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Health and Social Care Partnerships Chief Officers
Local Authority Chief Executives
Directors of Public Health
Care Inspectorate, for onward transmission to all care homes providing care to adults
NCPG (COSLA)
Care Homes Rapid Action Group
Clinical and Professional Advisory Group on Care Homes
Test and Protect Operational Steering Group
Emma Shepherd, DHSC

3 July 2020

Dear colleagues,

**Use of the UK Government Social Care Testing Portal by Scottish Care Homes:
Summary guidance and Frequently Asked Questions**

Commitments were made by the First Minister and Cabinet Secretary on 18 June 2020 to test all staff in Scottish care homes for Covid-19 weekly. Care homes now have several weeks' experience of undertaking this routine testing, and of using the UK Government Social Care Testing Portal to access tests.

Guidance on the use of the Portal was provided on 11 June, and has been updated today on the Portal as a result of helpful feedback from care homes.

In response to requests from the care home community for additional and summarised guidance, I attach a 2-page summary of the updated UK Government Portal guidance, as well as a Frequently Asked Questions document on the Portal process.

A Short-Life Working Group will meet from Monday 6 July 2020, including representation from the staff side and from care home management, to further understand the experience of Scottish care homes of weekly staff testing and to seek solutions to any issues raised. A key aspect of its work will be to support and encourage staff to participate in testing. Asymptomatic staff can unknowingly pass on the virus to their colleagues and vulnerable care home residents. Routine weekly staff testing within all care homes will therefore help protect residents and staff, and is an important part of the national effort to tackle coronavirus.

Thank you for everything you are doing at this hugely challenging time.

Kind regards,

Donna Bell, Director

COVID-19 Testing for Care Home Staff in Scotland using the UK Government Social Care Portal: non-Randox test kits

PLEASE NOTE: In Scotland, the UK Government Social Care portal is currently **only** being used for **care home staff** testing and **not** for testing of residents. This guidance should be followed for staff who do not have symptoms. Staff with symptoms should not attend work and should access testing via the test and protect section of the NHS Inform website www.nhsinform.scot/self-help-guides/self-help-guide-access-to-testing-for-coronavirus or by calling 111. Local Health Boards will inform homes of the system for testing care home residents when this is required.

For Care Home Staff testing via the UK Government Social Care Portal

1. Before you do any testing, **book a courier collection** which will pick up your completed tests. This can be arranged at www.carehomecollect.co.uk. **Please do not make separate arrangements for collection.**

For Island NHS Boards: Please note that different arrangements will be made for collection. Please speak to your health board contacts.

2. **Order test kits** via the online portal for care homes: <https://request-care-home-testing.test-for-coronavirus.service.gov.uk/>

Currently homes order tests each week but shortly they will be able to order once per month. Always order plenty of tests: you can retain and use any extra in future. Testing through the Portal in Scotland is only for staff, but please note that to enable the portal system to operate, you should enter the figure "1" when asked how many test kits for residents you want (and not the number of residents in the home).

3. **Prepare to conduct testing** in your care home.

- Familiarise yourself with the guidance and instructions and assist your team to prepare by watching [this instruction video](#). All test kits used in Scotland require the swab to be left in the testing medium and sent with the sample.
- Discuss the testing approach with your staff.
- Make sure that you obtain consent from staff to be tested.
- Review staff rosters to ensure all eligible staff can be tested within timeframe.
- Review your personal protective equipment (PPE) supply and ensure
- you have the correct PPE to carry out testing.
- Ensure a proper workstation is available for preparing and packing the tests.
- Look out for the delivery confirmation email letting you know when tests will be delivered.
- Make sure you have booked (by 7pm the day before you start testing) a courier collection to pick up your completed tests.

4. Staff testing will be done on a **weekly cycle**:

- Day 0 – you receive an email confirming you have successfully ordered tests
- Day 1-2 – you will receive an email confirming tests are scheduled for delivery
- Day 3 – you receive your test kits by courier after 10am
- Day 4-6 – days for testing and collection. Please only test on a day that you have a
- confirmed courier collection arranged.

5. **Agreement to be tested** should be obtained from all staff to be tested. Formal written consent from staff is not required.

