

Regular coronavirus testing update for care home managers in England.

In today's care home testing update, important changes for you to be aware of:

- New return boxes to help improve the test kit tracking process for organisations
- Important information about registering LFD test results
- User accounts are now available to speed up the process of registering your LFD kits
- Testing within 90 days of a positive PCR test
- Testing in a confirmed or suspected outbreak
- Returning PCR tests in an outbreak

Important reminders:

- Want to provide feedback on how you've found the national care home testing service?
- Sign up to our care home testing webinar series
- Staff with symptoms should not come into work
- Please avoid providing personal information when returning test kits
- Useful links

New return boxes to help improve the test kit tracking process for organisations

To improve the testing process and save you time, we are introducing a new outer return box for sending individual test samples and a new record keeping spreadsheet for multiple registration. We will be going live with the new process from Friday 26th February 2021.

To enable this, the new outer return boxes will have a barcode attached, which will be used to link the test kit samples to the outer return box so that the samples can be tracked throughout the testing process.

There will be some minimal changes to the single registration journey so you can link each test kit to the outer return box, and a new record keeping spreadsheet is also being introduced for those of you using the multiple registration feature to register more than one test kit at a time.

We have also improved the packaging of test kits: Test kits will be delivered in clear plastic bags rather than the grey bags, and you will no longer need to return test kits in the small individual UN3373 boxes – simply put them all in the new larger UN3373 return box. The bundles of outer return boxes and test kits will now be delivered in one box rather than separately.

The outer return box replaces the need to put the samples in the smaller individual test kit boxes. These individual test kit boxes can be recycled via your standard recycling route.

What will you need to do in advance of this change

Please note that from Friday 26th February, if you want to register multiple kits at once, you will have to use this new spreadsheet to register your kits – previous versions of this spreadsheet will no longer work from Friday.

For this reason, we strongly encourage you to download and populate the spreadsheet now via

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/organisation-testing-registration-record-of-users> so that you are prepared for this change.

What you will need to do once the new outer return boxes are delivered

When registering each test kit, you will need to link the test sample/s to the outer return box via the registration portal and place test samples directly into the outer return boxes. There will no longer be the individual test sample boxes. For multiple registrations, you can start to populate the new record keeping spreadsheet using the link outlined above. This contains an additional column to add the outer return box barcode.

Please write the number of test samples contained in the outer return box on the outside. The box will then be ready for collection by the courier who will scan the box and deliver to the lab.

We believe that this new process will:

- Save time as you don't have to make up smaller boxes for returning individual test kits, test kits can be placed directly in to the outer return box in sample bags
- Help the Test & Trace programme track your samples from when they are collected and leave your premises
- Help the Test & Trace programme better manage test kit volumes across the network of laboratories
- Reduce cardboard waste
- Reduce the number of missing tests

FAQs around New Return Boxes:

Will I be getting new PCR kits?

No – you are using the exact same PCR test kit, it will just be delivered and returned in improved packaging to improve the user experience

What happens if my new outer return boxes haven't arrived by 26th February, or if I don't have enough?

You can continue to use any existing return boxes that you have, if your new return boxes have not arrived – the courier will still collect them. If you are using the bulk registration spreadsheet you can leave the return box column blank.

Does the barcode on the outer return box replace the individual test barcode?

No, this is an additional barcode so both need to be registered if you are using the outer return box.

I don't think I have enough outer return boxes to return the test kit samples, what should I do?

If you do not think you have enough outer return boxes, you can ring 119 who will be able start the process for an order of additional outer return boxes to be placed on your behalf.

Next Steps

Staff and residents must continue to follow the usual testing regime. By the end of February, you should have received 8 new outer return boxes. You will also be sent additional boxes with your kits when you place your next standard order. The number of boxes will be calculated based off the size of your kit order, to ensure you will have enough. If you have not received your supply of outer return boxes by 8th March please call 119.

We have updated the user agnostic instructions which shows you the full process of packing test samples into the outer return box. This is

also complemented by a short training video that you can find at:

<https://youtu.be/IVOpW3cRJ6U>

You will find more information about the outer return box changes in the updated guidance on Page 24:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/963633/Care_Home_Testing_Guidance_England_v22-02_2.pdf

If you are having issues with the single or multiple registration journeys, please call 119.

Important information about registering LFD test results

All LFD test results (negative, positive, or void) must be registered online.

We are monitoring registration compliance and will be following up with care homes where results are not being registered.

