

# The train now at platform 8 is the rapid COVID testing service for rail staff

March 12, 2021



The UK's biggest rail franchise is offering twice-weekly rapid lateral flow tests to its colleagues who can't work from home. It's part of a Government scheme to help stem the spread of COVID-19 and give added reassurance to staff, as well as passengers when they return to the railway.

Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR), operator of Southern, Thameslink, Great Northern and Gatwick Express, has set up three centres for its staff including one in an adapted Southern train with curtains and screens in platform 8 at Brighton station.

GTR Head of Safety and Health Mark Whitley said: "One-in-three people with Covid show no symptoms. These tests are the latest in a long line of measures we've been taking to protect our colleagues and will help identify carriers before they have the potential to infect others. It will help prevent workplace outbreaks and, along with regular sanitising, give our staff and passengers added reassurance."

The government is offering two asymptomatic rapid lateral flow tests per week to businesses for anyone who can't work from home. The Prime Minister last weekend announced this initiative will be extended until the end of June.

Robert Nisbet, Director of Nations and Regions for the Rail Delivery Group which represents the rail industry said: "Implementing the use of lateral flow testing will help identify asymptomatic carriers of COVID-19 and, alongside train operators' enhanced cleaning, is helping to make work safer for our people and ensure those who need to travel can do so with confidence."

Brad Lade is an Onboard Supervisor with Southern who has volunteered as one of the team of 15 testers. He said: "I wanted to do something which will benefit people, to give them and my family peace of mind that my colleagues and I are COVID-free."

To reassure people who have to travel, as well as those preparing to return to the railway when restrictions ease, GTR sanitises every one of its 2,700 carriages each night and using long-lasting viricide across its network, which kills coronavirus for weeks at a time.

Over 1,000 touch-free hand sanitiser points have been put in at stations since the start of the pandemic and a staff app has been developed to monitor passenger volumes to identify 'hot spots' across the network. A team of GTR inspectors carry out regular Covid assurance checks, and to cut contact at the station, smartphone 'e-tickets' have been extended to help everyone socially distance.

*Photo credit: Govia Thameslink Railway*