



T: 0131-244 2480
E: John.connaghan2@gov.scot

NHS Chief Executives

1 May 2020

Dear Colleague

UPDATE ON TESTING STRATEGY AND DELIVERY

Following the First Minister's statement at today's (Friday 1 May) daily press conference, I am writing to provide a further update on the Scottish Government's strategy and priorities for testing.

This update further adds to my previous letter of 28 April – when I asked you to introduce laboratory testing for COVID-19 at admission for all patients age 70 years or more – and builds upon our three priorities for testing:

1. Directing our testing capacity effectively to save lives and protect the vulnerable, focussed on hospital patients – particularly vulnerable groups – and care home residents
2. Ensuring that critical staff can return to work as soon as possible, building on our prioritisation of health and social care workers, and with reference to the [recently announced expansion of eligibility](#) in Scotland for the UK Government's testing programme
3. Monitoring and reporting on the spread and prevalence of the virus in the population and the impact of public health measures (surveillance).

As the First Minister outlined this afternoon, we have moved quickly to significantly scale up testing capacity in Scotland – in our own labs, as part of the UK Government's testing programme, and through academic partnerships. That in turn enables further extensions of eligibility. Thank you again for the enormous efforts you and your staff have put into that achievement.

I want to update you now on three further priorities for testing which we expect NHS Boards and your partners to start putting in place from Monday 4 May:

- 1. Undertaking enhanced outbreak investigation in all care homes where there are cases of COVID:** We now intend to undertake enhanced outbreak investigation in all care homes where there are cases of COVID - this will involve testing, subject to individuals' consent, all residents and staff, whether or not they have symptoms.
- 2. Comprehensive surveillance testing in care homes where there are no cases:** Sampling testing should be started in care homes where there are no cases. By definition this will also include testing residents and staff who are not symptomatic.
- 3. Testing across care home groups:** Where a care home with an outbreak is part of a group or chain, and staff may still be moving between homes, we expect urgent testing to be carried out in any linked homes.

I recognise this represents a significant operational task, with logistical and workforce requirements which will need to be carefully managed. Jill Young, Chief Executive of the Louisa Jordan, has agreed to lead the team to oversee delivery of this policy and to direct all operational delivery aspects of Government policy on testing. She will work closely with Boards to ensure you deploy the necessary resources and ability and have the support you need. As noted above, we would expect this expansion to start being put in place from Monday, using the additional lab capacity that has been built up now, and will continue to build over the coming weeks. Clearly this will need to be done in a safe and secure manner, and we would expect you to put in place risk assessments, to enable prioritisation as that build-up of capacity continues. Many Boards are already engaged in some of this work already. However I now ask that you scale up your capability as quickly as possible **starting this Monday** to effectively address the three additional priority areas identified above.

Additionally, we are also expanding eligibility for access to the UK Government's testing facilities in Scotland to include all those over the age of 65 with symptoms and their households, as well as anyone who is not a keyworker, but who has to leave home to go to work. While this of course sits outside of the scope of NHS testing, I would appreciate any support you are able to provide in ensuring the different testing facilities, and the relevant eligibility, are clearly articulated to the general public, particularly by those Boards in remote and rural areas, where there may be more overlap between NHS testing facilities, and eligibility for the UK programme.

I would like to reiterate my thanks for your continued action and support on testing. I recognise that this is a fast moving and constantly evolving situation, and I appreciate the efforts of health and social care colleagues across Scotland who have responded quickly to implement our ongoing testing priorities. These all build towards the next phase of moving to Test, Trace and Isolate which, as the First Minister outlined this afternoon, we will provide more detail on in the coming week.

If there are any immediate questions on this our National Director for Testing is available on directorcovid19testing@gov.scot or 07769 239202.

Yours sincerely



JOHN CONNAGHAN CBE
Interim Chief Executive NHSScotland