their lives. “They have done much more than their title suggests – they have identified vulnerable people and got them extra support, whether that be someone to chat to, a food parcel, or linking in with vital mental health services. “As we seek to stop the spread of new variants of concern, experienced contact tracers are key to doing this effectively and we are continuing to invest in this work.” Research has suggested that when coronavirus transmission was high before the firebreak last year, TTP reduced the R number from approximately 1.7 to 1.3. Using the more recent R number and improvements to monitoring, its impact may be to reduce R from 1.3 to 0.8.