

## Programme of testing in Lanarkshire care homes - 26 May 2020

We are aware of Scottish Government announcements week commencing 18 May 2020 on establishing testing of all care home staff on a weekly basis and we are currently working through the clinical and operational implications of this. Until such times as these have been finalised and confirmation that sufficient capacity is available to provide this additional screening, the undernoted procedure is what is currently being implemented in NHS Lanarkshire (this paper is therefore subject to change and updates will be provided.)

### Scottish government policy announcement – 1 May 2020

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.

In all three scenarios, testing of residents (subject to consent) and staff should be carried out irrespective of whether they are symptomatic or not. Data protection permissions covered by the Public Task of the GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018 will be used to process data relating to staff.

Since the 1 May 2020 there have been further announcements from Scottish Government regarding further extension to testing. Lanarkshire is adopting a prioritised approach outlined below and will continue to review this on a weekly basis.

In making the announcement on 1 May 2020 the First Minister acknowledged: “This is a significant expansion and we do not underestimate the logistical and workforce requirements. Now we have the increasing testing capacity, we will make it happen as swiftly as practicable.”

Therefore in order to implement extended care home testing within the parameters of physical and laboratory test capacity, a degree of local level prioritisation is necessary. Decisions in relation to extended care home testing must always be risk assessed to ensure the safety, health and wellbeing of residents and staff, to maximise benefit and protect the stability of the care home sector. Prioritisation is set out below and a care home testing plan has been developed.

### Prioritisation

As is detailed in national guidance on PCR testing in care homes, 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. Testing all residents and staff in care homes with already well-established outbreaks is less likely to be effective in reducing viral transmission further.

### Priority 1

1. Where there is evidence of a ***new or very recently identified*** outbreak of infection in:
  - a) 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.
  - b) A care home where units/wards are not self-contained

**Note:** A single new symptomatic case in a resident or a member of staff will be tested for COVID-19. A laboratory confirmed COVID-19 positive result is the trigger for initiating testing of all residents and staff in a unit/home as appropriate to categories a) and b) above.

It may take 24-72 hours to complete full testing of residents and all staff, depending on the size of the care home.

2. Where a care home with an outbreak is part of a group or chain and staff may still be moving between homes, we 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:
  - a) 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.
  - b) 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.

### Priority 2

3. Prospective COVID-19 resident and staff screening in a sample of care homes where there are no cases of COVID-19. A plan for screening in care homes has been developed which will be implemented in a planned and coordinated way to ensure:
  - a) Physical and laboratory testing capacity is available.
  - b) Contingency plans are in place to deal with test positive results and any potential staffing issues.

**Note:** Prospective screening must be risk assessed and undertaken in a planned, proportionate and coordinated way to ensure stability of the care home sector.

Work is underway to increase our capability for extended care home testing. However, should physical and/or laboratory capacity be reached, further prioritization within the above may be required.

#### Managing test positive residents and staff

- 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).
- Symptomatic staff should be excluded from work for 7 days as per existing national guidance.
- Asymptomatic test negative staff can continue to work but be vigilant for development of symptoms.
- Asymptomatic test positive staff should be excluded from work for 7 days (no later than by the end of their current shift if working, and sooner if possible). If symptoms develop, 7 day isolation should re-start from date of symptom onset and any household members should self-isolate for 14 days as per national guidance.

**Note:** Further guidance is available on the Public Health Scotland website – Interim guidance on COVID-19 PCR testing in care homes and the management of COVID-19 PCR test positive residents and staff.

#### Replacement of excluded care home staff

- 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 7 days.
- Symptomatic staff should be excluded for 7 days and tested.
- If there is an unavoidable delay in organising testing or a critical shortage of available staff, an asymptomatic new care home worker may commence work in an outbreak affected care home, provided they wear appropriate PPE and as long as they remain asymptomatic. They must be tested as soon as possible.

**Note:** Further guidance is available on the Public Health Scotland website – Interim guidance on COVID-19 PCR testing in care homes and the management of COVID-19 PCR test positive residents and staff.

#### Access to COVID-19 test kits

Care homes must notify the Health Protection Team promptly on identification of symptomatic residents or staff members so that the need for testing (for public health or clinical management reasons) can be discussed and infection control and outbreak management advice provided. Each care home in Lanarkshire will be seeded with five COVID-19 test kits for early testing following identification of symptomatic resident(s). Symptomatic staff members should self-refer to Occupational Health for testing.

On receipt of a confirmed COVID-19 positive case in a care home resident or staff member, extended testing will be initiated. Test kits for extended testing **must be requested from the laboratory by the Health Protection Team** (not the care home) to ensure extended testing is appropriate and that physical and laboratory capacity is sufficient.

Care homes have been supplied with a temporary transport code for the **return** of test kits to the laboratory. This code is Juliet5. The contact number below should be used for transport bookings:

Mon-Fri 07:00-19:00 – Community Transport Glasgow, Tel: 0141 778 2042

Mon-Fri 19:00-07:00 – NHS Lanarkshire switchboard, Tel: 01236 712050/748748

Sat-Sun (at all times) – NHS Lanarkshire switchboard, Tel: 01236 712050/748748