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To:

Registered care home providers (adults)
Chief Executives NHS Boards and Local Authorities
Chief Executives of Health Boards

Chief Officers Health and Social Care Partnerships
Chief Social Work Officers
Directors of Public Health
Nurse and Medical Directors
Chief Executive, Care Inspectorate

24 December 2020

Dear Colleague

Additional preventative measures due to new Covid variant – Testing of Care Home Staff, Visiting Professionals and Outbreak Management

In light of the further restrictions announced by the First Minister on Saturday 18 December we have undertaken an urgent review of our care home COVID testing strategy. This includes consideration of advice from SAGE in this area. This letter should be considered additional to our letter to you of 22 December in relation to care home visiting and visitor testing, from 26 December.

The advice in this letter on staff and visiting professional testing applies to all Levels until further notice.

Enhanced Care Home Staff Testing

As of 4 January care homes will have access to twice weekly lateral flow tests for staff members, to be used alongside the existing weekly PCR test in line with the SAGE recommendations. The first LFT should be done on the same day as the PCR and if the LFT comes back positive the member of staff should self-isolate and await the PCR result to confirm. If this PCR test is negative they can return to work. If it is positive they must remain isolated. The second LFT can be used later in the week. If this later test is positive staff should self-isolate and seek a confirmatory PCR.

We are currently arranging for the distribution of additional LFT kits to all care homes commencing on 29 December. As per our letter of 22 December the testing kits already held by care homes should be offered to essential visitors from 26 December. After which, if existing supply allows, you may wish to consider a one off lateral flow test for all staff members who have mixed with other households during temporary relaxations on Christmas Day. The implications of these tests are as described above.

Staff should refer to the testing guidance and training before undertaking any lateral flow testing. These have been approved by the MHRA for use in adult care home settings. Materials can be accessed at: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): adult care home visitor testing guidance - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-adult-care-home-visitor-testing-guidance-2020/pages/1-1-introduction.aspx).



This will empower care homes to take early and immediate action to support the health and wellbeing needs of both residents and staff.

In the event of a resident or staff member testing positive for COVID via LFT whole home outbreak management process should be triggered immediately. This must be supervised by HPTs and can additionally utilise the home's stocks of LFTs to do simultaneous testing of all staff in addition to PCR. This may not be as suitable for residents who should have, as a minimum, PCR testing, though LFT may be useful for a first suspected case pending PCR confirmation. Any staff immediately identified as positive for COVID by LFT must self-isolate pending the PCR result. Any residents identified as positive must be isolated and managed in line with the relevant guidance.

Staff who initially test negative will continue to be tested daily, for 7 consecutive days, after the identification of a single case of COVID within a home. In addition all previously negative residents should be tested on day 4/5 with PCR. This is in line with SAGE guidance.

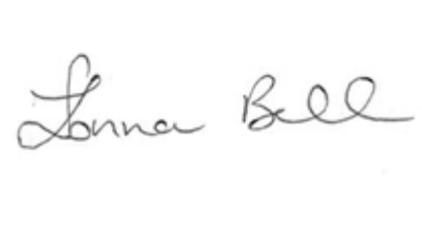
Given the ongoing challenges of the pandemic it is essential that we remain vigilant about transmission. These measures are right and appropriate for Care Homes and are in line with the most recent Sage advice. I recognise that it is a further call on the time of Care Home staff. However, we are also aware all of you are as committed as us to preventing the ingress of COVID into our care homes, and will approach the delivery of these enhanced measures with the same commitment you have shown throughout, and particularly with the introduction of PCR staff testing.

I would also like to draw your attention to support available to you with COVID-related costs. On 22nd December, Scottish Government published updated guidance on payments to adult social care providers to support with additional administration required by care homes as a result of COVID-19. This is available here:

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): financial support arrangements for social care providers - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/resources/consultations-policies/coronavirus/coronavirus-covid-19-financial-support-arrangements-for-social-care-providers/).

If you have any follow up questions at this point them please do not hesitate to contact CareHomesCOVIDsupport@gov.scot

With very best wishes to you all



Donna Bell
Director of Mental Health and Social Care

