



The Department of Health and Social Care Coronavirus National Testing Programme

Whole home testing for care home staff and residents

This document outlines the testing provision for residents and staff in care homes. This testing approach applies in England only. We are working with the Devolved Administrations to explore and support their needs around adult social care testing. We recognise that each Devolved Administration will have its own testing priorities in their nation, however we are working closely to align our approaches.

Who can register care homes for whole home testing?

Registered care home managers can register online to request coronavirus test kits for their care home. They can register online for all residents and care home staff. Care Homes should inform their Director of Public Health that they have registered.

Local Directors of Public Health and their representatives can also refer local care homes. In line with their local prioritisation of need.

Tests will be available to all care homes over time, but this digital portal service is currently available to those which primarily look after older people or people with dementia.

Who can get tested using this testing provision?

Care home residents with and without symptoms and care home workers **without symptoms** can be tested within the care home.

Any care home workers with symptoms should be self-isolating and can access testing via the [self-referral portal](#)

You can access the testing matrix for adult social care here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/884284/Adult social care COVID-19 testing.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/884284/Adult_social_care_COVID-19_testing.pdf)

Why just care homes for older people?

On the 28th April, increases in testing capacity meant that eligibility could be expanded to more groups at higher risk of contracting COVID-19 and/or of suffering worse outcomes if they did. This included anyone over 65 and symptomatic, as they are at higher risk of adverse consequences if they get the disease. If a care home for older people also cares for residents under 65, all residents, regardless of age should be tested.

Health and social care workers, NHS patients and care home residents can have tests even if they are asymptomatic, as they are at higher risk of contracting the disease due to their regular close contact with potentially infectious individuals.

This service will be rolled out to all care homes in a phased approach. This service will be expanded to other types of registered adult social care settings as soon as possible.

How do care homes register online?

Care homes can register for testing by visiting <https://www.gov.uk/apply-coronavirus-test-care-home>

They will need their Care Quality Commission registration number and will be asked to confirm the number of residents and staff in the care home.

Directors of Public Health and their teams on behalf of local authorities registering a care home will also need to provide the CQC care home registration number, numbers of residents and staff, and also their details as the referrer.

What is the role of Public Health England Health Protection Teams? Does the national testing service replace them?

Public Health England (PHE) Health Protection Teams (HPTs) will continue to be the first point of contact, when the care home suspects for the first time, that a resident has symptoms. The care home manager should contact their local PHE HPT which will arrange for the testing of all symptomatic residents only at this point, and will provide locally tailored infection control advice.

For all subsequent testing needed beyond the initial outbreak, the care home manager needs to inform the local Director of Public Health and apply for further tests for all remaining residents and staff, through the National Testing Service portal <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

How can Directors of Public Health, working with Directors of Adult Social Services refer care homes to be prioritised?

As part of our prioritisation criteria care homes can be referred to the national testing service by local authorities either based on size (over 50 beds) or local knowledge. The programme needs to have a clear understanding of which care homes local authorities think should be prioritised.

As such, as well as working with care homes that are a local priority to make sure they are registered with a local referral, Directors of Public Health can inform the national testing service directly of which care homes in their area they would want prioritised by completing the attached **Care Home Testing Referral Form**. Care Homes should be listed in priority order so that deliveries can be scheduled accordingly. Completed forms should be submitted to COVIDCareHomeTestingReferrals@dhsc.gov.uk

We would ask that DPHs report any changes to the priority list/order on a weekly basis by exception by midday each Friday.

How will the national testing service perform the tests on staff and residents?

For residents – Detailed instructions on administering tests to residents is available will be provided to care homes. Everyone who will be involved in administering tests should watch this [instruction video](#). We recognise that some care home staff will not feel comfortable conducting swabbing. Training and advice can be sought via the local CCG Director of Nursing, in the same way that PPE training has been provided or from the local Director of Public Health.

For staff - The test kits are self-administered meaning staff can perform the tests on themselves. Test kits come with detailed instructions on how to use them. You can also refer to this helpful video on [self-administering swabs](#).

Will the test kits come with personal protective equipment (PPE)?

No. The testing offer provides test kits only. Care homes are asked to follow the [current guidance](#) from Public Health England on how to work safely in care homes and this video on [putting on and removing PPE](#).

Tests should not be conducted without the correct PPE.

How will care homes get the results from the national testing service?

Results will be communicated as soon as possible. Results for residents will be passed to their respective care home manager to enable them to notify the resident and their family (if appropriate). Care home managers should pass on the positive test results of residents by name to the GP practice, using confidential routes such as nhs net, so they can enter the information into the primary care clinical system. The test results will also be fed back to PHE to inform any follow up actions required, and to build up our understanding of the prevalence of the virus in care homes across England.

Staff members should register the tests themselves to receive the test results directly or may choose to ask the care home to register their details.

The Pillar two testing programme are urgently working to put in place the necessary arrangements to share data from the testing programme with Local Authorities to help them manage coronavirus in the local area.

Who should care homes contact for further support and guidance?

If you have questions about your test kit registration, you can contact the Coronavirus Testing Call Centre on 0300 303 2713. It is open from 07:00 to 23:00 every day.