

**Emergency Advisory Group  
Advice Note**

**Lateral Flow tests and PCR tests  
29 July 2021**

**Introduction**

The Council of Ministers requested that the EAG consider the merits or otherwise of Lateral Flow antigen testing for Covid under certain circumstances through the use of Lateral Flow Tests (LFTs) compared to the use of Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) tests in all situations. The paper requesting this advice is attached at Annex 1.

The EAG notes that given the current numbers of Covid cases in the community, the use of PCR tests in all cases is no longer practical or achievable given the capacity of on-Island testing.

The EAG further notes that the Council of Ministers has already introduced the use of LFTs for the day 6 release test on the border entry pathway.

**Advice**

1. The EAG draws the Council of Ministers' attention to the fact that LFTs are not undertaken in laboratory conditions and while there are risks related to false positives, there are also greater risks in relation to false negatives.
2. The EAG therefore advises that clear and easy to follow guidance for users is vital in ensuring the best use of LFTs in testing for Covid-19.
3. For the reasons described above, the EAG would also not support the use of an LFT testing regime that is less than daily for seven days if identified as a close contact.
4. The EAG urges CoMIN to increase publicity of the online reporting feature for LFTs and to promote its use widely in an effort to increase the data available to it for decision making purposes. Linked to this, the EAG advises CoMIN to start including the breakdown of LFT versus PCR tests in respect of positive cases reported on the Government's Covid dashboard.
5. The EAG advises CoMIN that it must increase the supply of LFTs significantly. The EAG believes the current supply model is not sustainable and urges CoMIN to consider a more frictionless distribution model to allow people to obtain LFTs more easily. This could include through the postal service or in workplaces, for example.
6. Linked to the above, the EAG notes the concern raised by many businesses on the issues caused by isolation of their staff, particularly in smaller businesses. The EAG believes clearer guidance is needed for small or medium enterprises in when staff can work and when they cannot, and how businesses can use LFTs to protect their staff, customers and revenues. The EAG would advise CoMIN to require the Department for Enterprise to provide such targeted guidance as soon as possible, working in conjunction with the Chamber of Commerce.
7. In respect of businesses or services which are critical to the Isle of Man's daily operation, the EAG notes that the UK has taken steps to identify alternative pathways to isolation for certain key workers. The EAG's advice is that CoMIN should undertake a prioritisation

exercise to identify key businesses which are critical to the Island's national infrastructure. This would then enable CoMIN to set policies where such businesses (or public sector services) are given priority access to LFTs or return to work pathways.

8. Finally, the EAG advises that the Council of Ministers should ensure it has a robust, clear and well communicated plan for the return of children to school in September which includes the use of LFTs to give confidence to students, teachers and parents in respect of controlling the spread of Covid-19 in educational settings.

Whilst we hope that the above is self-explanatory, the EAG is happy to engage in discussion or further clarification, if required.

**Emergency Advisory Group**  
**July 2021**

**About the Emergency Advisory Group**

The Emergency Advisory Group is a committee, appointed by the Council of Ministers, consisting of a range of people from across the community with a broad range of skills and expertise. Its primary role is to consider matters referred to it by CoMIN and provide independent advice and analysis. All its members are unpaid volunteers.

The current membership is:

Hon Graham Cregeen, MHK	Minister for Justice and Home Affairs (Vice Chair)
Rob Mercer, MLC	Tynwald representative
Mrs Jacqueline Bridson	
Mr Steven Christian	
Mr Peter Davidson	
Professor Peter Edge	
Dr Rachel Glover	
Ms Julie Hotchkiss	
Mr John Spellman	Chair
Mr Jonathan Wild	