You can register all LFD test results at:

<https://www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result>

Registration should be done within 24hrs to help NHS Test and Trace understand results. This is crucial for us to understand the prevalence of coronavirus in care homes across the country and be able to support the care sector appropriately. It is very important that you make sure that all LFD results are registered online, including staff self-testing at home.

Please note that LFD tests should not be returned with a courier under any circumstances – returning LFD tests can affect the safety of laboratory staff and result in a temporary closure of the lab. Used LFD tests must be disposed of in your healthcare waste.

User accounts are now available to speed up the process of registering your LFD kits

The ability to create a user account when self-registering your LFD result is now live.

Using your user account makes the process for registering LFD test kits simpler and less time consuming, removing the need to navigate through multiple screens every time you complete the registration of your LFD result. Guidance on how to create your account is available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/958773/care-home-lfd-self-test-guidance-v04-02_2.pdf

Please note, this is an optional feature. If you do not want to create an account, the single registration journey is still available.

Testing within 90 days of a positive PCR test

Following a substantial clinical review of the latest evidence and testing data, an announcement was made on 16th February to inform care homes that 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?

- Rapid response LFD testing for staff is being extended (from 22nd February). This should no longer automatically stop after 7 days. Instead care homes should continue with rapid response testing until 5 days after the date of the last positive LFD (confirmed with PCR). Staff should only be tested on the days they are due to attend work.
- LFD testing for residents is being introduced (from 22nd 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.
- 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.

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 at

<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 are not to be sent to labs and should instead be disposed of in health care waste bins.

Important reminders:

Want to provide feedback on how you've found the national care home testing service?

In each weekly newsletter you can use the survey link below to let us know what's working and what's not working with the care home testing service.

<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/I56QFS/>

Any time you have an issue with testing, or a suggestion for an improvement, please feed this back into the survey.

Your feedback will help the NHS Test & Trace programme improve the testing service. All information gathered in the survey is anonymous as we do not gather any personal data in the survey. Anonymised data from this survey will be shared with relevant organisations and may be shared in the public domain.

Please note that for any issues you need immediate assistance with please call 119, as we will not be able to contact you back from the survey.

Sign up to our whole home testing webinar series

We would like to invite you to our regular care home testing webinars. The weekly webinars last up to 90 minutes and give detailed information about all aspects of care home testing, spanning both PCR and LFD test kits, specifically including:

- ordering tests
- preparing for testing
- test kit delivery
- testing certain care groups
- registering test kits
- booking your collection and
- what your results mean for your home

The session will include a live Q&A with representatives from the national care home testing team, who will be able to answer your questions and address any concerns in the session.

To sign up to attend our new care home testing webinars click here:
https://event.webcasts.com/starthere.jsp?ei=1369434&tp_key=296e54cdc9

If you are not able to attend the webinars please sign up and a recording of the session will be made available to you after the session.

Staff with symptoms should not come into work

Please remember that staff with symptoms should not be in work and should not come into work for testing. Instead they should be tested via one of the other channels such as via regional testing site or the home testing channel.

Avoid providing personal information when returning test kits

Please ensure you are not providing personally identifiable information of residents or staff when returning your completed PCR test kits to labs. This includes not writing personally identifiable information on the test kit bags, boxes, vials, or by slipping pieces of paper into the return boxes. All of the relevant information will have already been provided when you registered the test kits online.

Useful Links

Reminder that all guidance and instructions for visitor and visiting professional LFD testing can be found here:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-lateral-flow-testing-of-visitors-in-care-homes>

Self-test LFD guidance for staff can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/957245/Care_Home_LFD_Self_Test_Guidance_-_v28-01.pdf

Testing guidance for staff and residents for both PCR and LFD test kits can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/957849/Care_Home_Testing_Guidance_England_v21-01.pdf

We have launched an at-home antibody testing service, which is available to all paid staff in the adult social care sector in England. To register for an at-home antibody test:

<https://www.gov.uk/register-coronavirus-antibody-test>

To find out more information about antibody testing:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-antibody-tests/coronavirus-covid-19-antibody-tests#why-antibody-tests-are-useful>

You are currently able to register up to 100 test kits at once. For a complete walkthrough of bulk upload process, please see the following webinar recording:

https://event.webcasts.com/starthere.jsp?ei=1363388&tp_key=e2a021f062

Who should you contact in an emergency?

Please remember that if, at any stage over the next few days, someone at your organisation cannot cope with the symptoms, or their condition gets worse, or their symptoms do not get better after seven days, use the <https://111.nhs.uk/COVID-19> service or call NHS 111. In a medical emergency, dial 999.

Thank you,

NHS Test and Trace.

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