



To: Staff of Care Homes in Scotland

24 June 2020

Dear Colleague

Thank you for all your hard work in care homes across our country – at all times, but particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic. Your commitment and dedication to providing person-centred high quality care and support is appreciated by us but also by the many for whom a care home is their home.

COVID-19 is extremely infectious – and its effects have been devastating, especially in the care home setting. The infection can be passed very easily from person to person in public spaces (especially indoors) and close contact increases that risk. It can also present very differently in the elderly, making it harder to identify. We have continued to follow the science and are now seeing emerging evidence that people who do not have any symptoms and test positive, may in fact be what is termed ‘pre-symptomatic’. This means these people may be passing the virus on without knowing. The continued use of personal protective equipment and strict adherence to infection prevention and control procedures will reduce the risk of transmission to residents or staff – but it won’t take it away entirely.

With this in mind, we thank you for your understanding on the need for you to be tested weekly for Covid-19. We realise this is an additional burden for you at a difficult time. The purpose is to enable identification of any staff who do not have symptoms but are carrying the virus and therefore might unknowingly pass it on. We can then test residents where it is appropriate to do so, to keep residents, staff and the families of staff safe.

Although infection rates are slowly improving across Scotland, it is possible that there may be a second ‘peak’. Weekly testing of staff in care homes will help us to identify whether infection rates are climbing and help us to continue to suppress the virus. It will also help support work to commence a phased return to visiting in care homes. As you know we have been unable to reintroduce visiting because the level of transmission in the community, although falling, has been too high. However we have developed a plan for a phased return for when it is clinically safe to do so. We will publish this plan shortly. We know this will be important news for you, your staff and most importantly the people you care for and their loved ones. By being tested you are helping prepare the way for that important moment.

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We would like to thank those who have participated in staff testing already, and would encourage those who have not, to do so. This is a key part of Scotland's "Test and Protect" strategy and you are playing a hugely important part in it.

Recently we were made aware that receiving statutory sick pay when isolating was causing financial hardship for social care workers including those in the care home sector. This week we are introducing the Social Care Staff Support Fund. This Fund will ensure that social care workers receive their normal pay when, due to the nature of their work or work environment, they self-isolate as part of infection, prevention and control measures. The Fund is open to staff who meet the Fund criteria set out in guidance and is intended to remain operational in line with the duration of the Coronavirus No.2 Scotland Act 2020 (2020 Act), currently September 2020. If you do need to self-isolate as a result of COVID-19, you will be able to access this support. Information on how to access the fund will be published shortly on Scottish Government website here: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-social-care-staff-support-fund-guidance/>

We cannot stress enough how grateful we are for the role you play in the lives of the residents of care homes. We know that their families, friends and loved ones are incredibly grateful to you for what you do every day but most importantly what you have done to care for them during this pandemic.



**JEANE FREEMAN**



**CLLR STUART CURRIE, COSLA**

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