

This announcement provides policy updates for adult care homes in England, outlining changes to the 90 retesting day guidance for PCR and LFD and testing in the event of a confirmed / suspected outbreak.

Testing within 90 days of a positive PCR test

Following a substantial clinical review of the latest evidence and testing data, we are now changing the advice for retesting within 90 days of a positive. From now on, if someone tests positive with a PCR test, they should not be tested using PCR or LFD for 90 days, unless they develop new symptoms during this time, in which case they should be retested immediately using PCR. This 90 day period is from the initial onset of symptoms or, if asymptomatic when tested, their positive test result.

The previous policy to continue LFD testing following a positive PCR result was because although very unlikely, it is possible to be re-infected within 90 days. However based on the latest testing data and clinical advice, the policy has now changed.

The clinical view is that during this 90 day window from a positive test, given the low rate of reinfection during this window, it is significantly more likely that a positive LFD test would be a false result, rather than someone being re-infected, causing people to isolate unnecessarily. Therefore we are now stopping the regular testing using LFD during this 90 day period. The individual should return to the regular LFD and PCR regime once 90 days has passed.

This means that the policy for retesting within 90 days for Adult Social Care is now the same as the policy for NHS staff. The policy also applies to professionals visiting a care home who have received a positive PCR result in the last 90 days.

As with all testing policy, this will continue to be reviewed in line with the latest evidence and scientific advice.

Testing in a confirmed or suspected outbreak.

In line with SAGE and Public Health England advice, we are introducing some changes to the testing procedures in the event of an outbreak.

In the event of a confirmed / suspected outbreak, you should immediately contact your local Health Protection Team (HPT) for advice using the below link:

<https://www.gov.uk/health-protection-team>

An outbreak is defined as two or more confirmed or clinically suspected cases within 14 days – detected by either LFD or PCR testing.

However, one positive test result may be the first sign of an outbreak, so you should also contact your health protection team for advice in this instance.

Please read the full guidance detailing the outbreak testing process and how you can best prepare your care home in the event of an outbreak. This guidance should be followed unless advised otherwise by your HPT. The outbreak testing section starts from page 39.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/961926/care-home-testing-guidance-england-v1602.pdf

What is changing?

a. Rapid response LFD testing for staff is being extended (from 22 February). This should no longer automatically stop after 7 days. Instead care homes should continue with rapid response testing until 5 days have elapsed since the date of the last positive LFD

(confirmed with PCR). Staff should only be tested on the days they are due to attend work.

b. LFD testing for residents is being introduced (from 22 February).

This should be undertaken at the same time as the PCR testing in an outbreak – on day 1 and on an additional day between days 4 and 7. The usual principles of consent and best interest decisions apply to inform your decision whether this is appropriate for each resident.

c. With immediate effect, PCR outbreak testing is moving from Pillar 1 to Pillar 2. The policy for when to carry out the outbreak PCR remains the same. All staff and residents should be tested on day one and on an additional day between days 4 and 7.

These changes are based on SAGE advice for how to use testing in a care home outbreak to reduce transmission and save lives. Rapid response daily LFD testing following a positive result has already helped care homes to get on top of outbreaks since it was introduced in December.

This flow chart summarises the new outbreak testing process:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/961927/care-home-outbreak-testing-guidance-england-visual-v1602.pdf

Testing is only one part of the outbreak response. Your local HPT will provide advice on how to manage the outbreak including the necessary Infection Prevention and Control measures such as cohorting, proper use of PPE, good hand hygiene and distancing.

Process for ordering / reordering

We will continue to send care homes more PCR and LFD test kits than necessary to carry out the recommended weekly testing for both staff and residents. This means you should have spare LFD and PCR kits that you can use in case of an outbreak. We will continue to monitor kit levels as the current lockdown restrictions evolve, to

ensure you continue to have enough test kits to meet your testing needs.

If you are in an outbreak and do not have enough stock to last until your next routine order, you can place an additional order via 119. You should receive these kits within 48 hours.

If you are not in outbreak you can place an order via the ordering portal, in line with your normal 21-day reordering cycle. After 21 days, automatic emails will remind you that your home is eligible to place an order. You should make sure to re-order before running low – you can reorder every 3 weeks.

Please use the link below to order LFD and PCR test kits:

<https://request-testing.test-for-coronavirus.service.gov.uk/>

Returning PCR tests in an outbreak

As you are already engaged in the National Coronavirus Testing Programme for staff / resident testing – you may already have couriers booked for the days that outbreak testing is taking place. If this is the case, you should return PCR tests through this regular channel – no additional return courier booking will be needed. Should this not be the case, you can arrange a courier for the next day on <https://test-kit-collection.test-for-coronavirus.service.gov.uk/> and if required, you are able to call 119 to book a same day courier.

Please remember that no personally identifiable information should be included with the PCR test kit. All we need to process the test is the barcode on the test kit.

As a reminder, used LFD kits do not have to be sent to labs and should instead be disposed of in health care waste bins.

What about staff with symptoms?

Staff with symptoms should not be in work. They should not come into work for testing and should instead be tested via another channel – e.g. regional testing site, or home testing.

Webinars

To hear more about these changes, please join us for one of our regular care home testing webinars. Our webinar on 17th February 11:00am– 12:30pm will be covering these changes in detail. By attending one of these sessions, you can take part in a live Q&A about outbreak testing with representatives from the national care home testing team.

You can sign up for the webinars here:

https://event.webcasts.com/viewer/portal.jsp?ei=1369434&tp_key=296e54cdc9

If you are not able to attend, please sign up and a recording of the session will be made available to you after the webinar has been completed.

Please do not respond to this email, as this mailbox is not monitored. If you have any queries, please call our helpline on 119.

Many thanks,
NHS Test and Trace

Care home testing feedback survey – have your say!

Please fill in this short survey to help us improve the testing process.

We're looking for feedback from care homes on the overall testing process and communications. The survey should take no more than 10 minutes to complete. Your input will be critical in helping us to

identify where improvements or additional support is required. All survey responses will be anonymised.

Click here to answer the survey:

<https://dhexchange.kahootz.com/connect.ti/COVID19Hometestinghsurvey/view?objectId=7170115>