



Department
of Health &
Social Care



Public Health
England

CARE

By email

27th April 2020

Dear Colleagues,

Further information on COVID-19 testing in social care

Last week saw the publication of a dedicated [national action plan](#) to support the adult social care system and the COVID-19 testing offer to the sector. Below outlines the national offer to various groups and how they can get it.

We would like to acknowledge the work led locally, regionally and sub-regionally over recent weeks to ensure that testing has been available to staff and residents. That has played an invaluable role whilst national testing capacity has been coming on line and the offers of testing should be seen as additional to these. We are working quickly to support the hard work you are all doing to look after the most vulnerable in our society. This note represents the very latest position and things will change over the coming days as new capacity becomes available and we learn from you how best to deliver this service most effectively.

Social care staff

Testing for critical key workers in the NHS, social care and other sectors is a key part of the Government's testing strategy. All symptomatic care workers can be swabbed through regional testing centres, using home testing or mobile testing centres. Information on this is available [here](#).

Workers can be referred to these through the [digital portals](#).

Residents at the point of outbreak in a social care setting

When a care home recognises it has its first potential symptomatic case or cases of COVID-19, they should contact the local PHE Health Protection Team (HPT) who will ensure swab kits are provided to the home and subsequently tested for all residents who are symptomatic at that time. You can find the contact details for your local health protection team [here](#).

Testing of residents post outbreak

All residents in a care home that has an outbreak and need a test should have access to one. We are piloting this approach in a limited number of nursing homes. There will be further developments on our approach to testing within the care home communities in the coming days.



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On admission to a care setting from the NHS

The strategy makes clear that residents need to be tested on admission to care homes. For those arriving from hospital, testing will be arranged in hospital before discharge. A letter that has been sent to hospitals about this is [here](#), and more information is available [here](#). These arrangements are in addition to any established locally.

Pre- admission from other than the NHS from hospital

The specific process is being developed and will be addressed through locally developed testing arrangements, including the use of testing available through the NHS laboratories and postal swab kits. Clear instructions will follow on this approach, but local processes should be used in the interim.

Ongoing surveillance testing of care settings

Some care settings will be invited to swab and test selected residents and staff as part of public health surveillance work. This is to inform the infection control advice that care homes will be advised to follow and prevent some future outbreaks.

The Government's number one priority for adult social care is for everyone who relies on care to get the care they need throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. We are committed to keeping you up to date in the coming days as approaches to testing may change.

Yours Sincerely,

Ros Roughton
Director of Adult Social Care
DHSC

Professor Paul Johnstone
National Director
PHE

Enc. Adult Social Care Sector Stakeholder Q&A



Adult Social Care Sector Stakeholder Q&A

Questions as of 23rd April 2020.

How will agency workers be able to access testing?

As set out in the letter, employers and essential workers can refer using the online portals.

How reliable are the tests?

No test is 100% accurate, but we are confident in the accuracy of the tests themselves. The tests have shown high levels of concordance with the tests used by PHE and NHSE.

Will there be enough testing for all care workers? Will test centres be able to cope with both social care and NHS staff requiring tests?

There is capacity for every care worker who needs a test to have one. As set out in the letter, testing has been opened to all essential workers.

How will care workers be prioritised for appointments for testing?

There is capacity available for all staff who need a test to have one.

Is there a period after showing COVID 19 symptoms that is the best time to take a test?

See guidance lines on essential worker testing.

Will all adult social care home staff, regardless of whether they are symptomatic or asymptomatic be tested?

PHE and the Chief Medical Officer for England keep all guidance under review and if this changes we will of course let you know.

If staff aren't displaying symptoms but caring for someone with confirmed COVID-19, or are symptomatic will they be tested?

PHE and the Chief Medical Officer for England keep all guidance under review and if this changes we will of course let you know.

Based upon PHE guidance staff are encouraged to return to work after 7 days. WHO guidance stating that people can remain infectious with Covid-19 for approximately 12 days. What is deemed to be the correct period of infection? And how long should symptomatic staff remain absent from work?



Current guidance is to return after 7 days. PHE and the Chief Medical Officer keep all guidance under review and if this changes we will of course let you know.

Test centre locations are an issue for non-drivers. Also, if care workers are symptomatic and can't drive what should they do?

Home testing is being rolled-out over the coming days. Employers and employees will be able to choose the most appropriate testing method.

Could home testing be carried out at a service setting (e.g. a care home) to ensure they are done properly?

Potentially, yes. Though home testing kits are accompanied by clear instructions and are simple to administer.

Can a care home minibus be used to get staff to a test centre if PPE is used?

No

Could 'Uber Health' be used for those care workers who do not have a car?

As above, the roll-out of home testing over the coming days will help mitigate this issue. We are also expanding the availability of walk-in testing where a Local Resilience Forum (LFR) has identified a particular need.

Will the result of a care worker's COVID-19 test also be sent to the employer?

No. It is the responsibility of the employee to inform their employer of the result of any test they undertake.

Is there a protocol following care worker screening for providers / employers to follow? What should they advise employees when a test is positive / negative?

As with all citizens if you receive a positive result you should self-isolate for 7 days. If you receive a negative result you should return to work when you are fit to do so, as normal.

Can a member of staff have multiple tests? Is time period between tests recommended?

PHE and the Chief Medical Officer for England keep all guidance under review and if this changes we will of course let you know. If an individual has a negative test but remains symptomatic then they can be referred again by their employer.

Will CQC be able to say how many people go back to work more quickly as a result of having a test?



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'Capacity Tracker' monitors overall absence rates and will report changes in trend at a regional level. We encourage all providers to complete daily returns to ensure up to date information is available to all who need it.