

[REDACTED]  
**From:** Careline Adults Services

**Sent:** Fri, 24 Apr 2020 17:22:03 [REDACTED]

**Subject:** PM 24 April 2020

**Importance:** Normal

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Dear care home manager

**PLEASE NOTE : THIS MESSAGE IS FOR CARE HOMES WHO DO NOT HAVE A COVID -19 OUTBREAK**

**Local arrangements for testing for coronavirus in care homes which have no current or previous outbreak of coronavirus amongst residents :**

Liverpool City Council has agreed an arrangement with PHE to test all care home residents in Liverpool care homes which have not had a suspected outbreak of coronavirus in their residents.

Testing kits will be sent to those care homes (which according to our records have had no outbreak or just have a single suspected or confirmed case) on Monday 27 April and will be couriered back to the lab. The kits will include instructions for how to take the swab and package the swab and instructions on appropriate PPE (as outlined in [Table 2](#) of the national guidance).

Forms will be provided in the kits for you to complete. The following information will be required: names of the residents, DOBs, and ideally the NHS numbers.

Many outbreaks have been reported in care homes, including in Liverpool. The reason why we want to test residents in homes which are unaffected, even though residents are not showing symptoms, is that recent studies have shown that residents in care homes may be infected and not show symptoms. By testing residents to identify those who are infected, infected individuals can be isolated in their rooms, just as they would be if they were showing symptoms like fever and cough, to prevent spread of infection to others.

We know that by the time an outbreak is reported, it is likely that there is significant coronavirus transmission already in the care home. This testing intervention is to support you and reduce the risk of an outbreak occurring. It is really important that all staff are aware that testing is happening and that they should expect that a significant number of residents will test positive. This means that they will be able to reduce the risk of an outbreak happening by isolating the residents straightaway if they have a positive result. Coronavirus infection is mainly spread by coughing and sneezing. Infected residents may develop symptoms like a cough after a few days. As they will already be isolated, the risk of spread is significantly reduced. Staff will be protected by wearing PPE, as described in the frequently asked questions below.

Best interest assessments should be carried out using normal processes. Please contact the GP 1<sup>st</sup> thing on Monday morning to organise.

See below for details of a zoom dial-in from [REDACTED], where we will try to answer any of your questions.

**Join Zoom Meeting**

**Meeting ID:** [REDACTED]

**The Infectious Disease Unit at the Royal has offered to visit unaffected care homes next week to talk to staff about coronavirus and answer any questions about PPE or anything else and explore any risks you think you have. This is a really good opportunity for staff to ask any questions. Please contact Careline if you would like them to visit and the doctor from the Royal will get in touch to arrange a convenient time to come and talk to staff.**

Kind regards

Dr Emer Coffey  
Associate Director of Public Health- Health Protection

**Frequently asked questions:**

**1. Why has my care home been selected for testing?**

Testing is being offered to all care homes in Liverpool which have not had an outbreak of coronavirus or who only have one suspected or confirmed case in a resident. A national programme of testing is being planned. A special agreement has been made for Liverpool as we have already piloted testing.

**2. Why are we testing residents when they don't have symptoms?**

Studies have shown that a high number of residents in homes may be infected without showing symptoms and some may go on to develop symptoms and spread to others. If we identify residents who have the infection, they can be isolated immediately to prevent spread to others.

### 3. Why are we not testing staff?

We are not currently able to test staff who do not have symptoms. There are not enough tests available. There are arrangements available to test staff who have symptoms. All staff should now be wearing fluid resistant surgical masks on a sessional basis in the care home. This will reduce the risk of staff passing infection to residents. There is also a risk that staff who test negative may be falsely assured. As staff are going in and out of the home, they may pick up the infection from others in their own households or in the community even after testing negative.

### 4. Who will carry out the testing?

Care home staff will carry out the testing. The kits come with instructions. Here is a link to a training video. It is about self-swabbing but the principles are the same. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-taking-swab-samples/how-to-use-the-self-swabbing-kit-for-a-combined-throat-and-nose-swab-video>

It is a single swab which you use to take a throat swab first, followed by a nasal swab. To get a good quality swab, you need to elicit a gag reflex with the throat swab. The nasal swab should go straight back to touch the back of the nose. This will elicit tears- not because of pain but as a reflex.

### 5. What about if the resident is on warfarin or a similar blood thinner?

If a resident is on warfarin or a blood thinner, just do a throat swab to avoid risk of a nose- bleed. If a resident has bleeding issues or a prolonged INR, as a precaution, do not test.

### 6. What PPE do we need to wear to test?

Disposable gloves, disposable plastic apron, fluid-resistant surgical mask and eye protection (goggles or visor) should be used. The mask and eye protection can be used on a sessional basis. The gloves and apron are single-use.

### 7. What PPE do we need to wear for residents who have positive test results?

- When providing personal care to a resident who is infected, wear single use disposable gloves, single-use disposable plastic apron and a fluid resistant surgical mask. The mask can be used until you take a break or for maximum 6 hours. Discard if moist. Risk assess the need for eye protection if there is a risk of contamination to the eyes from respiratory droplets or from splashing of secretions, e.g. caring for resident who is repeatedly coughing or vomiting. Eye protection can be worn on a sessional basis until your break.
- If a resident develops a cough, you should wear the same PPE if you are within 2 metres of the resident even if you are not touching the resident.
- If you are within 2 metres of an infected resident who does not have a cough but not touching: no need for gloves or apron, wear mask until your break and risk assess for need for eye-protection.
- In communal areas – same as for if you are within 2 metres of resident – wear mask on sessional basis, no need for gloves or apron. There should be no need for eye protection as residents with respiratory symptoms should be in their own rooms.

### 8. How do I order more PPE urgently if needed?

Details of how to order PPE is attached.

### 9. Who will tell us if our residents are positive?

You will be contacted by a public health practitioner who will give you the results.

### 10. What do we need to do if our resident's results are positive?

A senior staff member should brief all staff about residents results and make sure everyone is clear about what needs to happen.

Residents who are positive should be isolated as if they have symptoms of fever and/or cough and managed as a suspected case of coronavirus, i.e. barrier nursed.

Make sure staff know what PPE to wear (see question 6.)

### 11. What do we need to do to prepare for residents who have positive test results?

Make sure the care home has an identified senior staff member/lead for COVID-19 on duty.

If a resident needs a best interest decision to be swabbed, contact the GP or clinician as soon as possible Monday morning 27 April to arrange.

Make sure all staff in the care home are aware that testing is happening beforehand, and that it is likely that several residents will have positive results which show that they have infection.

Make sure that you have enough PPE.

Make sure that you can isolate residents who test positive.

### 12. Who can I contact if I have more questions?

Liverpool City Council public health team will hold a zoom dial-in from [REDACTED] to answer your questions about the testing and preparations needed for positive results. You can dial in at any time during this period to ask questions.

Join Zoom Meeting

Meeting ID: [REDACTED]