

Friday 7 May 2021

College students and staff urged to get tested

College students and staff are now able to take part in rapid testing for COVID-19 through their local college.

Over 100,000 rapid lateral flow testing kits have been distributed to colleges across Scotland, with twice-weekly voluntary testing being encouraged to support the safe return to learning and teaching on campus.

In line with current public health guidance, a limited number of students are currently allowed onto college campuses at any one time, with safety measures like social distancing in place.

Shona Struthers, Chief Executive of Colleges Scotland, welcomed the rollout. She said: “I’m pleased college students and staff can support the efforts we are all making to keep each other safe by using lateral flow tests. Colleges are making these available with easy-to-access systems, and the reassurance they bring is a really important part of being back on campus for essential learning.”

National Clinical Director Professor Jason Leitch said: “The college testing programme is voluntary, and I encourage all eligible staff and students to take part regularly to help protect themselves, and keep their friends, families and colleges safe.

“Around 1 in 3 people with COVID-19 do not have symptoms. Rapid lateral flow testing helps to find cases in people who may have no symptoms but are still infectious and can transmit the virus to others.

“These easy-to-use at home kits offer extra reassurance so it’s important that students continue to make use of them regularly as restrictions are lifted.

“The test involves taking a sample from your tonsils (or where they would have been) and from your nose, using a swab. You can get a result in 30 minutes. Asymptomatic testing is important as it can identify cases of COVID-19 that would otherwise not be picked up and, by doing so, break chains of transmission.”

Matt Crilly, NUS Scotland President, also welcomed the testing kits being made available to students. He said: “It’s up to all of us to keep our colleges safe for students and staff. I’d encourage all students to take up the offer of regular voluntary asymptomatic tests. It’s quick, easy and you can do it at home – get tested!”

To date, 101,736 testing kits, which include seven tests in each kit, have been provided to colleges by the Scottish Government.

A lateral flow test involves taking a swab from the mouth and nose, with results visible on the test within 30 minutes. Results can then be uploaded onto the NHS website. The Scottish Government is recommending that two tests are taken each week, ideally three days apart.

West College Scotland student Lauren Mulvey, 28, from Paisley said, "It's great that we can get these kits directly from the college. It avoids me going to a test centre or a medical centre as I don't have access to a car so that helps.

"I hope as many people as possible use them to make it safe to return to college. I am healthy and would feel happy in college, but I worry about bringing any virus to my family. It looks like the new normal is beginning to really start - I want to get back to learning and complete my HND Photography Course."

John Masson, 46 from Glasgow, who is also studying HND Photography said, "I was surprised that these tests will be available and to so many - I think it is a good thing as it gives you and people around you some reassurance and confidence.

"It has been a difficult year being away from my classmates and if using these tests means that we can work together again - I am all for it.

"I am hoping this is another step towards getting back to being a working student and being a professional photographer when I graduate this later year."

ENDS

Pictures of Lauren and John are available from:

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