

Covid-19 Testing in Care Homes in NI

There are 483 registered care homes in Northern Ireland. Minister announced that care home residents and staff would be tested for Covid-19 by the end of June 2020.

These homes have a total of 16,095 registered beds. There are approximately 20,000 staff working in the homes. The arrangements for delivering testing to this population of over 36,000 are set out below.

Proposed approach to testing

Care home residents and staff have been offered testing to support individual diagnosis and public health management since the beginning of the Covid pandemic.

As testing capacity increased, the indications for testing have been expanded meaning more and more people are being tested in care homes.

Since 24th April 2020, testing has been offered to all residents and staff when an outbreak of Covid-19 is declared.

While significant numbers of tests have already taken place in care homes, a systematic universal approach to offer all staff and residents testing is now being implemented to test all staff and residents by the end of June 2020.

To support this care homes have been divided into three groups based on their Covid status. Testing arrangements for each group are set out in the table below. These arrangements are in place today (28th May 2020).

They will be kept under review and could be amended based on learning as the programme progresses. The arrangements apply for the first round of testing. They will be reviewed should a policy of regular testing in the sector be announced.

Arrangements for universal Covid-19 care home testing May 2020

	Definition	Testing Arrangements	Timescales
Group one	Homes declaring outbreaks after 24 th April 2020	Testing of all staff and residents arranged through local Trusts	As quickly as possible after outbreak notified.
Group two	Homes with an outbreak declared before 24 th April 2020	Testing of all staff and residents arranged through local Trusts with NIAS support	Homes divided into risk categories and testing prioritised accordingly. First group of 36 homes completing w/c 25 th May. Next group of 56 homes getting underway.
	Homes with no history of Covid outbreak to date (sometimes referred to as "green homes")	Testing being arranged through national initiative.	Testing commenced w/c 25 th May

Results

Results from Trusts and the national initiative will be available in the data warehouse in due course. This will facilitate outbreak management, surveillance and epidemiological analysis.

Individual results will be conveyed to the care homes and staff involved.

Positive results of this notifiable disease will be managed by PHA in line with public health management guidance.

Homes with outbreaks will be supported.

HSCB/PHA and Trusts will work together to respond to situations where large number of staff test positive with an impact on the workforce in a setting.

28th May 2020