6. **Detailed test instructions** on conducting the test are in the more detailed version of this guidance which is available on the Portal. Every person involved in conducting the test in your care home must watch [this instruction video](#) prior to conducting the swab test. It also provides information on appropriate PPE. The guidance also advises how to prepare swab for sending to the laboratory.

7. You must **register each completed test online** at www.test-for-coronavirus.service.gov.uk/care-home. This will record the URN or barcode of each swab against the name and details of the individual who has been tested. Note that you must complete this on the SAME DAY that you conduct the swab testing and as close as possible to the time that the swab is taken.

8. **What you will need** to register your test online:

1. CARE HOME ID: Enter your Care Inspectorate number (it looks like this: 'CS1234567890').
2. ENTER THE TEST BARCODE: Enter the 11 character reference below the barcode on your test kit, or scan the barcode using your phone or computer camera. Take care to double check that this number is correct.
3. FIRST AND LAST NAME: of the person who has been tested.
4. STAFF OR RESIDENT: select Staff member.
5. SYMPTOMS: Indicate whether the person being tested is experiencing symptoms at the time the test is taken. Note: staff with symptoms should not be tested using the social care portal, so you should enter "no symptoms".
6. GENDER AND DATE OF BIRTH: of the person who has been tested.
7. EMAIL AND PHONE OF THE PERSON WHO SHOULD RECEIVE THE TEST RESULTS: In most cases this will be email address and telephone number of the individual staff member to receive their own test results.
8. POSTCODE: This will be the postcode of the individual staff member to receive their own test results.
9. NHS NUMBER: of the staff member who has been tested, if available (not required).

9. **On the same day that your courier** has been arranged to pick up completed tests, you should conduct testing between 6 am and 3 pm. Package your test kits up before 4 pm. The courier will collect completed kits from you between 4 pm - 10 pm.

10. If your **courier has not collected your test kits by 10 pm**, please email COVIDCareHomeTesting@dhsc.gov.uk or call the helpline number below to request an urgent collection the following morning. You will receive an email confirmation of your revised collection time. **It is important that you do not to organise other arrangements to transport samples to the laboratory.**

11. If the **courier arrives before 4 pm** and your test kits are not yet ready for collection, please politely ask the courier to wait or return at 4 pm the same day.

12. **Keep any unused test kits** in the care home for future weekly staff testing.

If you have **any other problems** with your delivery or collection that are not addressed above, please email COVIDCareHomeTesting@dhsc.gov.uk or call 0300 303 2713 (7am – 11pm daily) or 18001 0300 303 2713 for people with hearing or speech impairments.

Other useful guidance:

1. <https://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/web-resources-container/covid-19-information-and-guidance-for-care-home-settings/>
2. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-clinical-and-practice-guidance-for-adult-care-homes/>

The below questions apply to care homes which have been directed by their health board to use the UK Government social care portal for staff testing

1. Does this system apply to Island Boards?

Yes, but there will be specific test collection arrangements for care homes within island health boards (Shetland, Orkney, Western Isles) with separate instructions for these boards. Please speak to your health board contacts.

2. How do I access the social care portal?

The social care portal is at: <https://request-care-home-testing.test-for-coronavirus.service.gov.uk/>

3. How do care homes register online for testing?

Care homes can register for testing on the social care portal at: <https://request-care-home-testing.test-for-coronavirus.service.gov.uk/>. They will need their care home ID and will be asked to confirm the number of staff in the care home. Testing through the Portal in Scotland is only for staff, **not residents**. Please note that to enable the portal system to operate, you should enter the figure "1" when asked how many test kits for residents you want (and not the number of residents in the home).

4. Which email address should I include?

Usually this is the email address of the staff member to receive their own test results.

5. How do care homes access the test kits?

Test kits will be available to be ordered through the social care portal at: <https://request-care-home-testing.test-for-coronavirus.service.gov.uk/>. Currently homes order tests each week but shortly they will be able to order once per month. Always order plenty of tests: you can retain and use any extra in future.

6. I have ordered test kits but have not received a confirmation email yet.

It could take up to a day to receive the email. The email should be sent from care.home.portal.for.coronavirus.test.kits@notifications.service.gov.uk.

7. I have ordered test kits but have not received a delivery or confirmation of delivery.

You will receive another email once your delivery date is confirmed.

