Name Redacted
Test and Protect Policy
8 December 2021

PS/Cabinet Secretary for Health & Sport
PS/Minister for Public Health, Women's Health and Sport
PS/Minister for Social Security and Local Government

Accessibility of Testing for COVID-19

Background

1. At the First Ministers statement on 07 December 2021 Jeremy Balfour raised the issue of people with disabilities being able to access testing, those who may be visually impaired or like he is, having an upper-body disability. He was concerned that could disadvantage people with disabilities in relation to international travel as well as testing for domestic purposes.

2. We understand that in some cases testing for COVID-19 can prove difficult or is not possible at all with the current testing methods available in Scotland and we are currently exploring a number of new testing technologies.

3. It is important that these new tests are properly evaluated and validated before use and we are engaged with the UK Testing Programme. Our clinical experts will carefully review the evaluation of these tests to ensure that they are used in a safe way and we will continue to work closely with colleagues across the UK to identify what can be used where and to best effect in Scotland.

4. Testing for people without symptoms is voluntary - for example, in the schools testing programme the guidance issued to schools stresses that nobody should be excluded from school or their setting if they do not wish to test, and that for some pupils with additional support needs it may not be appropriate for testing to take place under any circumstances. Those who work most closely with pupils with additional support needs and their parent/guardian, will be best placed to decide whether testing will be appropriate, taking into consideration the needs of the individual.

5. Regular testing for children without symptoms is not recommended for children under the age of 11.

6. Where a person has symptoms consistent with COVID-19 and swabbing is not possible, advice can be sought from the local Health Protection Team.

They will also be able to assist with advice on self-isolation in these circumstances.

Lateral Flow Devices

7. Successful validation and evaluation of a number of Lateral Flow Devices (LFDs) has meant that we are now able to offer nasal only devices as part of the testing programme which are less invasive and easier to administer All testing pathways including the Universal Offer have moved or are in process of moving to nasal only LFDs.

8. These tests are more accessible as they require a nose-only swab, which benefits people who cannot tolerate throat swabbing, and provide results within 15 rather than 30 minutes.

Assistance for the blind and visually impaired

9. Blind and visually impaired individuals can use the 'By My Eyes' video call app via the UK Government 119 Contact Centre to seek assistance to self-swab using a PCR home test kit independently.

10. We are also engaging with the UK COVID-19 Testing Programme who are running a limited pilot to explore whether, and to what extent use of the Be my Eyes app via the 119 contact centre might enable visually impaired and blind people to carry out LFD self-testing independently. The findings and recommendations from the pilot will be examined carefully, with a view to potentially offering this service at a future point.

11. Instructions for Use of PCR Home Test Kits are available in audio, Braille, large print and giant print from RNIB as well as Easy Read and Plain Text. The instructions can be found here: Coronavirus (COVID-19) PCR home test kit instructions - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).

12. Instructions for use for LFDs Self-tests used in the National Testing Programme are available in Large Print and Easy Read and can be accessed here: Acon Flowflex, Innova and Orient Gene.

Assisted testing

13. Adults and Children over the age of 11 who have access to a car can access assisted testing to support them to take a test– where an assisted tester takes the swab – at the drive-through regional test sites across Scotland. At present this is the only way of delivering assisted testing that has clinical approval.

14. Children up to the age of 11 must have their test swab administered by their parent or legal guardian. A video on how parents can help to take a sample from a child, if they are showing symptoms can be accessed here: How to test your child for coronavirus (Covid-19) in the UK - YouTube, advice is also available on the Parent Club website.

Saliva testing

Loop Mediated Isothermal Amplification (LAMP Saliva Testing)

15. The COVID-19 LAMP assay is a test for the detection of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19 and can be used to detect the virus in saliva samples. We are aware that this has been raised as a potential alternative to swab testing.

16. This technology has been trialled by the UK Government in Special Education Nees settings (SEND). Though discussions with UK Government our understanding is that they are unlikely to recommend but we are awaiting confirmation. This is due to a number of reasons including pupils struggling to understand what they need to do and not being able to obtain sufficient sample volume.

17. We are also aware that Northern Ireland were also using saliva LAMP in SEND settings but the latest information officials have is that they are moving away from use of this technology due to the same reasons identified above.

18. It is important to note that if anyone tests positive on a LAMP test as part of an asymptomatic testing programme, then this should be confirmed by carrying out a PCR test.

LFD saliva tests

The UK Testing Programme are also imminently carrying validation and acceptability trials on saliva based LFDs which Scottish Government Officials are engaged with.

International Travel

19. Testing of international travellers is essential to monitor for variants of concern and limit the risk of importing new cases and strains. The pre-departure tests required for all travellers can be lateral flow or PCR, but the

day 2 test after arrival must be PCR. The regulations do allow for reasonable excuses not to take tests on medical grounds, but this needs to be certified by a medical professional. People thinking about travelling abroad should consult FCDO travel advice for information about the country they are planning to visit, and should follow any requirements those countries have set.

20. In terms of supervised testing, some providers will offer that service. However this may be more expensive than non-supervised testing.

Certification Scheme

21. Medical exemptions to the certification scheme are available for those who are unable to be vaccinated for medical reasons and are also unable to take part in LFD testing. We expect that to be a very small number of people and an exemptions process is in place for anyone to whom this does apply.

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Irrelevant & Sensitive

Copy List:	For Action	For Comments	For Information		
			Portfolio Interest	Constit Interest	General Awareness
Cabinet Secretary For Health and Sport Minister for Public Health, Women's Health and Sport Minister for Social Security and Local Government			x x x		

Christine McLaughlin
Niamh O'Connor
John Nicholson
COVID Testing and Contact Tracing Policy
Test and Protect: Engagement and Ministerial Delivery
Testing Performance
Communications Health & Social Care
Name Redacted
Name Redacted
Angus Macleod