



Department
of Health &
Social Care

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To: DPHs and DASSs
CC: Chief Execs, Local NHS and Care Providers

ROLL OUT OF WHOLE CARE HOME TESTING

The Minister of State for Care wrote to you on 7 May 2020 setting out the steps we were taking to meet our commitment of offering a coronavirus test to every staff member and resident in every care home in England, whether symptomatic or not. I have attached this for your benefit.

I want to repeat her thanks for all your efforts over recent weeks to ensure that testing has been available to staff and residents.

I am pleased to announce that on Monday we launched the digital portal for care home coronavirus testing. This digital portal will make the arranging of tests as easy as possible for care homes by enabling them to register for the delivery and collection of test kits directly. You can access the digital portal here <https://www.gov.uk/apply-coronavirus-test-care-home>

This service provided by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) will be rolled out to all care homes in a phased approach; it is currently available for care homes whose primary clients are older people or those with dementia. Over the coming weeks we will want to work with you to roll this service out to other types of adult social care settings for example those catering for adults with learning disabilities.

To ensure that national testing capacity is directed to areas and care homes with the greatest need, from this point forward we ask that requests for whole home testing (all residents and asymptomatic staff) within care homes are made through this mechanism. Any care home workers with symptoms should be self-isolating and can access testing via the [self-referral portal](#) or be referred by their employer in the usual way.

The only exemption to this is if a care homes identifies their first symptomatic resident and is concerned they may have an outbreak. In these circumstances they should contact their local Public Health England Health Protection Team who will undertake a risk assessment, provide public health advice, and arrange urgent testing of all symptomatic residents. If any further cases are suspected after the initial outbreak access to testing is through the DHSC national testing service after seeking medical advice. See <http://www.gov.uk/health-protection-team> for more information.

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

How it will work

Attached to this letter is a **factsheet** which sets out who can access the national testing provision and how. Extensive guidance is available online covering the end to end process, but in outline this will proceed as follows:

- 1) **Request via the Digital Portal.** The digital portal has been launched and is available through the coronavirus testing page:

<https://www.gov.uk/apply-coronavirus-test-care-home>

The portal enables individual care home managers, or representatives within Local Authorities, to confirm the number of residents and staff within the home. This process verifies care home contact details and ensures the right number of kits are provided. The care homes' details will be cross checked against the Care Quality Commission database.

- 2) **Prioritisation of testing.** For this phrase, we have allocated up to 30,000 test kits per day. This should enable deliveries to over 300 care homes each day on average. We will prioritise care homes referred by Public Health England as well as local authorities, so that tests can be directed based on greatest need. The following prioritisation criteria have been agreed in consultation with Public Health England:
 - a. Care homes with a new outbreak, after the PHE Health Protection Team have arranged for the initial outbreak testing.
 - b. Covid free care homes with over 50 beds.
 - c. Care homes referred by local authorities either based on size (over 50 beds) or local knowledge. We ask that local authorities refer care homes in priority order so that deliveries can be scheduled accordingly.
- 3) **Delivery to the home.** Once the order is processed, test kits will be delivered by couriers or Mobile Test Units as swiftly as possible. Care homes will receive confirmation of their delivery date in advance.
- 4) **Conducting tests.** Detailed and clinically approved guidance has been produced for care home managers. We have also produced a tutorial video to guide staff through the swab collection process. 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 infection control training is being accessed. Testing within each home will typically be conducted over the space of three days, with courier collections pre-arranged at the end of each day. The care homes can rearrange courier collections if required.

- 5) **Recording swab samples.** Each swab test must be registered online on the same day the test is completed. In most cases, registration will be undertaken by the registered care home manager on behalf of their residents. Staff self-administering their tests can register their own, or may choose to ask the care home to register on their behalf details.

- 6) **Results.** Test results will be emailed to the registered manager, or directly to staff, within 72 hours of the test arriving at the laboratory. All test results for residents should then be notified to 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.

While the process we have put in place means that most care homes will register to receive testing kits directly, you have a crucial role to play as we scale up delivery.

First, we recognise that you need to be able to direct testing capacity to where it is needed the most. To do this, we need your help to make sure that all registered care homes are aware of and understand how they can access the testing programme through the digital portal.

Second, we understand that some care homes may need support to access the digital portal - this is why we have made it possible for you to register for testing on their behalf. We also recognise that Directors of Public Health, working with Directors of Adult Social care will have unique insight into the care homes with challenges, so homes you refer will be prioritised in accordance with the criteria above. Instructions for how Directors of Public Health should refer care homes to be prioritised are set out in the attached factsheet.

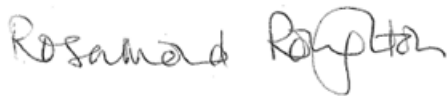
Finally, we know that many councils and NHS partners have already put local arrangements in place for testing care homes and have excellent support mechanisms already in place. As this additional capacity rolls out, we will continue to need you to continue to support care homes as they receive the results of those tests.

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

If you have questions about a registration, delivery or collection you can contact the Coronavirus Testing Call Centre on **0300 303 2713**. It is open from 07:00 to 23:00 every day.

Expansion of our testing programme protects and keeps people safe. Testing is a crucial part of this. It helps prevent and control outbreaks and means steps can be taken to reduce the spread the virus.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rosamond Roughton". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned to the left of a vertical line.

Rosamond Roughton
Director General, Adult Social Care