8. We have not received our delivery on the advised date.

Test kits are delivered through the Royal Mail; although we arrange for next day delivery sometimes there are unforeseen delays. Please wait until 10 pm the day after the kits were due to be delivered. After then, please contact COVIDCareHomeTesting@dhsc.gov.uk and let them know your test kits have not arrived. A new delivery will be arranged for you.

9. Some of the test kits delivered are damaged. How do I replace these?

Please contact COVIDCareHomeTesting@dhsc.gov.uk and let them know how many are damaged. A new delivery will be arranged for you.

10. An incorrect number of kits have been delivered to me. How do I order more?

Please contact COVIDCareHomeTesting@dhsc.gov.uk and let them know the details of this. A new delivery will be arranged and communicated.

11. Why have I received more than one bag with the test kit?

All non-Randox kits will have 2 bags - one that looks like a sandwich bag and the other a bio-hazard bag. Make sure to place the absorbent pad and the vial separately into the sandwich bag. Then place the sandwich bag into the bio-hazard bag.

12. Do I include the swab in the used test kit?

Yes, all non-Randox kits require the swab to be left in the testing medium when sent for analysis. Place the swab in the medium and break off at the stem before securing the lid.

13. Do I need to box up the used test kits?

Yes, the labs require used tests to be boxed up, for clinical safety reasons. Please either re-use the original box that unused test kits arrived in or use any cardboard box to package your tests, but you should either print or write a **UN 3373** symbol onto the box to show that it contains a clinical substance.

14. Do I need to label the return box?

No, the return boxes (and original box) will already be labelled for return. You can also use any cardboard box to package your tests, but you should either print or write a **UN 3373** symbol onto the box to show that it contains a clinical substance. You will not receive a separate return label for any of your boxes.



UN 3373 Symbol

15. How can I store the test kits?

Test kits can be stored at ambient temperature (room temperature between 5-22 degrees Celsius); they do not need to be stored in a fridge. Please ensure that all care home staff are aware of where the kits have been stored and that they have not been locked away where the person who is handing them to the courier cannot access them.

16. When will the used kits be collected?

You need to book your courier collection; we will not automatically arrange this courier for you.

17. How can I book my own courier collection?

Care homes can book their own collection using the site <https://www.carehomecollect.co.uk/>. Collections can be arranged up to 6 days in advance and homes will have until 7 pm to book a next day courier collection. Payment for the courier is part of the process and the care home will not be charged for this. Care home will need their care home ID, care home email address and phone number, care home postal address and dates for collection ready when they log into the courier social care portal. Care homes should not begin testing until they have received confirmation via this website that a courier is arriving that day, and may need additional staff at work on days they are undertaking testing.

18. When will my courier arrive?

Care homes can expect the courier to arrive between 4 pm-10 pm on the day that they have booked them to arrive.

19. My courier didn't turn up – what do I do?

Please wait until 10.30 pm. If after 10.30 pm please contact covidcarehometesting@dhsc.gov.uk to let them know that your courier has not arrived to collect your test kits, and a courier will be arranged for you in the morning.

20. Can I cancel a courier collection?

We cannot cancel collections scheduled through our social care portal. If you don't perform any tests during a day that you have a courier booked to arrive, please thank the courier and tell them you have nothing for them to collect when they arrive.

21. I am going to be late for the 4 pm- 10 pm pick-up. How do I let the courier know to come later?

We are not able to delay the courier. All the completed test kits must be ready for the courier to collect when they arrive. No testing can take place after 4 pm, as the tests will miss the 48 hour window to be tested in the labs, and increases the risk of a void result.

22. I need an extra courier collection. How do I arrange this?

Collections would normally be 3 times per week, but additional collections can be arranged on occasion where necessary, using the site carehomecollect.co.uk. Collections can be arranged up to 6 days in advance and homes will have until 7 pm to book a next day courier collection. Care home will need their care home ID, care home email address and phone number, care home postal address and dates for collection ready when they log into the courier social care portal.

23. I need an urgent same day collection?

This option should only be required by homes that have completed testing but do not have a courier booked. They will need to email the mailbox at covidcarehometesting@dhsc.gov.uk with their care home ID, address, email address, number and the team will arrange this and be in contact with more information.