

COVID-19 Contact Tracing Centres (CTCs)

1. What is the COVID-19 Contact Management Programme (CMP)?

The CMP provides a national system of contact tracing working closely with Departments of Public Health (DoPH). The aim of the CMP is to stop the further spread of the virus by identifying the close contacts of people who have tested positive for COVID-19. This support enables teams within Departments of Public Health to respond to complex contact tracing, surveillance and outbreak management.

2. What is contact tracing?

Contact tracing identifies people who have been in close contact with another person who has an infection. This is done to gather the names of people (close contacts) who may be at risk of catching and spreading the virus. Alerting them will help stop the further spread of the virus.

3. What is a Contact Tracing Centre (CTC)?

A CTC is the place where people, who have been trained, contact people who have COVID-19, and subsequently their close contacts. The people who work in CTCs are called 'contact tracers'. A computer system, the CovidCare Tracker (CCT), is used by contact tracers to manage the work.

4. Who works in Contact Tracing Centres (CTCs)?

There are nearly 800 people trained to work in CTCs. The contact tracers come from a variety of backgrounds some specifically recruited for the role, and some seconded from the Defense Forces, public sector bodies and redeployed HSE Staff.

5. Where are the Contact Tracing Centres (CTCs) located?

CTCs are established across the country, set up as a national CTC system. These are the current CTCs:

- Galway
- Cork
- Limerick
- Dublin South Quarter
- University College Dublin
- Dublin Sandymount

There are also some experienced clinical staff working remotely assigned to specific CTCs.

Common Terms

A case: is a person who has the COVID-19 virus (<https://hse.ie/cvdpos>)

A close contact: is someone who has been in close enough contact with a person who has COVID-19 to have a significant chance of catching the virus (<https://hse.ie/cvdcc>)

Self-Isolation: means staying at home in your room and avoiding contact with other people, including those in your household.

Restrict Movements: means staying at home and avoiding contact with other people and social situations as much as possible.



6. What times do Contact Tracing Centres (CTCs) operate?

The CTCs operate seven days a week for twelve hours per day.

7. What do contact tracers do?

Contact tracers telephone people who have tested positive for COVID-19 to provide advice and gather contact details for people who are their close contacts. Contact information is recorded on the Covid Care Tracker. Contact tracers also contact people who have been in close contact with a person who has COVID-19 to provide advice and guidance and refer them for testing, if required. Additionally, where possible, contact tracers collect data (positive patient assessment) for Departments of Public Health which is used to guide decisions and changes in public health policy.

8. How do people in the Contact Tracing Centres (CTCs) know who to contact?

Where a person's COVID-19 test result is positive, their information is entered into the CovidCare Tracker. Using this system, an SMS text message is sent to notify people of their test results. When a test is positive, the caller contacts the person about their test result, provides guidance and gathers information about whom they have been in contact with ("close contacts"). Contact details for the person's close contacts are then entered on the CovidCare Tracker and these close contacts are then also contacted. Some parts of this system are being automated through an on line portal.

Contact tracers do not disclose the identity of the person with COVID-19 to anyone contacted during this process. Each person is allocated a Covid Care Tracker ID on the system to maintain people's confidentiality while undertaking this work.

9. How are the contact tracers trained?

The HSE has a national training programme for everyone involved in contact tracing. All contact tracers receive an induction and undertake training to ensure that they are ready to work in the CTC, and that they are able to use the CovidCare Tracker system. They receive support and feedback from CTC leads, and have access to "Super Users" and public health advice. All training materials are accessible online to the caller at any time to support them in their day-to-day work.

10. What kind of questions will the contact tracer ask?

The CTC caller will confirm the person's name, ask the person's date of birth (DOB), their GP's name and their address including county and Eircode. The caller will ask a number of further questions including:

- How the person is feeling and if they have symptoms
- Whether the person is a healthcare worker
- Whether the person lives in a residential care setting or are currently in hospital
- Whether the person has travelled internationally in the previous 14 days
- Whether they have previously tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 3 months
- If the person has the COVID Tracker app on their phone
- Asking for the names and phone numbers of people they have been in close contact with, and the setting of this contact (E.g. household, social, travel, healthcare), if relevant.

At the end of the call, the person receives a text message from the HSE confirming the information.



11. How do people know that a contact tracer has tried to contact them?

The contact tracer calls the number they have been provided with. This will show up on the person's phone as a regular landline phone number displaying the area code (01 for Dublin, 091 for Galway). If the person doesn't answer their phone, and the voicemail is activated, the contact tracer will leave a message to let the person know that they have tried to contact the person and they will call the person again. Five attempts are made over a two day period, after which point the person's details are passed to the relevant Department of Public Health to follow up with calls and, if these are unsuccessful, to look for alternative ways of making contact.

12. Can people contact the Contact Tracing Centre (CTC) directly?

Due to the volume of work, it is not feasible for people to make contact directly with the Contact Tracing Centre. Contact can be made with HSE Live on 1850 24 1850. There is also a lot of information on coronavirus and contact tracing on <https://www2.hse.ie/coronavirus/> for people to access if required.

13. Can someone else be nominated to take the call on the person's behalf?

If the person requires additional support on the call (e.g. if English is not their first language, if they require support to understand the information that they are being given, or if they are unwell at the time), and they would like someone to take the call on their behalf, they can nominate someone to do this for them. The person can agree to this when they are being tested, and can give the name and number of the nominated contact for recording on the CCT system. If a person chooses to nominate someone to support them with the call, the contact tracer will conduct the call with this support person. If English is not the person's first language, they can be linked to a translation service where the contact tracer, the person and the translator all work together.

14. Are translation services available?

Translation services are available for several languages and persons who would like translation services will be facilitated as outline above.

Where to find more information:

Useful information and tips on how to self isolate at home are available at:

<https://hse.ie/cvdpos>

<https://hse.ie/cvdcc>