

From:

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I&S

Cleared by:

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Date:

30 April 2020

MINISTERIAL ADVICE**For decision by: Minister for Health and Social Services****Copied to:**

Subject	COVID-19 Testing Strategy and Care Homes – Policy Position
100 word summary	<p>The policy position the management of Covid-19 in care homes under intense scrutiny.</p> <p>The situation is rapidly evolving with more evidence and data available and increased understanding of constraints and issues around testing capacity and delivery of testing. There is also external pressure resulting from announcements coming from the UK Government.</p> <p>This advice is to set out the policy position in relation care home both in terms of the testing strategy and the package of care and measures to keep care home staff and residents safe and protected.</p>
Timing	URGENT
Recommendation	<p>The Minister is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - note the advice; and - agree the next steps paragraph 22
Decision report	This decision does require a Decision Report, which may be published be published x

ADVICE

Background

1. Under the direction of the Chief Scientific Adviser for Health, officials have worked with a range of stakeholders and experts to produce a strategic approach to testing – National COVID-19 Test Plan – to tackle the COVID-19 epidemic within Wales.
2. In recent days we have published our Critical Worker policy and conducted and released a review of the testing process following concerns about testing capacity and access to testing.

Current testing strategy

3. Sampling and testing for COVID-19 is a key part of our response to the pandemic and will support the contact tracing and surveillance activities. As we move into the recovery phase, the priorities for testing will be:
 - Diagnosing symptomatic hospital patients;
 - Testing specific groups of our population to inform public health action;
 - Testing groups of the population to check whether they have had the disease; and
 - Testing of key workers, or their family members as appropriate, to keep the essential services of Wales moving.
4. **Our current testing strategy** is focussed on testing according to the critical worker policy and with phased widening out into the broad categories. That is based **on evidence and the best use of our capacity**. Testing in all care home on the basis of the current policy set out above in para xx is also a priority in this phase. We are now seeing systems set up to deal with our testing needs now – through a combination of community testing units, mass testing units, with a hub and spoke model using mobile units and hopefully very soon home testing kits. These will all be through the portal now being stood up and rolled out.

Current policy position for Testing in Care homes in Wales.

5. **Testing policy for care homes** is as follows:
 - Testing all individuals being discharged from hospital to live in care homes regardless of whether or not they were admitted to hospital with COVID-19.
 - Extending COVID 19 testing to people who are being transferred between care homes and for new admissions from the community. We also intend to increase testing within care homes as more testing capacity becomes available.

- All individuals due to be discharged from hospital or transferred to a care home but have tested positive are provided with appropriate step down care in local settings, such as in community hospitals which will be equipped for infection control and can also offer therapeutic support to aid individual recovery. They will be tested again to ensure a negative result before returning to their care home.
6. **Additional Support for the Sector.** We have announced a £10m package to fund new and enhanced home care packages to support patients to leave hospital for their ongoing assessment and recovery. It will also help fund crucial community services supporting the Covid-19 response that are helping people to stay at home safely.
- the expansion of discharge from hospital schemes
 - additional capacity within the community to care for people discharged from hospital
 - maximising patients' independence post Covid-19, including the purchasing of equipment for their home
 - enhanced community-based services to reduce pressure on primary and secondary care
7. Environmental Health Officers working in partnership with Social Service colleagues, Public Health Wales, LHBs and CIW are now providing direct support to all care homes in Wales. They maintain about regular or frequent contact based on need contact with those care homes reporting possible cases and work with them to ensure delivery of appropriate infection prevention precautions including use of appropriate personal protective equipment as per national guidance. They are working with care homes who have not reported cases to ensure that all measures are in place to minimise risk of introduction of Covid-19 virus into the home.

Recent developments in England and areas of divergence.

8. On 28 April in England the Department of Health Announced extended testing to:
- All residents in care homes will be tested irrespective as to whether or not they have symptoms
 - All symptomatic individuals over 65 years or a symptomatic family member will be offered a test
 - Same for all key workers
9. The position of the UK Government has today been clarified – they are **not** testing all care home residents in all care homes but rather all care home residents and care workers **where there is an outbreak** (see doc 1).
10. DHSC will also report Covid-19 deaths from all settings from Wednesday.
11. **Access to testing is another difference at present for tests.** Both England and Scotland have the portal for booking online fully with the home testing option fully operational.