

1. Interim approach for testing of health care workers for COVID-19

Following the move to the 'delay' phase of the COVID-19 outbreak response individuals displaying symptoms of a new onset continuous cough and/or high temperature are required to self-isolate at home for 7 days and family contacts of household symptomatic cases are required to self isolate for 14 days. Testing of these 2 groups is not recommended routinely.

Patient Testing

Testing is recommended for hospitalised patients who meet the following criteria

- requires admission to hospital (a hospital practitioner has decided that admission to hospital is required with an expectation that the patient will need to stay at least one night)

and

- have either clinical or radiological evidence of pneumonia

or

- acute respiratory distress syndrome

or

- influenza like illness (fever $\geq 37.8^{\circ}\text{C}$ and at least one of the following respiratory symptoms, which must be of acute onset: persistent cough (with or without sputum), hoarseness, nasal discharge or congestion, shortness of breath, sore throat, wheezing, sneezing)

Health Care Workers (HCWs)

To date the laboratory response to testing for COVID 19 has been limited by the need to **protect laboratory capacity** for testing hospitalised patients, for whom the result will influence clinical management and infection prevention and control decisions. In N Ireland, laboratory capacity for testing currently is 200 tests/day and will increase to 800 tests/day in the next 7-10 days to include local testing in the NHSCT and SHSCT. The priority for laboratory testing will continue to be the maintenance of turnaround times for hospitalised patients so samples from HCWs may have longer turnaround time than those from hospitalised patients and turnaround time will depend on whether laboratory testing is at capacity or not.

It is recognised that there is a need for an approach which supports testing HCWs under certain conditions.

2. Testing Health Care Workers (HCWs): Interim Criteria

HCWs who work in the following area will be considered for testing

- HCWs involved in frontline patient facing clinical care working in the following units
 - a. Physicians and surgeons involved in the care of acutely ill patients