

CareHomesCPAG@gov.scot

By email:

To: Managers - Adult Care Homes

14 December 2020

Dear Care Home Manager

Care home visitor Lateral Flow Device Testing

I am pleased to provide you with a guidance pack on the introduction of Lateral Flow Testing (LFT) for care home visitors. Adult care homes are being issued with LFT kits to support designated visitor testing. The introduction of lateral flow testing will enhance existing visiting guidance providing an additional layer of protection.

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulation Agency (MHRA) has confirmed that Lateral Flow Devices can be used for asymptomatic care home visitors Scotland, in line with the guidance outlined in the pack and the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP).

The guidance pack, which includes training and guidance on the test as well as information for visitors, can be found on the Scottish Government website:

www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-adult-care-home-visitor-testing-guidance

Over the next day or so the guidance will be uploaded onto the TURAS Safety Huddle <https://learn.nes.nhs.scot/40860>.

The guidance will support you in preparing and managing lateral flow testing for designated visitors. It provides advice on how to prepare your home for visitor testing and how to use the LFT kits. To note the guidance and materials have been developed at pace and updates will follow, so it will be important to check the website regularly.

The LFT kits are for designated visitors only. This is a family member or friend chosen by the resident to visit them indoors. Essential visitors are not included in the testing programme – they should be supported to visit at all times. PCR testing for care home staff is already in place and separate arrangements are being developed for visiting professionals. The LFTs should not be used for care home staff or visiting health and social care professionals.

An initial supply of Lateral Flow Test (LFT) device tests, in boxes of 25 devices, has been dispatched to all Care Homes. Distribution of the second batch will start this week to supply all care homes with enough LFTs to last until 11 January 2021. These initial device allocations are intended to provide capability to test one designated visitor per resident per week. Thereafter care homes will be able to order additional devices directly from



NHSScotland COVID testing portal: www.covidtestingportal.scot (note the ordering facility on this webpage will be available shortly).

If you have any delivery issues please contact 0333 234 2888 (note this phonenumber will be available very shortly).

Care homes can begin visitor testing once the relevant staff have completed the training and visitors have been informed of the arrangements. Visitor resources have been prepared for care homes to adapt and use and are [available online](#) as part of the guidance pack.

Testing visitors can reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission but it does not completely remove the risk of infection. When used alongside robust infection prevention and control (IPC) measures such as personal protective equipment (PPE) it can support care homes to safely maintain a balance between infection control and the vital benefits of visiting to the health and wellbeing of residents. For full guidance on how you can facilitate safe visiting, please see [adult care homes visiting guidance](#).

It is possible that some care homes may be unable to make LFTs available to visitors in time for the Christmas and New Year period. PCR testing of visitors who cannot access LFTs will therefore also be made available for care home visitors from 21 December to 11 January. Visitors will need to arrange this by booking an appointment for a PCR test or arranging for a home kit to be delivered. Guidance will be used on this but to note LFT testing should be used in the first instance, with PCR testing recommended only when LFTs are unavailable. Where an advance test is not possible via either route, visiting should continue to be supported – it is not a mandatory step to supporting safe visiting.

The Scottish Government [has published guidance](#) (4 December 2020) setting out new arrangements for financial support for social care providers for costs relating to the COVID-19 pandemic from December 2020 to the end of March 2021. This guidance covers the commitment to meet reasonable additional costs incurred as a result of the pandemic and sets out details on the additional costs that can be reimbursed. This includes for example additional staff to support care homes with facilitating safe visiting during the pandemic, and additional non staffing-related COVID-19 testing costs, for example costs associated with creating space to carry out testing safely and effectively. All providers are encouraged to consider the guidance in full, and should contact their commissioning authority before they make any significant purchase that they intend to seek reimbursement for, to ensure that the purchase can be reimbursed against the categories in the guidance. Similarly, if a provider is in any doubt as to whether a purchase can be reimbursed against the categories in the guidance, they should contact the commissioning authority to discuss.

I would like to thank you for working to put the necessary systems and processes in place to support visitor testing.

Donna Bell

