Cross party motion

Council resolved to adopt the following motion:

X Council expresses concern that, so far into the COVID pandemic, the country still does not have an adequate testing and tracing system, putting the people of X at increased risk of suffering from coronavirus.

Test and trace has been proven in countries with a properly functioning system to be a successful strategy to manage and contain COVID-19 outbreaks. Numerous experts have repeated that, to be effective, testing and tracing needs to be managed and carried out at a local level, such as in [Germany](https://www.bmj.com/content/369/bmj.m2522) and [South Korea.](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23288604.2020.1753464)

A functioning Test and Trace system is still absolutely vital to stopping this virus spreading over the coming months and year, as [Independent SAGE](https://twitter.com/Zubhaque/status/1346382843556089859?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1346382843556089859%7Ctwgr%5E%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fuk.news.yahoo.com%2Fboris-johnson-lockdown-announcement-extraordinary-omission-134455973.html) [members](https://blogs.bmj.com/bmj/2021/01/27/covid-19-how-to-break-the-cycle-of-lockdowns/), the [WHO](https://www.bmj.com/content/372/bmj.n292) and public health experts like [Prof. Devi Sridhar](https://www.newstatesman.com/science-tech/coronavirus/2021/01/devi-sridhar-uk-needs-zero-covid-strategy-prevent-endless-lockdowns?utm_source=Economic%20Change%20Unit&utm_campaign=542bacd6f0-Biden_COPY_03&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_6101fe9ecd-542bacd6f0-180123229&mc_cid=542bacd6f0&mc_eid=edec7302db) have asserted time and time again.

However, instead of funding local bodies – which have the expertise, experience and vital local connections – this Government has squandered billions of pounds of public money on private companies (though the system has still been misleadingly named ‘NHS’ Test & Trace).

This poor performance has contributed to the failure to contain COVID outbreaks and, ultimately, to an increased loss of life. This lack of integration into normal local NHS services (which would allow GPs to contact positive cases with crucial and timely medical advice for example) could and probably will cost lives.

This lack of integration with local authorities prevents the timely offering of financial and practical support. In late recognition that its tracing performance could not improve without local participation, NHS Test and Trace have in recent months passed to local authorities the names of people with positive tests whom they failed to reach. In short, they are getting local authorities to clean up their mess.

However, while test and trace was rightly criticised across the media for its failures last year, now much of the media focus has now gone to vaccines, which are being billed as the only way out of this crisis.

In reality, months on, privatised test and trace is [still not up to scratch](https://www.chroniclelive.co.uk/news/health/nhs-confederation-chief-says-12bn-19601368#r3z-addoor), and still not for several reasons, including:

* Local Leaders are still asking to be able to contact people earlier after a positive test. (See [10:54:00-11:00:00 of a recent Committee session with local Public Health leaders here.](https://www.parliamentlive.tv/Event/Index/c07239f1-d760-4bc1-b685-a8cae6da8d53))
* This is because the remote, privatised system is STILL not reaching enough people. According to the [Government's statistics](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/960283/Test_and_Trace_w36.pdf), only 70.8% of contacts from a different household to the positive case were successfully reached and told to self-isolate in the week up to the 3rd February.
* We STILL need local public health teams to get the funding to lead on test and trace, so that they can provide the [all-round LOCAL support needed to isolate](https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/covid-cases-continue-2030s-test-23400440) that an online form and remote callers with a script cannot give.

This Council believes the only way to fully rectify the situation is for full control to be passed to local authorities, with the necessary funding to do the job properly, with national input providing any support necessary to ensure effective co-ordination.

We believe a local scheme will:

* Improve traceability
* 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
* 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 the leader of the Council to support more local authority engagement in testing and tracing.
* Write to our MPs asking them for their support.