Chief Nursing Officer Directorate
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NHS Territorial Board Chief Executives (by email)

CC: Scottish Directors of Public Health

16 April 2020

Colleagues,

Firstly, please let me start by thanking you for the extraordinary work you are doing to support our vulnerable and elderly population across Scotland's care homes.

I write to make you aware of the First Minister's announcement yesterday, 15 April 2020, that Scotland will move to a system where any symptomatic patient in a care home will be clinically assessed and, were appropriate, offered testing for COVID-19. This is a departure from existing infection management procedures of only testing initial cases in order to establish whether an outbreak has occurred. We are making this change in acknowledgement of the unprecedented pressures on our care homes, in order to offer this additional level of reassurance during what will be a deeply unsettling time for both our vulnerable elderly population and their families.

Health Protection Scotland will be updating their guidance to reflect the changes, and I would be grateful if you could liaise with your local NHS Health Protection Teams to ensure care homes are supported in the transition to this new increased testing regime. Further to this, I would also be grateful if you could be alert to the fact that we are looking to Boards to collate data on the number of care home residents tested and provide this to Health Protection Scotland.

The Scottish Government continues to work closely with NHS National Services Scotland and Public Health Scotland to rapidly increase our testing capacity across Scotland. We have already increased our capacity to over 2,000 tests per day and are on track to increase to 3,500 by the end of April. As we increase our capacity, we will further develop our testing prioritisation strategy.

Fiona McQueen

Chief Nursing Officer

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