Dear Colleague

Contact tracing and weekly testing of staff

I am writing to provide you with an update on arrangements for contact tracing for care home residents and on testing in care homes.

1. Contact tracing for care home residents

Contact tracing has now begun in the Greater Glasgow and Clyde area, and includes staff and residents in care homes. Under this system, anyone who has been tested for COVID-19 from 28 May onwards and whose result is positive is being contact traced. Care home staff whose result is positive should immediately be excluded from work and should self-isolate at home. They will be telephoned by the contact tracing team to determine their contacts, who will then be provided with relevant advice on self-isolating and on accessing testing if they in turn develop symptoms.

For care home residents, many of the measures that contact tracing might result in are already covered by existing infection prevention and control (IPC) recommendations and testing arrangements. However there are some situations in which specific contact tracing and/or risk assessment for care home residents will need to be carried out.

For symptomatic confirmed cases, these include instances in which:
- Visitors to the care home have had direct contact or been in proximity with the resident, or
- Staff have provided care to the resident without using the right PPE in the right way, or
- The resident has spent any time outside the care home during their infectious period, for example if they have been newly admitted to the care home or attended an outpatient appointment.

For asymptomatic confirmed cases, contact tracing is generally limited to instances in which the resident may have spent time in a household setting during their infectious period. This will mainly apply to
residents who have been newly admitted to the care home from the community and have tested positive upon admission.

A checklist has been developed to enable care homes to identify any newly confirmed cases to which these circumstances apply, so that they can refer those cases to the contact tracing team. This has been integrated into a new version of the outbreak toolkit for care homes. A copy of this is attached and I would ask you to start using it form now. Care homes are also encouraged to approach the contact tracing team for advice if they are in doubt or if they are concerned that contacts may have been exposed in situations other than those listed above.

2. Testing in care homes

Weekly testing is now offered to all asymptomatic staff in Care Homes who have not previously had a positive test. There is no need to re-test staff who have had previous positive tests, unless they develop new symptoms. As always, symptomatic staff should stay off work and can access our staff testing service.

In total there are three mechanisms in place for weekly testing of asymptomatic staff. Two of these (via the UK Government testing service) are available to staff working in care homes that are not currently affected by an outbreak of COVID-19, and one (via local HSCP testing hubs) is for care homes with a current outbreak.

In view of these eligibility criteria and limits on the numbers of tests that can be provided through the UK Government service, individual care homes are each being allocated to one or other of these mechanisms.

Your care home should access weekly testing via: The Social Care Portal

Please note that this allocation may change if and when the circumstances of the care home change, particularly if the care home reaches the end of an outbreak or develops a new one. Please refer to the detailed information in annex 1 on each of the three testing pathways and on how to access them, and follow the instructions for the pathway to which your care home has been allocated. I realise these new arrangements can lead to queries. A Q&A has also been provided in annex 2, which I encourage you to read.

Please contact the Public Health Protection Unit (0141-201-4917) if you need to discuss aspects of this information.

Thank you again for all your hard work in caring for your residents and staff in this difficult time.

Yours sincerely

DR LINDA DE CAESTECKER
Director of Public Health
Annex 1: Arrangements for weekly testing of asymptomatic staff

The three mechanisms and instructions for accessing them are set out below. Please follow the instructions that apply to the mechanism that has been allocated for your care home:

1. **Weekly testing for staff in care homes without an outbreak: UK Government Covid-19 Testing Service (Employer Portal)**

The weekly testing of asymptomatic staff in care homes that are not currently affected by an outbreak can be organised via the **Employer Portal** of the UK Government Covid-19 testing service from now. The Care Home manager registers all their staff on the system and staff can access Glasgow Airport testing centre, other regional testing centres or can request a home test kit. Results through this route will go directly to the staff member and Care Homes should request that staff inform them of their result. [https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-getting-tested/pages/arrange-a-test/](https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-getting-tested/pages/arrange-a-test/)

This testing route is only available to care homes with no active outbreaks of Covid-19 i.e. homes that have never had any cases of Covid-19 or homes that have had cases but it is over 14 days since their last new case arose.

2. **Weekly testing for staff in care homes without an outbreak: UK Government Covid-19 Testing Service (Social Care Portal)**

From next week, care homes can also access the UK Government Covid-19 **Social Care Testing Portal**. After registering staff on this portal, self-testing kits will be delivered to and picked up from the care home for all staff every week. Results will be sent to the Care Home to inform staff. The Care Home will be asked to report the results for staff in their regular communication with commissioning managers and via the daily safety huddles. [https://request-care-home-testing.test-for-coronavirus.service.gov.uk/](https://request-care-home-testing.test-for-coronavirus.service.gov.uk/)

This testing route is only available to care homes with no active outbreaks of Covid-19 i.e. homes that have never had any cases of Covid-19 or homes that have had cases but it is over 14 days since their last new case arose.

