



Department
of Health &
Social Care

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To: Directors of Public Health

CC: Directors of Adult Social Services, Local Authority Chief Executives, Regional NHS
Testing Leads and Care Providers

Dear Directors of Public Health

Further information on coronavirus testing in care homes

On the 3rd of July Ros Roughton wrote to you launching the next phase of our testing in adult social care strategy where we set out how care homes can access testing through local PHE Health Protection Teams in the event of an outbreak and through the National Testing Programme in other circumstances. You have asked for clarification about how those two processes work together and for further guidance on re-testing. We are therefore pleased to attach a matrix and a factsheet setting this out.

We also wanted to take the opportunity to update you on the use of Randox test kits and our plan to roll out re-testing to care homes for older people and people with dementia, and all other adult care homes.

Replacement test kits

On the 15 July 2020 we issued a [statement](#) on the pause on the use of Randox test kits across the National Testing Programme and issued a notice to care homes the next morning. That notice asked care home to pause the use of Randox test kits subject to further investigation. We ask that you retain the kits and store them appropriately while waiting for further instructions. In the meantime, it is important that these kits are not returned to the programme, the labs or destroyed.

We committed to providing replacement kits as soon as possible in order to complete re-testing. Since then we have identified all care homes who require replacement kits to complete regular retesting or complete their first round of whole home testing. Replacement kits have been delivered to the majority of these homes, with the remaining receiving theirs next week.

Regular Whole Care Home Testing

We have had a positive response to the roll out of regular whole home testing with most care homes having now registered. However, as a result of a numbers of factors including rising demand across testing and unexpected delays we have not been able to reach all care homes for older people and people with dementia as quickly as we had hoped.

While we are taking all possible steps to increase our supply this does mean that we have to revise the previously advised timelines for rolling out regular testing in care homes as follows:

- We will now reach all care homes for older people and people with dementia by the 7 September 2020.
- If you have already started regular testing, there may be a wait for your second month's order to be fulfilled until we have reached all care homes for older people and people with dementia.
- All other adult care homes will be able to start to place orders for test kits from the 31 August 2020.

In the period up to 7 September, we will also take the following steps to target testing capacity where it is most needed:

- We will prioritise providing test kits to care homes in areas on the Contain Framework Local Authority Watchlist as set out in the [Weekly PHE Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) Surveillance Report](#)
- All care homes that have symptomatic residents will continue to be able to access testing through their local PHE Health Protection Team.

We will communicate directly with care homes who have registered for regular testing to inform them of the revised rollout dates. We want to reassure you that we are doing all we can to ensure test kits are received as soon as possible and we will continue to look for options that can reduce delays. We will be convening a roundtable with the care sector to discuss these options further.

For example, we need care homes to carry out testing throughout the whole week, especially on Friday, Saturday and Sunday where this is possible. This will enable us to increase the amount of care home testing we can do and make full use of the available testing capacity in our labs. We understand the challenges some care homes may experience with carrying out testing at the weekend, but we would encourage care homes to do this where possible.

We also are currently planning for meeting our new commitment to begin systematic testing for those in supported living and extra care. We will write out in due course with a plan for how we will roll out and deliver this commitment.

We want to reassure you that care home testing has not stopped. We are issuing over 50,000 tests a day to care homes across the country, with the majority of these in high priority outbreak areas. Any symptomatic person is still able to get a test and care homes with suspected positive cases will be able to access whole home testing via their Health Protection Team

Bulk registration of tests

As part of our efforts to make the testing process more accessible, we have listened to the sector and through our user experience research we have heard clearly that registering tests individually is unnecessarily burdensome. We are therefore pleased to inform you that from the 7 August 2020, care homes will be able to bulk register tests, which will speed up the process and alleviate the administrative burden.

This new digital offer has been tested with care home managers before launch to ensure that it meets their needs. Guidance will be issued about how the bulk registration process will work and we will cover it in our regular webinar.

As always. thank you for your continued involvement in, and support for, the testing programme and we sincerely apologise for the delays to the planned rollout.

Yours

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jane Cummings". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line underlining the name.

Jane Cummings
Testing Director, Adult Social Care

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alex Cooper". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line underlining the name.

Alex Cooper
SRO, National Testing Programme