



# Testing for COVID-19 in adult care homes: Implementation plan



Version	002 - 3 <sup>rd</sup> July 2020
Effective from	3 <sup>rd</sup> July 2020
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## **Background**

Dumfries and Galloway (D&G) has been testing symptomatic care home and care-at-home staff for possible COVID-19 infection since 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2020. Testing of care home residents within the home setting started in April 2020.

The last recorded POSITIVE test from a care home resident in D&G was in April. Since that time the Public Health Department has had frequent contact with care homes, by telephone, face-to-face, or in a weekly MStTeams meeting. A Care Home Support group which includes representation from Health and Social Care locality teams, Scottish Care and Public Health was established early on in the Pandemic to provide support to care homes. The Care Home Clinical and Professional Advisory Group has also met daily to maintain up-to-date awareness of any issues or concerns being raised in or by care homes.

Within Dumfries and Galloway there are 34 residential settings (including temporary respite units) which will all be offered testing as described in the following document.

### **Initial surveillance testing of all care homes**

A round of surveillance testing, with 25% of staff and 25% of residents (if valid consent had been received) being tested began on 28<sup>th</sup> May 2020, and will be completed in all care homes for older adults in the region during the week beginning 6<sup>th</sup> July 2020. During this process no POSITIVE staff or resident cases have been identified.

### **Reporting**

Care homes make a weekly return to the Strategic Planning and Commissioning Team of tests undertaken by their staff as part of weekly offer of staff testing – this return captures the use of the Social Care Portal by care home staff. Additional data are collected by the Public Health Department of local NHS testing. Care home staff are discouraged from using the Mobile Testing Units (MTU) locally due to faster availability of results to date from NHS local labs, but if they do access this testing they may not be included in D&G returns. Currently the Public Health Department submits the following reports each week relating to testing in care homes:

- Daily return to Public Health Scotland (PHS) of symptomatic staff and residents of care homes tested.
- Bi-weekly return to PHS of all testing of care home (and other key worker) staff

- Weekly return to Scottish Government of all testing of care home staff and residents, and projections for the following week.
- Weekly return to PHS of all surveillance testing of care home residents and staff
- Director of Public Health Weekly Report.

### **Staff undertaking testing**

Testing of symptomatic staff and residents is normally undertaken by the Public Health Department testing team. However, when primary care staff (GPs, ANPs, and community nurses) are undertaking visits to symptomatic residents in care homes, they are encouraged to undertake testing as part of their consultation, to reduce visitors entering the home unnecessarily.

Care home staff have been trained to undertake self testing in order to use the test kits supplied through the Social Care Portal (SCP), and it is hoped that they will also undertake routine surveillance testing of their residents in the near future.

### **Testing locations**

Symptomatic staff who are able to travel can attend D&G testing centres located in Dumfries and Stranraer, and staffed by Public Health. Care home residents are tested within their own home setting, or within an acute hospital setting if requiring further clinical assessment and management of their condition. They are transported to hospital by Scottish Ambulance Service.

### **Laboratory capacity**

All tests taken by D&G staff are tested within the local laboratory, and currently capacity exceeds demand, but this is subject to ongoing review as new testing pathways are coming online. All staff surveillance tests ordered through the Social Care Portal are returned for national testing. The offered supply of kits is currently sufficient to meet local demand.

### **Testing of symptomatic staff**

**(Appendix 1)** Care home staff who display symptoms of possible COVID-19 infection can be referred to Public Health for testing. Referral is either via a dedicated email address within the Strategic Planning and Commissioning department, or by direct telephone call to the Public Health Department out of hours. Symptomatic staff are invited to attend the most convenient testing location. Staff who are unable to travel are directed to the Government portal to order a Home Test Kit.

All staff are entered into the Public Health COVID-19 database, and given appropriate advice about self-care, self-isolation, and return to work.

### **Notification of staff test results**

Staff are automatically notified by text message and web-link of their test results when undertaken by local labs. Results are typically available between 12-24 hours after testing. If the text message is not responded to, additional text messages are sent for a further two days. After three unsuccessful attempts to contact the member of staff the Public health Department are notified, and make contact through other means.

