

# Channel3 Consulting/Test and Trace Programme

## Test and Trace: Technology Validation Group

### Introduction

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19, the disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2, a pandemic. This announcement followed a rising sense of alarm in the preceding months over a new, potentially lethal virus that was rapidly spreading across the world.

In response to the pandemic, on the 27 May, the UK government launched the NHS Test and Trace programme to track and help prevent the spread of COVID-19. It was a central component of the recovery strategy, which sought to return life to as close to normal as possible, for as many people as possible, in a way that was safe and protected the NHS and social care.

The primary goal of the programme was to help break chains of transmission and enable people to return towards a more normal way of life. Its objectives were as follows:

1. using testing to find people who have COVID-19 and ensure both they and their recent contacts self-isolate to avoid passing the virus on to other people;
2. managing outbreaks in local communities and reducing the risk;
3. helping individuals, businesses and public services to better understand and manage risks of COVID-19 transmission;
4. building a trusted service with and for the citizens who use it.

The programme involved multi agency working across local government, local communities, Public Health England, other national bodies and a wide range of partner organisations.

### Support Provided

As an Associate to Channel3 Consulting, we provided operational and strategic support in the area of diagnostic test validation for the Test and Trace programme. This included:

- Establishing of the process, overarching governance and supporting infrastructure (including mobilisation of a PMO) for the triage, review and evaluation of offers of viral detection, antigen and antibody tests to support the National Test and Trace programme. This excluded non-machine based lateral flow tests and home kits and antibody testing.
- Operationally managing the process, leading a blended team of DHSC resources and external consultants.

- Providing ad hoc support to the Chief Scientific Officer for England.
- Contributing to national testing policy and facilitating the development of national guidance on testing.
- Establishing governance and working arrangements that led to dramatic improvements in the relationship between the programme and the regulator (MHRA) to enable delivery of the national strategy.
- Project managing a rapid trial of 'Point of Care Test' across 10 acute Trusts during the Christmas period to quickly validate its efficacy and usability as a diagnostic tool in Accident and Emergency Departments. The tool successfully helped these Trust to better manage flow and avoid nosocomial outbreaks in high-risk settings. The test was purchased at scale and rolled out as a part of a national deployment.
- Programme managing the introduction of the mandatory validation regime for COVID-19 tests on the UK Market.
- Mobilising a programme of work to develop a new operating model for the validation of COVID-19 tests. Undertook the current state assessment and identified high level options for the future.

### Value Delivered

- A robust process for the validation of COVID-19 tests (with clear oversight and governance).
- Published guidance around testing for COVID in different settings to prevent the spread of the virus.
- Tests that could be purchased and deployed across the NHS and other health and care settings (a critical component of the national response to COVID).
- An evidence base that supported the deployment of a Point of Care test that enabled acute providers to improve patient flow and reduce nosocomial outbreaks.
- A centre of excellence for the validation of viral detection, antigen and antibody tests.
- Improved confidence of the MHRA in the programme's adherence to regulatory requirements.
- Legislation/a mandatory validation regime that ensures tests on the market are of adequate quality.