

## **Derbyshire statement on using Lateral flow devices, December 2020**

We recognise how important it is to allow care home residents to safely meet their loved ones, especially those at the end of their lives. Whilst the rates of community transmission still need to be carefully managed, maintaining opportunities for visiting to take place is critical for supporting the health and wellbeing of residents and their relationships with friends and family.

[Guidance](#) published by the government on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2020 sets out measures that can be put in place to provide Covid secure opportunities for families and friends to visit. It recognises that providers are best placed to decide how to deliver visits in their own setting in a way that meets the needs of their residents individually and collectively.

The guidance recommends that all care homes – regardless of Tier, except in the event of an outbreak, should seek to enable indoor visits where the visitor has been tested and returned a negative result in addition to outdoor and screened visits.

Guidance on indoor visiting and Lateral Flow testing (sometimes known as rapid testing) should be used in conjunction with other visiting and testing guidance and should not be considered a replacement for previously circulated guidance.

The purpose of the new lateral flow testing regime is to allow indoor visitors safely into the home and is a supplement to the current staff and resident testing programme. Care homes still need to ensure the current staff and resident testing arrangements are maintained using the PCR test kits as normal.

Please refer to the guidance below, the Care Home visitors Covid-19 testing (Lateral Flow) guidance and the Department of health and Social Care guidance on indoor visiting in the first instance. If you have further questions regarding the testing programme, the Derbyshire Whole Home Testing team may be able to provide additional guidance, please contact; [wholehome.testing@derbyshire.gov.uk](mailto:wholehome.testing@derbyshire.gov.uk)

### **Lateral flow tests**

The latest guidance takes into account the use of lateral flow testing to enable a greater degree of indoor visiting. It should be noted that while lateral flow tests provide a test result within a very short time, they do not and should not be taken as a guarantee that an individual with a negative test result does not have coronavirus or is not infectious. As such the testing process should form part of a dynamic risk assessment and any subsequent visiting should be with the correct PPE and infection control measures.

All visitors should be provided with advice and information on lateral flow testing, how it works, what it involves, the processes the visitor will need to go through and how the test result reduces but does not eliminate risk.

### **Outbreak**

A care home should move to rapidly stop visiting (except in exceptional circumstances, see Appendix A) in the event of an outbreak (two or more linked cases). Restrictions should continue until the outbreak is under control with support from the local infection prevention control and public health team as appropriate.

### **Principles of approach**

Guidance recognises that providers are best placed to design their own individual visiting arrangements. In doing so, providers should use a dynamic risk assessment approach which considers factors including:

- Balancing benefits of visits against risk of introducing infection
- The ability of a setting to put in place measures to mitigate any risks from visiting such as PPE, handwashing, social distancing and alternate forms of visiting.
- The ability of the provider to put in place testing arrangements including where and how these will happen.
- The health and wellbeing risks from residents including any additional vulnerability to infection with Covid-19 or circumstances making visiting particularly important.
- The individual resident, their views, their needs and wellbeing.
- The circumstances of the individual care home (for example, its staff availability, layout, resident demographics and outbreak status)
- Results from weekly testing of staff and monthly testing of residents
- Advice and guidance from the local DPH using, for example, local information on transmission rates, provider IPC and risk assessment capability and Capacity Tracker information.
- Legal obligations such as those under the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998
- The DHSC [ethical framework for adult social care](#)
- Readiness of the care home to respond quickly to confirmed or suspected cases or an outbreak.

Care homes should support NHS Test and Trace for all visitors in line with current guidance.

### Visiting policies: general

- Visitor numbers should be limited to a single constant visitor wherever possible, with an absolute maximum number of 2 constant visitors per resident.
- Appropriate PPE must be used throughout the visit including around the care home buildings and grounds in line with current PPE guidance.
- Social distancing must be maintained at all times (except where lateral flow testing used, see Appendix A) and in any case throughout the general care home.
- High quality [IPC](#) must be maintained throughout the visit and wider care home environment.
- Ad hoc visits should not happen and the care home should have a booking system for all visitors.
- Visiting spaces must be used by one resident and visiting party at a time with an appropriate time between visits to allow for cleaning.
- Where there is a single access point the resident and visitor should enter the space at different times to ensure safe distancing and seating arrangements can be maintained.
- All visits should be overseen by staff to ensure infection control and social distance measures are adhered to.

### Visiting policies: indoor supported by testing

- CQC registered care homes will be able to test 2 visitors per resident twice a week
- Testing areas can be set up within the home subject to adequate space to allow visitors to maintain social distancing before, during and after the test, including a waiting area and one-way system.
- Visitors should have access to hand hygiene in the testing area which should be well-ventilated with fresh air.
- Care home managers should provide clear communications to all visitors about the purpose of testing including that it does not remove all risk of infection and emphasising the need to maintain good infection control measures.

## General infection prevention and control for visitors

The providers visiting policy should set out the precautions that will be taken in respect of infection control during visits. These should be communicated to all visitors in a clear and accessible way. Adherence to IPC will be included as part of the care home's infection prevention control inspections. Precautions should include:

- A record of any visitors and the resident visited in line with the NHS Test and Trace requirements
- On arrival, asking of Covid-19 related questions about visitors' health and history of contact with anyone with potential symptoms; anyone who has symptoms or who has been in contact with a symptomatic individual should not be allowed in and should self-isolate in line with government guidelines.
- Reminders of and facilities to wash hands for 20 seconds, use hand sanitiser and tissues
- Provision of support to visitors to ensure that the appropriate PPE is always worn and used correctly.
- Care homes and visitors should follow the guidance on how to [work safely in domiciliary care](#) to identify the PPE required for their visiting situation.
- Discussion with visitors regarding any items they wish to bring with them for their visit so that it can be easily cleaned.
- No contact with other residents and minimal contact with care home staff.

## Communicating with families and visitors

Advice should be provided on:

- The visiting policy and why it is in place
- How to prepare for a visit including IPC and communicating with their relative
- Where lateral flow testing is used to support visiting, information and advice on the test, how it should be carried out, how results should be communicated and the continued need for infection control measures.

## Risk assessment review and publication

Providers are best placed to decide how to deliver visits in their own setting in a way that meets the needs of their residents individually and collectively. Decisions should be made through working with the resident, their family and friends and the provider and other relevant professionals such as social workers or clinicians where appropriate.

Completed risk assessments should be available for review as part of quality and infection control support.

Visiting policies should be publically available for friends, families and residents.

## Change in circumstances

Where, for whatever reason and at any time, an individual or group of care homes is/are considered to need to restrict visiting, either temporarily or permanently, the DPH should communicate this advice in writing to commissioners of all the relevant care homes, or in the absence of a commissioner, direct to the registered manager as quickly as possible.

## **Supporting guidance**

Care Home Visitors Covid-19 testing guidance (Lateral Flow Device test kits)

*This guidance is adapted from local guidance originally produced by Northamptonshire County Council.*