

NHS Lanarkshire Care Home Testing Plan

On 1 May 2020 the First Minister of the Scottish Government announced an extension to PCR (polymerase chain reaction) testing for COVID-19 infection in care homes with the aim of reducing viral transmission. Three scenarios were described:

- Enhanced outbreak investigation in care homes where there are COVID cases, involving testing of all residents and staff, subject to consent, whether or not they have symptoms.
- In a care home with a new or recent case/outbreak which is part of a wider group or chain and where staff may be moving between the affected home and other home(s) within the group, carry out urgent testing of residents and staff in the linked home(s).
- Screening in a sample of care homes where there are no cases.

In addition, from week commencing 25 May 2020, Scottish Government policy has been for asymptomatic staff in care homes to be offered weekly COVID-19 PCR testing.

There are 93 adult care homes in Lanarkshire with 4,595 registered places and approximately 5,700 staff. 80 of the 93 care homes are older adult care homes.

There are well-established processes in Lanarkshire for testing symptomatic care home residents and staff, to support clinical management of patients and outbreak identification and control. Symptomatic residents are tested by registered nurses in care homes or community nurses in residential homes. Testing is either clinically indicated (for example, requested by a GP to aid the clinical management of a patient) or for the purposes of outbreak investigation and control (and therefore requested by the Health Protection Team). Symptomatic staff should self-isolate for 7 days and self-refer for testing via the SALUS occupational health service.

Enhanced outbreak investigation

For the purpose of this paper, outbreak is taken as one or more confirmed case(s) of COVID-19 in a care home. An outbreak is normally defined as two linked cases of a disease.

As of 25 June 2020, 58 care homes in Lanarkshire have had a COVID-19 outbreak (38 laboratory confirmed and 20 suspected).

As of 25 June, 18 care homes remain closed, with restrictions in place, from either whole home or single unit outbreaks with first or subsequent COVID outbreaks.

Testing of all asymptomatic residents and staff (subject to consent) in care homes with a newly confirmed case of COVID-19 was implemented from 1 May.

We have seeded all care homes with COVID testing kits to be used immediately a care home suspects a resident(s) has COVID symptoms, to ensure early identification. If that test result is positive for COVID, the care home testing team will respond to arrange to offer testing to all residents. Testing is initiated as soon as practicable and usually within 24 hours. Completion depends on a variety of factors including consent and compliance from those offered testing.

As part of this approach, residents and staff in linked homes where staff members may still be working across homes, have been offered screening.

Surveillance sampling in non-outbreak care homes

A care home testing team has been established to deliver a rolling programme of sample surveillance across non-outbreak care homes in Lanarkshire. This involves screening a sample of residents and staff (subject to consent) who are asymptomatic.

The care home testing team has implemented a programme of sample surveillance on a random basis, in homes with no current COVID outbreak. Sample sizes have been agreed locally and are outlined below. Where newly identified outbreaks occur, these are prioritised for testing as this is where the most benefit lies in reducing viral transmission.

Non-outbreak care home sample surveillance	
No. resident places	% residents sampled
<50	50
50-80	40
>80	30

Surveillance data is collected and monitored in order to evaluate the sample surveillance programme and share learning.

Testing of asymptomatic staff as part of outbreak testing or sample surveillance ceased on introduction of weekly testing of asymptomatic care home staff. Outbreak testing and sample surveillance of asymptomatic residents is on-going.

Weekly testing of asymptomatic care home staff

Weekly testing of asymptomatic care home staff commenced in Lanarkshire from 11 June.

Whilst there are technical limitations of testing in asymptomatic people and challenges with interpreting the results, testing may identify care home staff who could be at work and carrying COVID-19 thereby unknowingly putting residents and staff colleagues at risk. Staff who are positive would be removed from work until deemed non-infectious. There would be a public health risk assessment of the staff member and the care home informed by guidance and potentially closing of units or an entire home to new admissions/discharges. Positive staff would also be contact traced.

There are just under 5,700 staff across Lanarkshire's 93 care homes. We have allocated care homes to one of two sampling streams, in order to deliver this aspect of Scottish Government policy.

- a. NHS: local lab services have been doing a significant amount of work to increase local capacity and reduce reliance on regional testing. This has included new analysers and reconfiguring analysers normally used for other purposes. This is to accommodate a wide range of pressures on lab testing. A prioritisation process and list was developed to help services plan COVID testing access. Additionally, we have invested in the development of the SALUS occupational health system to develop a care home staff portal that allows for tests to be requested/results returned and the provision of management information on number of tests undertaken by each staff member, in each care home, and the corresponding result.
- b. UK Government Social Care Portal: we have been provided with an allocation of 5,803 tests from the UK Government for asymptomatic care home staff testing (regardless of COVID

- c. infection in care home or not). These samples are channelled through the Lighthouse laboratory in Glasgow.

Number of asymptomatic care home staff allocated to each sampling stream	
NHS	1200
UK Government social care portal	4500

Assuring that weekly testing is taking place is both dependent and evident in the care home managers' weekly returns to the NHS Board. Care home managers need to be able to receive data efficiently and timeously, in order to provide these returns, which are subsequently collated by the NHS Board and submitted to Scottish Government. The SALUS portal allows for electronic collation of this data by care home. The same functionality is not currently available from the UK Government social care portal.

Additional resources are in place to support the organisation and data management requirements of the above testing programmes.

25 June 2020