(The Social Care Portal is not yet live and I will contact you again as soon as it is – hopefully this sentence will not be required). NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde has been given an allocation for the social care portal and not all eligible homes will be able to access this route.

3. **Weekly testing for staff in care homes with an outbreak: Local HSCP Testing Hubs**

The third route is similar to the current system for testing residents and staff via the HSCP testing hub. In order to access this service, the care home should supply an updated list of all staff to the HSCP Hub or confirm to the Hub that your staff list is the same as it was previous testing. The Hub will then deliver labelled testing kits to the home weekly for all staff to either self-swab or be swabbed by nursing staff in the home. Instructions on self-swabbing will be provided. The kits will be collected every week 2 days later to enable as many staff as possible to be swabbed. This 2 day timing for collection does not affect the accuracy of the tests, but it is a strict cut-off and no further collections will be made from the care home until the following week’s new round of testing. Results will not be communicated directly to staff but will be returned to the care home which in turn will need to inform staff of their results. The results are also available to the NHS Board and the HSCP to monitor the weekly testing, so you do not need to report the results to the HSCP.
Annex 2: Recent questions on testing in care homes

Should residents or staff who have already had a positive test be re-tested at any stage?
There is generally no need to re-test residents or staff who have already had a positive test. If they are re-tested it is likely that the repeat test will come back positive because there may be remnants of virus particles left that can still be detected by the test even though they are no longer active. The exception to this may be in someone who has fully recovered from their infection and is no longer in their isolation period, but who then develops new symptoms consistent with COVID-19. In such situations a repeat test may be done to investigate whether the person has been reinfected. However, if the result is positive it may be difficult or impossible to determine whether this is due to reinfection or ongoing presence of inactive virus particles from their previous infection.

Do staff who have had a positive test need to be re-tested before they can return to work?
No. There is no requirement for staff to have a further test to show that they are negative before they return to work. Staff who have had a positive test should stay away from work for a minimum of seven days from the date of onset of their symptoms, and can then return to work as long as their symptoms have improved and they have been free of fever for at least two days.

Do residents or staff who have had a negative test need to be re-tested?
A negative test demonstrates that the virus was not detected at the time that the sample was taken, but it does not rule out the possibility that the individual was nonetheless infected at that time (ie the test was done before the virus could be detected) or that they may have acquired the infection after the test was taken. Residents and staff who have a negative test but then develop symptoms at any time after that test should therefore be re-tested, even if the interval between their negative test and the start of their symptoms is very short. Staff who have a negative test result and remain asymptomatic should be included in any subsequent rounds of ‘mass’ testing of asymptomatic residents and staff in the care home.

Should we be doing ‘mass’ testing in care homes that have not yet had a case, or which have had cases but no longer do?
Yes. However ‘mass’ testing of asymptomatic residents and staff in these care homes is a lower priority than it is in care homes that currently have an outbreak of COVID-19 (in other words those that have one or more possible or confirmed cases of COVID-19). As soon as all care homes in your area with current cases of COVID-19 and any linked homes have been tested, please start testing homes which have had previous cases of COVID-19. Screening of care homes which have had no cases of COVID-19 should also go ahead. This has already happened in some partnership areas but not in all areas. HSCPs may wish to consider a mutual aid approach to testing in order to enable testing to proceed in all these categories of care homes across GGC.

Which care home staff are eligible for testing at the care home?
When a round of ‘mass’ testing of asymptomatic residents and staff takes place at a care home, it should include all members of staff who work regularly and for significant periods of time in the care home. This includes frontline care staff as well as those in other roles such as domestic or catering staff. It also includes directly employed as well as agency staff. Others such as district nurses or podiatrists who periodically visit the care home to provide care to residents may also be included. However one-off visitors to the care home such as utility contractors would not normally be included.
The main focus of mass testing of asymptomatic staff should be on staff who are continuing to work in the care home, as the results are mainly used to manage existing staff to minimise the risk of COVID-19 transmission in the care home.

Regardless of their role, no staff who are symptomatic should be tested at the care home. Any staff member who is symptomatic should immediately go home to self-isolate, and should apply to be tested via the separate arrangements for testing symptomatic staff.