Early Learning and Childcare Directorate
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NOTE FOR ALL DAYCARE OF CHILDCARE PROVIDERS

To all registered Daycare of childcare providers,

COVID-19 UPDATE – ACCESS TO TESTING FOR CHILDCARE STAFF

On Wednesday 12 August in a statement to the Scottish Parliament the Deputy First Minister, John Swinney, announced that teachers, nursery and school staff can now be tested for COVID-19 on demand if they are concerned they have been at risk from infection, even if they show no symptoms. This step has been taken to provide additional reassurance to teachers, nursery and other staff as children and young people return to the classroom and to early learning.

Today's note highlights the change and sets out the options for school and ELC or childcare, including school age childcare staff to access testing for COVID-19. It addresses the circumstances where testing is essential as well as situations where staff who are concerned that they may have been exposed to COVID -19 may consider accessing testing. At the present time access to this testing route is not available for childminders.

1 Symptomatic staff and close contacts

It is important that the whole community around the school or setting is vigilant for the symptoms of COVID-19 and understands what actions they should take if someone develops them, either onsite or offsite. The key symptoms to be aware of are:

new continuous cough

fever/high temperature

loss of, or change in, sense of smell or taste

If a staff member develops symptoms suggesting COVID-19 infection, they **should self-isolate and book a test as soon as possible.** This can either be done

through the employer referral portal as per local arrangements Councils have in place, which enables access to a priority slot at a test site if the sites are busy or

by self-referral - online at NHSinform.scot/test-and-protect or by calling 0800 028 2816.

Orkney, Shetland and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar have different ways of accessing a test in their local areas, employers and staff should liaise with their local Health Boards to find out how to access a test.

It is essential that staff who have such symptoms, or who share a household with someone who has symptoms, **do not** attend nursery or other childcare settings, and must self-isolate along with all members of their household, as per guidance on NHS Inform and from Test and Protect. Staff who are identified as a close contact of a confirmed COVID case will be asked to self-isolate for 14 days.

2   Other circumstances

Unless staff are symptomatic or are advised to get a test by a healthcare professional, then testing is **not** a requirement. However, if members of staff are on occasion concerned that they have been at risk from infection, then they may request a test whether or not they have symptoms. The limitations of testing when a person does not have symptoms are set out at Annex B.

Such staff should make the request via their employer who can book a test for them using the employer portal (see Annex A). This route is the only way an individual can access a test if they do not have symptoms. Settings should make arrangements to ensure such staff are furnished with the information at Annex B so that they can make an informed choice as to whether to proceed, and understand what the test result means.

Testing people who do not have symptoms but are concerned that they may have COVID-19 is not available to the general public. We are keen to understand how many staff in different settings take up this offer and we are considering options for regular collection of this information. We will update you as soon as we have a process agreed.

What this means for the early learning and childcare and school age childcare sector

We want childcare staff to not just be safe, but to feel safe, at their place of work. Clinical advice is clear that testing those with symptoms must be the priority but we are now offering all staff who are concerned they may have been at risk of infection to have access to testing through their employer.

Staff support

Staff may feel anxious or worried at this time but it is important that staff feel safe and supported while at work. We want colleagues to be informed of the latest information and confident when communicating information to families. It is really important that staff understand the information we have outlined above about offering all staff who are concerned they may have been at risk of infection to have access to testing through their employer.

We would encourage you and your staff to have a look at the [Team ELC Wellbeing Hub](#) as a range of help and support is available for everyone in the childcare sector. This Wellbeing Hub hosts a wealth of resources to support you in understanding your wellbeing, your mental health and mental illness. There are practical ways to support your wellbeing, celebrate you and your work, attend useful events and connect with others in the childcare industry.

Thank you again for everything you do for Scotland's children and families, particularly in these challenging times.

Alison Cumming
Interim Director, Early Learning and Childcare

Use of the Employer Referral Portal in Childcare Settings

Tests for staff should be arranged through the Employer Referral Portal, which grants priority access. Orkney, Shetland and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar have different routes to accessing a test in their local areas, employers and staff should liaise with their local Health Boards to find out how to access a test.

Each daycare of children's services provider should register with the employer portal so that they can book tests for their staff. In order to obtain a login, they should email portalservicedesk@dhsc.gov.uk with:

- organisation name
- nature of the organisation's business
- region
- names (where possible) and email addresses of 2 users who will load essential worker contact details.

Once employer details have been verified, 2 login credentials will be issued for the employer referral portal. The provider should then upload a spreadsheet containing names and mobile phone numbers for staff being referred for testing. The system then automatically generates text messages to those staff members with a reference number inviting them to book a slot at their nearest regional or mobile test site.

When the member of staff registers to book a test they will enter their home postcode. A list of their nearest test centres will then be generated to allow them to book a slot. Tests are generally self-swab although some of the regional test sites do offer administered testing. Results are issued to the individual within 48 hours of the test (although turnaround times are generally quicker). It is the responsibility of the individual to inform their employer of a positive result although data will flow back into public health systems.

Covid 19; information on testing people who do not have symptoms

Please ensure this note is cascaded to all HR departments and made available to staff who may wish to seek a test without having symptoms

COVID-19 is the illness caused by a new strain of coronavirus first identified in late 2019 in China. It can cause a range of symptoms, including a new continuous cough, fever, or loss or change in sense of smell or taste.

COVID-19 has an incubation period of 2 to 14 days. This means that someone who is exposed to the virus, for example by having close contact with another person who is infectious, may take from 2 to 14 days to develop symptoms. Through the NHS Test & Protect approach, people who are identified as close contacts are asked self-isolate for 14 days, in order to reduce the risk of spreading it to others if they themselves develop the infection. No testing is required unless symptoms develop or they are specifically advised to get tested by their NHS Health Protection Team or an NHS contact tracer.

School, ELC and childcare members of staff who are concerned that they may have been exposed to infection may seek a test whether or not they have symptoms. Before proceeding with such a test individuals should consider the pro and cons. If upon reading the below information they decide to proceed with the test, their request will be granted, via the employer referral portal.

Things to consider before requesting a test:

Some individuals, out of concern for their own health or that of others, seek a test even when they have no symptoms. This may give a sense of assurance but can be misleading and cannot exclude the possibility that the virus is present, or that the person may go on to be infected or to develop the illness.

The COVID-19 tests we use in Scotland work by detecting evidence of the virus in a person's nose and throat sample (which is collected using a nasopharyngeal swab to collection secretions from the back of the throat and then the back of the nose). **These tests cannot tell us whether or not someone is incubating the disease,** but only if evidence of the virus is present at the time when they are tested.

This means that testing is a single point in time assessment of whether a person may be infectious but it cannot tell us whether a person is going to become ill in the future. Therefore a negative result cannot reliably be used to inform individual risk or as the basis for reducing mitigations to reduce the risk of transmission such as hygiene and distancing.

Sometimes when the test is taken and returns a positive result, it needs to be repeated. Self-isolation must continue until the repeat result is available and further advice provided thereafter by your NHS team.

Individuals who are concerned they may have come into contact with an infected person, but are unsure about undertaking testing, also have the alternative option of approaching NHS Inform for further information.