



LATERAL FLOW TESTS - Members Update

As you will be aware, the Government announced on 18th December that schools would be responsible for carrying out Lateral Flow tests on all pupils. This was quickly followed with suggestions in many schools that it would be support staff who would be required to undertake these duties. Whilst GMB supports mass testing in schools to stop the spread of the virus it does not believe that this should be, yet another responsibility placed on overstretched support staff.

GMB London has been clear that this expectation of school support staff is unacceptable and last week wrote to all Head Teachers stating the following-

“GMBs’ position is that the carrying out of such tests is a medical task and not an educational one and therefore falls outside the scope of the job description for those employed in an educational capacity. Although job descriptions do allow for ad hoc duties, as seen fit by a Manager, GMB does not consider medical testing to fit within this criterion and will be advising Members accordingly.”

Department for Education Guidance, Supporting Pupils at School with Medical Conditions, states that **“Any member of school staff may be asked to provide support to pupils with medical conditions, including the administering of medicines, although they cannot be required to do so.”** Although the requirement for Lateral Flow Tests is not the same as supporting a child with a medical condition, it is reasonable to assume that any staff involvement has to be with the specific agreement of the member of staff involved and as above they cannot be required to do so.

The DfE Guidance also provides interesting and useful information regarding the schools’ responsibility for insurance, in the context of the administration of medicines and staff involvement with pupils with medical conditions. Again, this information only relates to medical conditions and does not offer guidance in relation to Lateral Flow Tests but the broader principle should apply.

It states

“Insurance policies should provide liability cover relating to the administration of medication, but individual cover may need to be arranged for any healthcare procedures. The level and ambit of cover required must be ascertained directly from the relevant insurers. Any requirements of the insurance, such as the need for staff to be trained, should be made clear and complied with. In the event of a claim alleging negligence by a member of staff, civil actions are likely to be brought against the employer.”

It is therefore reasonable to assume that schools would need to check their insurance before any staff began carrying out these tests. GMB knows, having listened to members, that school support staff do not want to be responsible for carrying out these tests and GMB supports you. We do not want any member being placed in a difficult situation because of an unreasonable expectation being placed upon them.

GMB has attached with this, a template letter you may wish to send to your Head Teacher, if you are being asked to carry out these tests and do not wish to do so. It details the position of GMB on this and if there is a group of GMB members who feel the same, you may wish to write collectively rather than individually on the matter. One of the benefits of being a member of GMB, is the strength we have in our numbers, and you may prefer to adapt the letter to show your collective approach.

