



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

TITLE **Covid19 Testing in Care Homes Update**

DATE **16 May 2020**

BY **Minister for Health and Social Services, Vaughan Gething AM**

Members will know that I have committed to keep them informed about Covid-19 testing developments in care homes.

The safety and protection of the most vulnerable people in our communities is at the heart of the Welsh Government response to the Covid-19 pandemic. People living in care homes and other similar residential settings are amongst the most vulnerable, with many relying on close personal care.

Testing in care homes has been central to preventing and managing outbreaks. But testing can only support a reduction in infection rates if coupled with actions to promote infection control more generally. This is reflected in the package I announced on 2 May which expanded testing by:

- Targeting outbreak hot spot areas, which could include deploying our mobile units to test all residents in care homes in cases where an outbreak occurs; and
- Targeting the largest care homes (those with more than 50 beds) which are at greater risk of experiencing an outbreak because of their size.

I have made clear that protecting care home staff and residents is a priority and I want to be sure that we are doing everything we need to do to keep staff and residents safe. To this end, we have been closely monitoring and responding to developing evidence. SAGE has put forward new advice on how testing should be deployed in care homes in order to help reduce transmission into and within care homes. In response to this advice I am instructing Public Health Wales and Local Health Boards with immediate effect to take further steps on testing in our care homes. This expands on the package I announced on 2 May.

Further Safeguards

Today, I am announcing that we will begin to test all care homes and their staff. Specifically:

- In care homes with ongoing incidents / outbreaks prior to May we will offer testing to all residents and staff who have not previously tested positive for Covid-19. This means that any care home that has had a possible or confirmed case of Covid-19 amongst staff or residents within the last 28 days will be eligible for testing of all staff and residents.
- Testing will also be offered to all symptomatic and asymptomatic staff and residents who have never tested positive for Covid-19 even where the home has not reported possible or confirmed cases. Via the UK government portal care homes will be able to bulk order test kits enabling testing to be rolled out to all care homes in a matter of weeks.
- It is also proposed that when available serial antibody testing of care home staff will be undertaken so that we can estimate prevalence over time.

By taking these steps we can identify early introduction of Covid-19 into care homes, providing reassurance to care homes that infection control procedures are robust, while also providing a useful surveillance tool as lockdown restrictions are lifted.

We will continue to deploy testing in care homes as part of our approach to protect our care home workers and residents from Covid-19 and to rapidly and effectively treat the infection where necessary.