

This announcement is for adult care homes in England only

Visiting professionals guidance updated

Following feedback, the revised guidance regarding testing for professionals visiting care homes is now published. Please note that these changes should be implemented by 22nd March. The full guidance can be found at the below link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-lateral-flow-testing-in-adult-social-care-settings/testing-for-professionals-visiting-care-homes>

We have worked with care home providers, Dr Jenny Harries the Deputy Chief Medical Officer for England, Public Health England and NHS England to develop this new guidance. The guidance strengthens the existing approach for testing professional visitors to care homes in order to reduce the risk of Coronavirus transmission.

The key changes are:

Professionals should not be allowed to enter a care home without a negative LFT result, with the exception of the following scenarios:

- An emergency

- Overridden by the care home manager following a risk based decision

- Their entry is required by law, such as CQC inspectors

For NHS professionals, care homes should see evidence from the professional of a negative rapid lateral flow test within the last 72hrs, which shows they are following the NHS staff testing regime.

As per the previous guidance, professionals who are not part of regular testing for NHS staff or CQC inspectors (for example, professionals such as podiatrists or engineers) will need to be tested at the care home in the same way as visitors.

If they are visiting multiple care homes in one day, they will now only need to be tested at the first care home they visit that day and can use evidence of this test at the next care home they visit that day.

CQC inspectors will now test at home using a lateral flow test on the day of a care home inspection, in addition to their weekly PCR.

Like care home staff, visiting professionals are exempt from testing for 90 days following a positive PCR test, unless they develop new symptoms.

The guidance provides further details and outlines the different forms of test evidence.

This guidance should be implemented as soon as possible but we also understand that professionals and their employers will need time to get to grips with practical issues, such as how they will provide evidence to care homes. Therefore this guidance should be implemented by care homes and professionals by 22nd March, if not before.

Testing is, however, only one part of the approach to reduce risk and it is critical that visiting professionals don and doff PPE appropriately and follow the relevant infection control measures when visiting a care home, including hand hygiene and distancing, in order to help keep care home residents and staff safe.

Thank you,
NHS Test & Trace