If the staff member has a NEGATIVE test result, and they have been asymptomatic for at least 48 hours they can normally return to work. If the staff member has a POSITIVE test result then the 'Outbreak in a Care Home' pathway is activated.

Results through the Social Care Portal is via e-mail direct to the Care Home and results from the Mobile Testing Units/Home test kits are sent via text message.

### **Testing of symptomatic residents**

(**Appendix 2**) Care home residents who are symptomatic have to be discussed with a clinician in the COVID-19 Hub. Once the clinician has determined that the resident is safe to remain at home then the care home make direct contact with the Public Health Department. The Public Health Department arranges testing in the care home setting at the earliest possible convenience, and gives appropriate advice about infection control, and steps to be taken in case of clinically worsening picture.

The care home is formally closed to admission and transfers when the Public Health Department is notified of a symptomatic resident. The care home are told this on the phone, and this is followed up with email confirmation, and notification is sent to a wider group of necessary teams and departments.

### **Notification of resident test results**

The Public Health Department notify the care home manager/senior staff member of the results of a resident's test when available. If the test result is NEGATIVE then the home can normally be re-opened, and the care home are told this on the phone, and this is followed up with email confirmation, and notification is sent to a wider group of necessary teams and departments.

If the result is POSITIVE then the 'Outbreak in a Care Home' pathway is activated.

## **Outbreak in a care home**

(**Appendix 3**) An outbreak in a care home setting is declared if one or more residents or members of staff have a POSITIVE test for COVID-19 from the NHS D&G laboratory. Following declaration of an outbreak a Problem Assessment Group (PAG) is convened to discuss the situation.

The care home are offered advice and support around infection control, staffing, and on-going management of care. A testing team is brought together to test all staff and all residents (with consent).

At the same time, a complement of replacement staff from the Health & Social Care Partnership (HSCP) are identified to backfill any vacancies as required, and tested to ensure their COVID-19 free status.

Any staff who have a POSITIVE test are required to self-isolate for seven days, and have had at least 48hours symptom free before returning to work. If possible the care home will fill any absences from within their own staff team, but where this is not possible additional staff will be deployed into the home from the HSCP.

An outbreak is considered to have ended when 14 days have elapsed from the onset of any new symptoms in residents, or from the last POSITIVE test, whichever is longer. A home can receive visitors after a further 14 days without new cases (i.e. a total of 28 days from the last new onset of symptoms).

## **Positive test result in staff member using SCP or MTU**

(**Appendix 4**) A POSITIVE test result received from either the Mobile Testing Unit (MTU) or Social Care Portal (SCP) will be considered PROVISIONAL until verified by local testing. This is due to a previous confirmed *FALSE POSITIVE* result, and current low levels of coronavirus infection in the community, suggesting Lighthouse POSITIVE tests may have low positive predictive value.

The staff member will self-isolate, and urgent re-testing will be arranged through the Public Health testing team.

If the NHS D&G test result is NEGATIVE no further action will be taken, and the staff member can return to work, and other staff and residents will not be tested, beyond routine on-going surveillance testing.

If the NHS D&G test is POSITIVE then the 'Outbreak in a care home' pathway will be followed.

## **Surveillance testing in care homes**

(**Appendix 5**) Following completion of the first surveillance sweep, during which 25% of staff and residents were tested by the Public Health Department, care homes are now being referred to the Government's Social Care Portal (<https://request-care-home->

[testing.test-for-coronavirus.service.gov.uk/](https://www.service.gov.uk/testing-test-for-coronavirus)) for ongoing staff surveillance. Testing as part of routine surveillance is an offer for care home settings, rather than a mandated requirement, and so each care home setting will make decisions (if necessary supported by the Public Health Department) that best meet their requirements.

Care home staff have received initial training and support from the Public Health Department in order to be able to access the portal and carry out testing. This is further supported by a weekly MSTeams meeting.

