

News Release

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Fire and Rescue Service Become Facemask Testers

Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service are helping to keep local care workers safe at work, by 'fit testing' facemasks.

The Coronavirus pandemic has led to local multi-agency support to assist with testing the fit of facemasks worn by domiciliary and residential staff, personal assistants and carers in special schools within Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.

Ben Bee, Group Manager at Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service, who helped to facilitate this support to the care sector, said: "The aim was to face fit test carers who look after some of the most vulnerable adults and children across the county, where airway support procedures are given. Facemask fit testing is largely new to the care sector but it is part of their recommended PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) for some procedures during Covid-19.

"We wanted to respond to this request for help, so Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service purchased a Portacount face fit testing machine and asked for volunteers from across the Service, to become face fit testers."

There are currently eight volunteers across the Service, including support staff, On-Call and Wholetime firefighters, who are trained to use the testing machine, which measures the effectiveness of a facemask.

To date, over 250 care workers masks have been tested.

John Miller, firefighter and face fit testing volunteer, said: "A few weeks back, I saw an advert within our internal newsletter asking for volunteers. I wanted to do it because I felt the fire service has done some great stuff recently around the face shields that some of the stations have been making, and around delivering medication and vital supplies like food and prescriptions to vulnerable people in our community. I just wanted to give a

little bit back to the community that we all serve and that we all care about.”

The volunteers, have a number of appointments throughout the day abiding by the Government’s two-meter social distancing rule.

Where possible the care workers supply testers with the mask they use. If they don’t have one, masks are provided. The machine is plugged into the mask and the background particles in the room are measured, along with the particles they breathe out. The score between the two identifies how effective that mask is at protecting them from potential COVID-19 when they are undertaking tasks that generate aerosol.

The volunteer testers are able to advise each person whether the mask fits securely. Information on how to put the mask on correctly is given to the worker, along with a certificate to prove testing has taken place and to record the outcome.

Nigel Thomas, Assistant Director in Adults and Communities and Chair of the PPE COVID-19 operations group within the County Council said: “The assistance and support provided by Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service has been invaluable in ensuring that our care professionals feel confident in the correct fitting the masks in line with PPE requirements of their role, ensuring the safety of staff and service users.”

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Notes to Editors:

Interviews can be arranged through prior arrangement with Corporate Communications on the details below.

About the Service

Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service provides emergency response, prevention and protection services from 20 stations across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. Its headquarters is based in Birstall, Leicester.

During 2018/19, the Service attended 762 road traffic collisions, of which 125 were extrications from vehicles, in addition to 2,569 fires. We carried out 6,746 home safety checks and fitted 4,790 smoke alarms. 279 schools were visited as part of the Service's schools programme, delivering fire and road safety education to pupils. Staff organised or took part in 1,068 community safety events, promoting fire and road safety and arson prevention, and 134 Virtual Fatal Four (VF4) events as part of the Service's young drivers' road safety project.

The Service's prevention, education, enforcement and inspection programmes have resulted in significant reductions in the number of incidents. In the last ten years, fire-related incidents have reduced by over 30 percent.

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