

Southwark Council expresses concern that the country still does not have an adequate testing and tracing system. Numerous experts have repeated that to be effective contact tracing needs to be managed and carried out at a local level by people with expertise in public health. A robust Track, Trace and Isolate System needs to be in place by the time the country comes out of lockdown otherwise all our efforts will have been in vain.

Instead of funding local bodies the Government has squandered billions of pounds of public money on private companies whose poor performance has contributed to failures to contain the virus and ultimately to an increased loss of life and economic damage.

In late recognition that its tracing performance could not improve without local participation, NHS Test and Trace are now passing to local authorities those cases who have tested positive but who they have been unable to reach. While a welcome step this doesn't go far enough:

- there are still large numbers of people named as contacts that the national system is failing to reach. The Government's Sage group advised that 80% of contacts need to be reached and asked to isolate if the transmission of the virus is to be suppressed. NHS Test and Trace is still falling short of this target and surveys show that the proportion of people self-isolating can be very low;
- the centralised system lacks integration both into the normal, local NHS services (which would allow GPs to contact positive cases with crucial and timely medical advice) and into local authorities who can offer the financial, social and practical support needed to enable people to isolate.

This council believes that the only way to fully rectify the situation is for full control of contact tracing to be passed to local authorities and their Public Health partners. This must be accompanied by a transfer of the necessary funding and resources, with national input providing any support needed to ensure effective coordination and where necessary to help people to isolate.

We believe a local scheme will:

- improve contact tracing
- enable increased and targeted testing, including asymptomatic testing
- be better integrated into existing Council COVID support services
- be a more cost-effective solution
- achieve greater community engagement and GP involvement
- allow for the engagement of local volunteers.

Pressure is building on the Government both to use local authorities more and to cease contracting out "NHS" Test and Trace to private companies.

This Council agrees to add its voice to those challenging the current, failed system by asking the Leader to:

- call on our Director of Public Health and, if appropriate, the London Regional Director for Public Health England, to support further devolvement of responsibility for testing and tracing;
- write to our MPs asking them for their support.
- write to other London boroughs to pass the same motion
- ask London Regional Government to pressure the government to give full control and sufficient resources to local authorities to achieve this,