



24 August 2022

From: Adult Social Care Delivery and Covid-19 Response
Department of Health and Social Care
39 Victoria Street
London SE1H 0EU

To: Adult social care service providers
Directors of Adult Social Care Services
Directors of Public Health and wider stakeholders

Dear care colleagues,

Pausing COVID-19 asymptomatic testing in adult social care

I am writing to you to set out the details for adult social care following the Government's announcement on pausing routine asymptomatic COVID-19 testing in high-risk settings in England, including testing for staff and visitors providing personal care.

The Government's strategy for [Living with COVID-19](#) outlined the approach to prioritising testing to protect those most vulnerable to the virus, while working towards managing COVID-19 in line with other respiratory illnesses following the rollout of vaccines and therapeutic treatments.

This also set out our intention to continue symptomatic and outbreak testing for relevant services across the year, while outlining our approach to make sure asymptomatic testing was proportionate to prevalence and risk.

Following the fall in national prevalence, we are therefore asking individuals to pause routine asymptomatic testing across adult social care services from 31 August 2022. This is based on evidence from UKHSA that the recent BA.5 wave has now peaked, with prevalence and other epidemiological indicators likely to continue to decline in the coming weeks.

This means that the likelihood of infectious individuals entering adult social care settings and services has also reduced and the relative risk of onward transmission is lower. As a result, regular asymptomatic testing will have relatively less impact in improving health outcomes.

This change will apply nationally and is consistent with the approach in the NHS and other high-risk settings.

The key changes to testing in adult social care are:

- Pausing twice weekly asymptomatic lateral flow (LFD) testing for staff in care homes, extra care and supported living services, homecare organisations and day care centres, as well as personal assistants, social workers, Shared Lives carers and CQC inspectors.
- Pausing asymptomatic lateral flow (LFD) testing for visitors and visiting professionals providing personal care to care home residents.

This change only applies to routine asymptomatic testing, and we will continue to keep this under review to make sure our response remains effective and proportionate. In doing so, we will continue to monitor prevalence and other factors that will determine whether further asymptomatic testing is needed.

In the meantime, the following free testing will continue throughout the year:

- Symptomatic testing with two LFDs taken 48 hours apart available for:
 - Care home and extra care and supported living residents.
 - Staff in care homes, extra care and supported living settings, day care centres, domiciliary care.
 - Personal assistants, social workers, Shared Lives workers and CQC inspectors.
- Testing of residents admitted to care homes from the community or being discharged from hospital.
- Testing of staff and care home residents following a positive COVID-19 test to allow staff to return to work earlier and to minimise restrictions on resident wellbeing. Individuals will continue to be able to test from day five, returning to work or ending isolation early after two consecutive negative tests taken 24 hours apart.
- Testing to manage outbreaks in care homes, and daily rapid response LFD testing for five days in the event of a single positive case in care homes and high-risk extra care and support living settings.

Organisations should continue to order tests using their Unique Organisation Number (UON) on the [Government organisation ordering portal](#), and eligible staff who order tests individually should continue to order tests from [GOV.UK](#) for home delivery. Further details can be found in the [COVID-19 testing in adult social care guidance](#).

Organisations should select the 'symptomatic tests' order option to order tests for people who display symptoms of coronavirus. The ordering process will now ask for how many symptomatic people there have been in your service over the past six weeks. Orders for rapid response and outbreak testing will remain unchanged.

Service and care managers are also requested to continue to support people who are in the highest risk group and who are therefore potentially eligible for COVID-19 treatments should they test positive for COVID-19. Individuals' test results must be reported via GOV.UK or 119, including their NHS number and the postcode that is recorded with their GP, so that they can be identified as eligible for treatment. A phone number should also be provided so that they, or care staff, can be contacted. Further information on accessing COVID-19 treatments can now be found in the updated [COVID-19 testing in adult social care guidance](#).

Care homes enrolled in the Vivaldi study should also follow the new testing guidance. Regular blood sampling will take place in some homes that are taking part in the study in order to continue research into the protective immune response of vaccination over time.

It remains important that staff, service users and visitors continue to follow [ongoing guidance on infection, prevention, and control](#). This, alongside other important measures such as symptomatic testing, outbreak response, vaccines and antiviral drugs will continue to protect the most vulnerable, whilst avoiding staff having to test regularly when it is not necessary or proportionate.

Thank you to you and your staff for everything you have done in response to the pandemic, and for your continued efforts as we continue to adapt to living with COVID-19.

Yours faithfully,

Claire Armstrong

Director of Adult Social Care Delivery and Covid-19 Response,
Department of Health and Social Care