



The Department of Health and Social Care Coronavirus National Testing Programme

Whole Home Testing for care home staff and residents

Updated 05.06.2020

This document outlines the testing provision for residents and staff in care homes. This testing approach applies in England only.

Who can register care homes for whole home testing?

Whole Care Home Testing through the National Testing Programme was initially made available to care homes who primarily look after older people or people with dementia.

From 7 June 2020 we have expanded eligibility for this service to all remaining adults care homes who will now be able to access whole care home testing for all residents and asymptomatic staff through the digital portal. We expect these to be largely specialist adult care homes catering for adults with learning disabilities or mental health issues, physical disabilities, acquired brain injuries and other categories for younger adults under 65 years.

Who can get tested using this testing provision?

Care home residents with and without symptoms and care home workers **without symptoms** can be tested within the care home.

Any care home workers with symptoms should be self-isolating and can access testing via the [self-referral portal](#)

You can access the testing matrix for adult social care here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/884284/Adult_social_care_COVID-19_testing.pdf

How the process works

1) **Request via the Digital Portal.** <https://www.gov.uk/apply-coronavirus-test-care-home>

The portal enables individual care home managers to register to receive testing kits. This process verifies care home contact details and ensures the right number of kits are provided. The care homes' details will be cross checked against the Care Quality Commission database.

2) **Delivery to the home.** Once the order is processed, test kits will be delivered by Royal Mail special delivery (this means that it has to be signed for). Care homes will receive confirmation of their delivery date in advance. We are offering coronavirus tests to all care homes across England and are working hard to deliver test kits as quickly as possible. There may be a delay between registering for kits and confirmation of when your test kits will arrive.

3) **Conducting tests.** Detailed and clinically approved guidance has been produced for care home managers. We have also produced a tutorial video to guide staff through the swab collection process. Testing within each home will typically be conducted over the space of three days. Before starting to test care homes managers should book a courier to collect their tests here www.carehomecollect.co.uk at least 24hours before you begin testing.

Care homes should only carry out testing on days that they know they have a courier booked, as tests need to reach our labs with 48hours of the swab being taken in order for the testing to be processed.

4) **Recording swab samples.** Each swab test must be registered online on the same day the test is completed. In most cases, registration will be undertaken by the registered care home manager on behalf of their residents. Staff self-administering their tests can register their own or may choose to ask the care home to register on their behalf.

5) **Results.** Test results will be emailed to the registered manager, or directly to staff, within 72 hours of the test arriving at the laboratory. All test results for residents should then be notified to the resident and their family (where appropriate). Care home managers should pass on the positive test results of residents by name to the GP practice, using confidential routes such as nhs net, so they can enter the information into the primary care clinical system.

How to carry out testing on staff and residents?

For residents – Detailed instructions on administering tests to residents is available to care homes. Everyone who will be involved in administering tests should watch this [instruction video](#). We recognise that some care home staff will not feel comfortable conducting swabbing. Training and advice can be sought via the local CCG Director of Nursing, in the same way that PPE training has been provided or from the local Director of Public Health. Each care home has access to a

For staff - The test kits are self-administered meaning staff can perform the tests on themselves. Test kits come with detailed instructions on how to use them. You can also refer to this helpful video on [self-administering swabs](#).

Will the test kits come with personal protective equipment (PPE)?

No. The testing offer provides test kits only. Care homes are asked to follow the [current guidance](#) from Public Health England on how to work safely in care homes and this video on [putting on and removing PPE](#).

Tests should not be conducted without the correct PPE.

What support is available to care homes accessing

To support care home planning to carry out whole care home testing, we are hosting webinars every morning on the whole home testing process. We strongly recommend them for care homes carry out testing so that they can understand the process and what they need to do. Care Homes can register to access the webinar:

<https://event.on24.com/wcc/r/2375949/724EF6345473A192F6B9C19334699A29/1077953>.

Obtaining Consent

You should obtain consent to conduct the test from the resident, family members or GP in line with your usual policies and procedures and the specific circumstances of each resident. Some residents, for example some people with dementia, learning disabilities or mental health conditions, may lack the relevant mental capacity to make a decision about their own testing. You should consider if the

principles of the Mental Capacity Act 2005 allow you to make a 'best interests decision' to swab and receive results, on their behalf.

As far as possible, residents should be offered the choice to either self-administer the test on themselves or to have the test administered by a suitable member of staff.

What is the role of Public Health England Health Protection Teams? Does the national testing service replace them?

Public Health England (PHE) Health Protection Teams (HPTs) will continue to be the first point of contact, when the care home suspects for the first time, that a resident has symptoms. The care home manager should contact their local PHE HPT which will arrange for the testing of all symptomatic residents only at this point, and will provide locally tailored infection control advice.

For all subsequent testing needed beyond the initial outbreak, the care home manager needs to inform the local Director of Public Health and apply for further tests for all remaining residents and staff, through the National Testing Service portal <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

How can Directors of Public Health, working with Directors of Adult Social Services refer care homes to be prioritised?

The programme needs to have a clear understanding of which of the now eligible specialist adult social care homes local authorities think should be prioritised. As such, as well as working with care homes that are a local priority to make sure they are registered with a local referral, Directors of Public Health are asked to inform the national testing service directly of the top 5 care homes in their area they would want to be prioritised by completing the attached **Care Home Testing Referral Form**. Completed forms should be submitted to COVIDCareHomeTestingReferrals@dhsc.gov.uk by the 10 June 2020.

How will care homes get the results from the national testing service?

Results will be communicated as soon as possible. Results for residents will be passed to their respective care home manager to enable them to notify the resident and their family (if appropriate). Care home managers should pass on the positive test results of residents by name to the GP practice, using confidential routes such as nhs net, so they can enter the information into the primary care clinical system. The test results will also be fed back to PHE to inform any follow up actions required, and to build up our understanding of the prevalence of the virus in care homes across England.

Staff members should register the tests themselves to receive the test results directly or may choose to ask the care home to register their details.

Is whole care home testing available for the wider adult social care sector?

We are continuing to explore how we can support other parts of the sector such as those in supported living settings, extra care settings and domiciliary care.

Who should care homes contact for further support and guidance?

If you have questions about your test kit registration, you can contact the Coronavirus Testing Call Centre on 0300 303 2713. It is open from 07:00 to 23:00 every day.