

COVID-19 Hospital Discharge Service Requirements (Wales)

Update to Guidance in respect of Step-up & Step-down Care Arrangements during the COVID-19 period.

Issued 29th April 2020

The Discharge to Recover then Assess (D2RA) model forms the basis of the COVID-19 Hospital Discharge Requirements published by Welsh Government on 7th April 2020 <https://gov.wales/covid-19-hospital-discharge-service-requirements> .

The D2RA model and the 'Home First' ethos remain the default for as many people as possible during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This update aligns the COVID-19 Discharge Guidance with the new approach to testing on discharge for people normally resident in care homes or potentially being discharged to a care home on Discharge to Recover then Assess Pathway 3 or 4.

The same principles will apply to people in Extra Care and supported housing, adult placements (Shared Lives) and those requiring reablement/domiciliary care at home (either returning to their existing care package or being discharged to their own home on Discharge to Recover then Assess Pathway 2).

This updated guidance sets out in detail, the two main options that need to be considered, and also describes the range of scenarios in which the principles could be applied.

The two main options are:

1. Discharge back to an existing placement or care package, where the individual has received a negative COVID-19 test result prior to discharge; and
2. Step-down (or step-up) within a designated NHS facility, where an individual has received a positive test result for COVID-19 prior to discharge, are still symptomatic or within the 14 day initial isolation period

1. Discharge back to an existing placement or care package, where the individual has received a negative COVID-19 test result prior to discharge

Where an individual has been admitted to hospital and has received a negative test result for COVID-19, they can be discharged back to their placement or package of care, if the provider agrees that the appropriate isolation and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) arrangements are in place, and they are able to support a 14 day period of self-isolation.

Factors to be taken into account when considering this option will include:

- The ability to practically implement isolation precautions¹ in the home environment (wherever that may be) and with available staffing arrangements;
- The risk to, and impact on, other residents/service users; and
- Whether the receiving care home (or other supported housing arrangement) has a confirmed COVID-19 outbreak.

Return to the individual's familiar environment for further recovery will always be the preferred option, as this will provide the best outcomes for them. Providers should be supported to implement this option wherever possible.

2. Step-down (or step-up) within a designated NHS facility, where an individual has received a positive test result for COVID-19 prior to discharge, are still symptomatic or within the 14 day initial isolation period

Where an individual has been admitted with or has contracted COVID-19, is ready to move from acute hospital to their next stage of care (see Annexe B of the COVID-19 Hospital Discharge Service Requirements) and is COVID-19 test positive, an additional '**Step-down whilst Covid +ve**' phase will be added to the discharge pathway. This additional phase is aimed primarily at people who:

- Require support for recovery and further assessment for ongoing care via one of the D2RA Pathways; or
- Are returning to an existing placement; and
- Are still symptomatic or testing as positive for COVID-19 after hospitalisation or are still within the initial 14 day isolation period.

The revised COVID Discharge Flow Chart is attached as **Annex A**.

¹ Within a care home, isolation precautions mean that the resident should be in a single room, ideally with en-suite or designated toilet facilities and not leave the room (including for meals). Staff would be expected to wear PPE as outlined in guidance document linked below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-how-to-work-safely-in-care-homes>

Whilst multiple moves are generally to be avoided, in these exceptional circumstances the revised pathway will:

- ✓ Mitigate the risks to vulnerable people of cross-infection;
- ✓ Protect the scarce social care staff resource; and
- ✓ Maximise the opportunity for active therapeutic input during the early recovery phase, potentially mitigating the reduction in reablement, where community teams may have been redeployed to other services.

The same service should be provided for **'step-up'** from placement or a person's own home where appropriate. For example, where a care home has a confirmed COVID outbreak, there may be a case for transferring residents who are testing positive for COVID-19 or are still symptomatic, to a step-up facility to mitigate the risks of further cross infection and provide any required therapeutic input.

This guidance will be reviewed on a regular basis.

ACTIONS REQUIRED

Health Boards, Local Authorities and their partners will need to identify suitable facilities in their area for the additional 'step-down/step-up whilst Covid +ve' phase in the COVID-19 Discharge Pathway.

They should also consider how this provision can accommodate people who have a cognitive impairment/delirium/learning disability/other mental health needs and ensure the right skill mix, including mental health advice and support, is available.

All patients leaving the 'step-down/step-up whilst Covid +ve' phase of their care (including transfer to one of the main D2RA pathways) must be tested and their COVID-19 negative status confirmed with the receiving service provider, prior to transfer taking place.

As testing does not provide a definitive outcome of whether someone is infectious to others and is only true for the time at which the test was taken, the national policy of 14 day self-isolation will still be necessary for patients admitted for non-COVID related reasons (in case they have acquired the infection whilst in hospital but are not symptomatic on discharge).

SUMMARY OF DISCHARGE SCENARIOS

Patient Covid-19 Status	Discharge action / scenario	Desired outcome
Admitted for non-COVID-19 related reasons.	Provider agrees it is appropriate to transfer back to placement/care package and they can comply with requirements for isolation for 14 days.	Individual recovers in their optimal environment, with risks to themselves and to others mitigated
COVID-19 Test Negative	<p>Provider does not agree that it is appropriate to transfer.</p> <p>Individual is transferred to a suitable step-down facility until the 14 day self-isolation period is complete.</p> <p>Further negative test required prior to transfer at the end of the 14 day period.</p>	Individual is supported until such time as safe transfer home is arranged.
Admitted with COVID-19 and COVID test negative on discharge	<p>Transfer back to placement or own home, on Discharge to Recover then Assess pathway if required.</p> <p>No requirement to isolate; care can be provided as normal</p>	<p>Individual recovers in their optimal environment.</p> <p>Risks to other service users are mitigated.</p>
<p>Admitted with or contracted COVID-19 in hospital</p> <p>Ready to move on from acute phase of treatment.</p> <p>COVID test positive</p>	<p>Transfer/remain in 'step-down/step-up whilst Covid +ve' facility.</p> <p>Transfer back to placement/care package or to non-COVID step-down facility, once COVID test negative and symptoms have resolved.</p> <p>Some patients may continue to test positive for some time after they become asymptomatic. Where positive testing is prolonged e.g. during 'virus-shedding', advice should be sought from Public Health Wales and the case discussed with the provider to ascertain whether transfer to the care home is safe and appropriate.</p>	<p>Individual receives appropriate support for recovery and rehabilitation.</p> <p>Risks to other residents/service users are mitigated.</p> <p>Individual is supported to return to their familiar environment as soon as it is safe and appropriate to do so.</p>

