



## 'Contact tracing to become part of everyday life'

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That was the message from the Health Minister Robin Swann today while on a visit to a newly established Contact Tracing Centre in Ballymena.

The new centre, which opened at the start of the month, is an important part of the wider Test, Trace, Protect programme managed by the Public Health Agency.



Health Minister Robin Swann pictured with Sinead Hicks from the Public Health Agency contact tracing team

Speaking during the visit, the Health Minister said: **"Test, Trace and Protect has a vital role to play in helping us move forward into recovery. This, along with other key public health measures, such as social distancing and ensuring good hand and respiratory hygiene, will help us to reduce community transmission of Covid-19.**

**"For Test, Trace and Protect to work, everyone in Northern Ireland must prepare for the possibility of having to self-isolate and be tested to help protect ourselves, our families and our communities."**

The Minister added: **"This is likely to become part of everyday life for the foreseeable future until an effective vaccine for Covid-19 is developed**

## **and a vaccination programme delivered.”**

Olive MacLeod, Interim Chief Executive of the Public Health Agency, said:  
“The initial pilot phase of Covid-19 contact tracing began in Northern Ireland on 27 April and as of 18 May we have been tracing all positive cases. Northern Ireland was the first part of the UK to have this service established and operational.

“Our contact tracing team is made up of trained staff who contact the person who has tested positive; identify those people with whom they have had close contact and could be at risk of developing Covid-19; and in turn contact them to advise them on the appropriate next steps.”

Mrs MacLeod concluded: “By this stage most people will be aware of Covid-19 symptoms which are a high temperature; a new, continuous cough; or a new loss of or change in sense of smell or taste. But people should also be aware that if they develop any of these symptoms they should get tested for Covid-19. More information on testing is available on the PHA website.”

## **Notes to editors:**

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1. For more information on Test, Trace, Protect visit the [NI Direct website](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/coronavirus)  
(<http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/coronavirus>)
2. Weekly information on the Contact Tracing service is now available on the [PHA website](https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus/testing-and-tracing-covid-19/contact-tracing-service-management-information)  
(<https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus/testing-and-tracing-covid-19/contact-tracing-service-management-information>)
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