



From the chief executive

20 May 2020

Dear Secretary of State,

RE: TEST, TRACK AND TRACE STRATEGY

Thank you for all you are doing to support the NHS currently. We are aware there is a lot of work being done around testing and tracing, but we are concerned that time is running out to finalise a test, track, and trace strategy to avoid a potential second surge. We are 10 weeks into the pandemic and developing a strategy with a well worked through local base should have been in place much sooner.

Our members are concerned that unless there is a clear strategy, then there must be a greater risk of a second wave of infections and serious health consequences.

We would therefore urge you to produce such a strategy with a clear implementation plan ahead of any further easing of the lockdown.

The Prime Minister's commitment today to launch the UK's test, track, and trace programme by 1 June, with 25,000 trackers, with the capacity to trace 10,000 new cases a day, is very much welcome. But delivery and implementation will be critical, and we await further details.

A vital component of this strategy must be the full involvement of local public health directors who have expertise and knowledge in this area. We were pleased to hear that Tom Riordan, Chief Executive of Leeds City Council, has been brought in to support this work but we cannot emphasise too strongly how important it is that local organisations and systems are involved alongside Public Health England. In this respect we welcome the very useful Statement of Principles that should underpin the approach to contact tracing that was published on Monday by the Association of Directors of Public Health (ADPH).

As you know, our members are health leaders from across the country, and they are keen to support you and your team in making the contact tracing programme as effective as it can be. These health leaders have warned us that this is a matter of protecting the NHS: if we do not rapidly instigate the right system, involving the right people, then the ramifications for the NHS, including its staff and its patients, could be severe. We are concerned that they are not yet reassured that this is in place.

We would welcome a conversation with you and your team about the issues I have highlighted and look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes,

Niall Dickson,
Chief Executive