



## Covid-19 outbreak and surveillance sampling in Lanarkshire care homes

### What is the Scottish Government's testing policy in care homes?

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 are 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.

### What is the benefit of testing?

Testing all residents and staff in newly identified outbreaks is likely to have the greatest impact in terms of rapidly reducing the risk of ongoing viral transmission. Evidence suggests that infection can spread relatively quickly in care homes unless rapid control measures are implemented.

### How does outbreak testing work?

Symptomatic resident(s) or staff should be tested for Covid-19. There should be a low threshold for symptoms (including atypical symptoms) in care home residents.

A single Covid-19 positive result (from LFD or PCR testing) is the trigger for initiating testing of all residents and staff in a unit/home as appropriate. Extended resident testing will be initiated by Public Health and undertaken by the care home testing team.

On identification of a single confirmed case of Covid-19 in a resident or staff member, all residents and staff should be tested in:

- a self-contained unit of a care home where there is absolutely no cross-over of staff between units within the home in terms of patient care and/or use of communal staff areas
- the whole care home where units are not self-contained

### What if the care home has an outbreak and staff have been working elsewhere?

Where a care home with an outbreak is part of a group or chain and staff may still be moving between homes, the HPT will consider whether testing is required in any linked homes. Where a staff member has provided care in another care setting in the previous 72 hours, all residents and staff in the linked home will be urgently screened for symptoms and consideration given to Covid-19 testing:

- Where the care home staff member is **symptomatic or asymptomatic test positive** and has worked in another care home(s) in the previous 72 hours – priority should be given to resident and staff testing in the linked care home.
- Where the care home staff member is **asymptomatic and test negative** and has worked in another care home(s) in the previous 72 hours – risk of transmission is lower and the care home should be closely monitored for early signs of infection. Testing may still be considered.

### Should testing be repeated?

The aim of extended testing is to identify outbreaks early, allow control measures to be put in place and ultimately reduce the risk of viral transmission. Given the identification of new variants of Covid-19, the Scottish Government has introduced enhanced testing in both outbreak and non-outbreak homes.

In non-outbreak homes, staff should be tested weekly via PCR and twice weekly using LFD (see PowerPoint slide on revised care home testing strategy).

On identification of a single case of Covid-19, testing of the whole home/self-contained unit is initiated. Residents are tested twice via PCR (on day 1 and day 4/5) and staff should be tested daily using LFD for a minimum of 7 days, in addition to the weekly PCR test (see PowerPoint slide on outbreak testing).

Residents or staff members who go on to develop new symptoms should be re-tested.

### How does surveillance sampling work?

Surveillance sampling involves testing a sample of care home resident for Covid-19 to proactively identify positive cases and prevent/minimise potential outbreaks from occurring. A four-week rolling programme of surveillance sampling of care home residents is in place in Lanarkshire. Sample size depends on the size of the care home.

Weekly screening of asymptomatic care home staff should continue to ensure positive cases of Covid-19 are identified early.

### How do I manage a test positive resident or staff member?

- Asymptomatic test positive residents should be managed as per symptomatic residents and isolated for 14 days from date of test result.
- Asymptomatic staff can continue to work until test results are available (with stringent infection, prevention and control measures in place, including universal use of PPE).
- Test positive staff (whether symptomatic or asymptomatic) should be excluded from work for 10 days as per existing national guidance. If symptoms develop in an asymptomatic positive staff member, 10-day isolation should re-start from date of symptom onset.
- Asymptomatic test negative staff can continue to work but be vigilant for development of symptoms.
- Household members of test positive staff should self-isolate for 10 days as per national guidance.

### What about new staff coming into the care home?

- New staff coming into the care home for the first time where usual staff are being tested, should be screened for symptoms and PCR tested.
- Ideally, testing should be undertaken prior to the planned start date but no longer than 48 hours before.
- Staff can commence work whilst awaiting testing if asymptomatic.
- Test positive staff must be excluded from work for 10 days.

### How do I access Covid-19 test kits?

Care homes must notify the HPT promptly on identification of symptomatic residents or staff members so that infection control and outbreak management advice can be provided. Each care home in Lanarkshire has been seeded with five Covid-19 test kits for early testing following identification of symptomatic resident(s). Care homes should retain a stock of five test kits at all times. Information on how to access test kits can be found at <https://www.nhslanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk/care-home-testing-toolkit/>