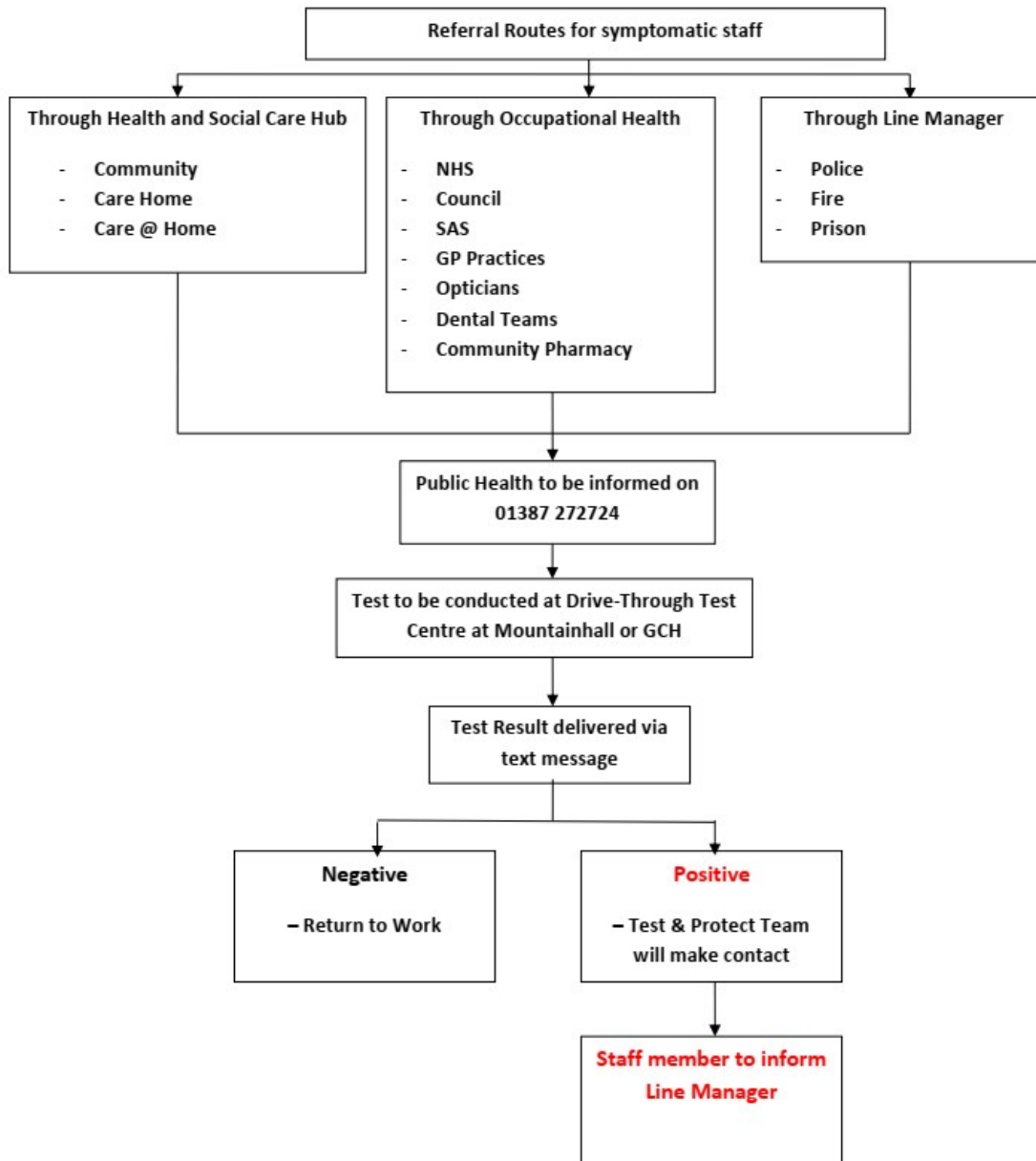
Alongside regular staff testing care homes will be able to undertake surveillance testing of a proportion of consenting residents, using the local NHS laboratory facilities for analysis and result reporting.

While the level of COVID-19 infection in the community is low a care home administered surveillance testing regime gives the optimal balance of disease awareness, staff and resident confidence, and not undertaking more tests than required. As the local risk changes, the level of surveillance testing may change, through discussion between individual care homes, Public Health Department, and clinical teams.

There are 34 residential settings in Dumfries and Galloway who are using the system, which gives a weekly snapshot of asymptomatic individuals across the region.

