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|  | 20 May 2020 |

Dear Provider,

**COVID-19: Training and Testing Update**

We would like to take this opportunity to recognise the extremely challenging circumstances in which you are working at present. Thank you for working with us and please pass on our thanks to all of your staff for continuing to offer the best care they possibly can to the individuals in your service. We want to assure you that all health and care partners and the Surrey Local Resilience Forum (SLRF) are working together to support you and are listening to what you tell us you need.

We are writing to you to outline some further practical support we are coordinating for care settings across the Surrey Heartlands footprint. This will include increased testing capacity to ensure that all care home staff and residents are able to access testing in the near future. The programme of support will build on and join up current testing opportunities and work on infection control and PPE. We would like to establish with you a clear, trusted single point of contact that can keep you informed and answer your questions.

Please note that care homes in Surrey Heath and Farnham are being supported by Frimley Health and Care Integrated Care System, and Surrey LRF will continue to support them where needed.

***Training, support, advice and testing***

We are putting in place a programme of training and support which aims to complement the skills and experience that you and your staff already have. It aims to help staff to feel more confident that they:

* have effective infection control measures that will protect staff and residents
* are using Personal Protective Equipment according to national guidance including the safe putting on and taking off of PPE
* are able, where appropriate, to undertake the testing of colleagues and residents

We’ll be doing this through a “train the trainer” approach. Four “Super Trainers” are already in place and will train a team of up to 40 trainers who will be able to deliver training and support to care homes. The trainers will be registered nurses or allied health professionals. The training will, where possible, be face-to-face but can also be delivered virtually if that is the safest way of doing it. We will ring you in advance to discuss precisely what your needs are and would be happy to tailor the approach to best meet those needs.

As part of the session we will be able to offer support with testing in the service. This could either be testing of staff and residents or training for staff on how to carry out testing. You will be aware of the importance of accurate testing to prevent the risk of false negative results. Our aim is to support you and your staff in delivering testing in a safe and effective way. This will depend on how well your current arrangements for testing are working, as well as the size of your home and the numbers of staff and residents involved. We will agree this with you prior to the session. You should continue with any testing you have already arranged, provided your staff have undertaken appropriate training and are aware of the issues regarding mental capacity and consent to testing. Details of the Government’s new process for registering for testing and accessing testing kits, initially for homes where the primary clients are older people (65+) and those with dementia, are given below.

We expect each training and advice session will last between two and three hours per care home, with additional time for any testing.

**Instructions on how to access this support and a named contact for the training programme for your care setting will be sent to you soon.**

***Registering for testing***

In line with government guidance, Surrey health and care partners are working together to make sure that all care home staff and residents, whether symptomatic or not, will be able to access testing.

The Government recently released [further guidance](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-getting-tested#history) and launched a new digital portal for care home coronavirus testing to supplement the local systems already in place. The new online portal aims to make it as easy as possible for care homes to access deliveries of coronavirus test kits.

**If you provide a service for older people (65+) or a service for those with dementia you can now register for testing of the whole care home. This includes all residents and asymptomatic staff, including agency staff.** You do this through theGovernment's [new portal](https://www.gov.uk/apply-coronavirus-test-care-home) for care homes. Care home managers can register on the portal and once processed and confirmed, testing kits will be delivered as swiftly as possible. **If you submit a request for whole home testing, please could you also notify us at** surreycovidtesting@surreycc.gov.uk. **We would ask that you do this so that we can support you as per the offer outlined in this letter which is part of our local commitment to build on the national approach.**

Over the coming weeks we will work closely with the Department of Health and Social Care to ensure this service is rolled out to other types of registered adult social care settings, for example to services for adults with learning disabilities and autism.

Care home carers and nurses who agree to undertake the testing of residents and staff in care homes should complete the online care home [swabbing competency assessment](https://www.genqa.org/carehomes) before carrying out tests. Detailed and clinically approved [guidance](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-getting-tested#care-home) and an online tutorial video have also been published to guide staff through the process. You should keep a record of which staff have completed the training and are considered competent to undertake the tests in your service. In addition, you need to keep a record of consent or best interest decisions etc for each individual in the service. The programme of training and support we’re offering will help staff feel more confident to deliver the tests but if testing is needed before your home receives our support the guidance and video will help you. You could also contact a Super Trainer for further advice – you will receive details shortly.

**If your care home has identified its first symptomatic resident and there is concern about an outbreak,** **you should contact the Public Health England South East, Surrey and Sussex Health Protection Team** (PHE.sshpu@nhs.net, phone: 0344 225 3861 - option 3; out of hours for health professionals only*:* 0844 967 0069), who will undertake a risk assessment, provide public health advice, and arrange urgent testing of all symptomatic residents. This applies to all homes including those catering for people with learning disabilities.

**If a care home worker has symptoms** **they should register for a test via** [Surrey's Testing Hub](https://surrey.trustwide.live/swabbing/) within 24 hours of developing symptoms and beginning self-isolation. Your manager will also be able to register you with this service if you do not have access to the internet. A member of the local testing team will then be in contact to book an appointment.

***Contact***

If you have any comments or queries, please don’t hesitate to get in touch with us at surreycovidtesting@surreycc.gov.uk. You’ll be able to find more information on the website <https://surrey.trustwide.live/>

Kind regards,

Clare Stone

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Sheila Norris

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