Contact Tracing in Ireland

Testing and Contact Tracing are vital components in the management of COVID-19 and preventing onward transmission of the virus. At the beginning of the first wave of the pandemic in March 2020, the HSE developed a national COVID-19 Contact Management Programme (CMP) for Contact Tracing.

Aim	The aim of the CMP is to notify results to people tested (or their nominated person) and to identify and manage contacts of people who have COVID-19.
Purpose	• To identify and close down chains of transmission of COVID-19. • To support eight Public Health Departments in undertaking key public health work including enhanced surveillance, outbreak management and complex control activity. • To help slow the progress of the COVID-19 epidemic in Ireland.

Who are Contact Tracers?

People working in Contact Tracing Centres (CTCs) were initially drawn from staff of the HSE, the wider public service, educational sectors, the defense forces and others. These volunteers were trained and remain available to provide contract tracing and other services when the demand arises. At the end of the summer 2020, however, over 800 dedicated specialists for contact tracing were recruited and deployed in centers around the country. People working in CTCs receive detailed training via virtual facilitated learning, self - directed learning and CTC on the job induction, access to resources on the Moodle learning platform, staff support and debriefs.

What is the CovidCare Tracker?

The CovidCare Tracker is the online platform which supports key aspects of care given to people where COVID-19 is suspected / detected, and their close contacts who may be at higher risk of contracting COVID-19. It facilitates contact tracers and automatic notification of test results by SMS (text message), referral for testing and active follow up communication. It also allows for reporting.

How does Contact Tracing work?

The process starts when COVID-19 laboratory test results are uploaded into the CovidCare Tracker. Contact Tracing then operates in four steps:

1. Case: Notification of test result to a person and provision of personal and public health advice.

2. Contacts: Identification of close contacts of a person who has COVID-19 by contact tracers, supported by the COVID Tracker App.

3. Control: Contact with people who are close contacts of people who have COVID-19 for public health advice and arranging testing as required.

4. Active Follow-up: With people who are close contacts, including text messages.

The CMP has the capacity to communicate with several thousands of contacts per day.

Contact tracers have access to training updates, a team support lead, public health specialist and Covid Care Tracker (CCT) Super Users for advice and queries.