Government publishes list of approved COVID-19 test providers

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The government has published a list of private providers of COVID-19 testing, in a bid to help employers and individuals set up their own COVID-19 testing programmes.

The accreditation process for private COVID-19 testing has also been made faster and more efficient by a new system that came into effect this week.

New legislation means that commercial tests are now accredited solely through UKAS, the UK's National Accreditation Body. Previously some providers of COVID-19 testing were required to be registered both with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and with UKAS.

This new approach avoids duplicate registration processes for test providers, whilst retaining the highest safety standards for consumers.

Lord Bethell, Minister for Health, said:

As the demand for private COVID-19 testing services increases, we need to enable business organisations and individuals to have confidence in the testing services that they procure.

These new changes to the accreditation process also ensure we have an agile and responsive regulatory environment that assists new providers in entering the market but makes no compromise of the safety standards required.

The new UKAS accreditation scheme is a 3-stage process that has been developed in partnership between DHSC and UKAS. This accreditation scheme simplifies the regulatory landscape for private COVID-19 testing, allowing providers of testing services to start providing services more quickly while demonstrating that their services are of a high quality.

Private providers of commercial testing will need to be registered with the new scheme by 1 January.

Only registration for COVID-19 testing is being removed from the CQC's remit. Providers will still need to remain registered with the CQC for other activities which are not changing.

Background information

For more information, please see the following guidance:

DHSC: List of approved providers

CQC: Regulating coronavirus (COVID-19) testing

About UKAS

The United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) is the sole national accreditation body for the United Kingdom. UKAS is recognised by government, to assess against internationally agreed standards, organisations that provide certification, testing, inspection and calibration services. UKAS is licensed by BEIS to use and confer the national accreditation symbols (formerly national accreditation marks) which symbolise government recognition of the accreditation process.

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