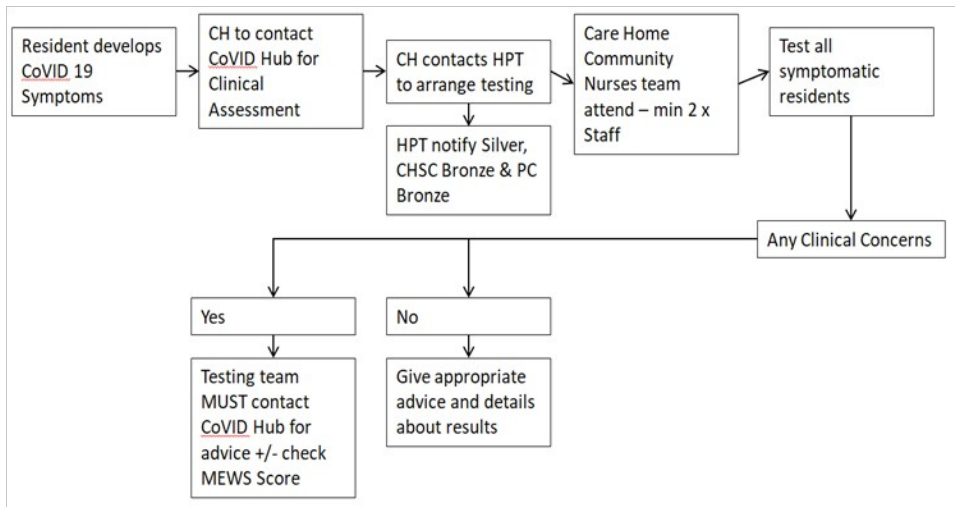
## Appendix 1 – Symptomatic staff member

### Symptomatic Health and Social Care Staff Member

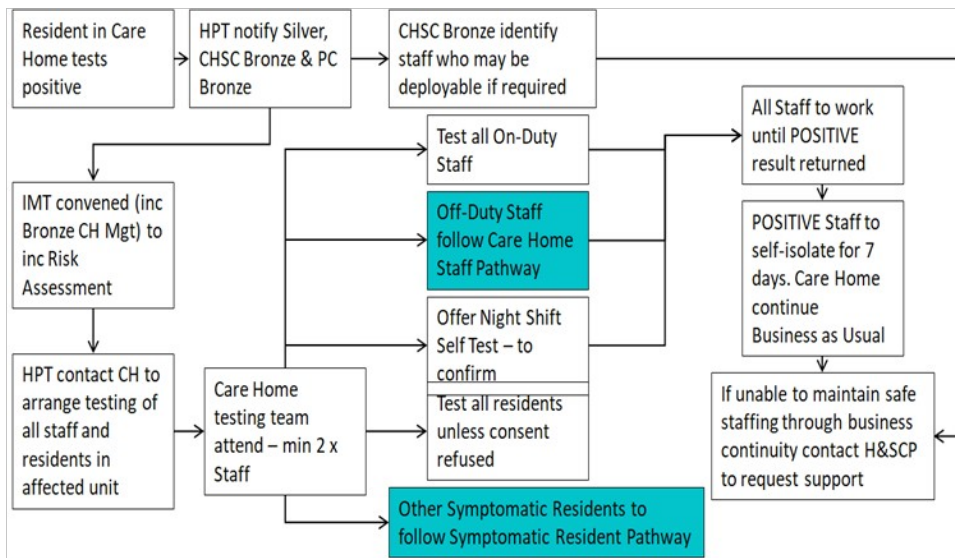




## Appendix 2 – Symptomatic resident



### Appendix 3 – Positive staff member or resident pathway



*This pathway now applies in the circumstances where a POSITIVE test result is received for either a member of care home staff or a resident from the local NHS laboratory or National Virology Centre laboratory*

## Appendix 4 – Positive test from Lighthouse Laboratory



*POSITIVE results will be considered provisional until confirmed by local testing.*

## **Appendix 5 – Care home surveillance testing**

*Pathway currently under review due to recent introduction of Social Care Portal staff surveillance facility.*