

# Care Home COVID-19 testing

## – What are the key points ?

The Government have announced that all care home residents and social care staff with coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms will be tested as capacity is built up, the government is announcing today. Whilst this is welcomed, what isn't clear from the announcement today (15/04/2020) is who is defined as 'social care staff' and if this includes social care staff working in people's homes and not just in care homes.

The Care Quality Commissioner have been tasked with contacting providers in the next few days to organise tests. The current definition of an outbreak in a care home is 2 or more residents with a fever of 37.8 and new /continuous cough in 14 days, living in the same care home. Currently a maximum of 5 are being tested but as the ability to test more people this will be increased to include all residents who have symptoms.

### So, what are the key headlines you need to be aware of?



CQC are leading co-ordination of testing for the care sector and have already offered 6,000 care facilities the opportunity to test their staff. By the end of the week (w/c 14/04/2020) they will have contacted all 30,000 care providers.



QCS understand that CQC are contacting Registered Managers rather than nominated individuals so make sure you regularly check emails and have a plan to manage any phone calls.



In terms of taking residents back from hospital who haven't completed the 14 days isolation from the start of their symptoms, they will have been COVID-19 tested and have confirmed COVID-positive status. If providers can isolate them, they will be able to accept them in the homes.



If the isolation isn't going to be possible within a home, the local authority will be responsible for finding alternative accommodation for the person until the isolation period is completed.



For people discharged without symptoms into a care home - these individuals will have been tested prior to admission. Where these tests are negative, it is still recommended that they are isolated for 14 days. This will either be in a care home that is able to meet that requirement, or it could be under alternative local authority arrangements assisted by appropriate NHS primary and community-based care.



Where individuals are coming from their own homes to a care home, they will be tested prior to admission and its recommended that they are isolated for 14 days.



In terms of staff, more information on how this will work is still to be confirmed however its understood that care workers will be able, with the appropriate authorisation, attend a drive through testing centre. Swabs are taking around 72 hours to come back. For staff who don't drive there are regional strategies in place to manage this e.g. taxis being used where driver and their cabs have been commissioned to support this.

The topic of testing both staff and service users are changing rapidly. Members of Parliament are challenging the government on their response to the testing of all social care staff not just those in care homes. QCS will be watching this emerging situation and will provide updates.