

FAQs – Lateral Flow Testing / Lateral Flow Devices (Updated 02/02/21)

Background:

- Extensive testing has shown that Lateral flow devices (LFDs) are suitable for use in care homes, where they can help to identify people who are most likely to spread the virus further and help **prevent transmission of the disease** from staff and visitors.
- It must be emphasised that LFD testing is a **risk reduction intervention only**. It is critical for visitors to continue to wear PPE and follow infection control methods to keep their loved ones, other residents and staff as safe as possible at all times.
- LFDs deliver a rapid assessment – **in 30 minutes** – of whether someone is likely to be infectious or not
- The test is not 100% accurate so does not eliminate risk, and must be used in conjunction with personal protective equipment (PPE), and infection prevention and control measures.

What is the purpose of Lateral Flow Testing?

Testing is one way of minimising the risk associated with visiting a care home. Testing should be undertaken alongside the recommended IPC measures, including not visiting if symptomatic, hand hygiene and the use of PPE. Testing is not a panacea, but if used appropriately along with other risk mitigation measures, testing reduces the risk of introducing the virus into the care home. (Gov.uk)

Who should receive an LFT?

Staff will receive 2 LFTs a week, in addition to the weekly PCR test. Weekly testing be between every 3-4 days depending on shift requirements.

If there are any positive cases, PCR or LFD, found in a care home, staff should also:

- Undertake daily LFD testing of all staff for 7 days
- If any staff test positive from a LFT, they will need to undertake a confirmatory PCR and then self-isolate at home immediately until they receive their result
- This additional 7-day testing should be **in addition** to any outbreak testing that may be necessary from local Health Protection Teams.

What if a member of staff tests positive?

The staff member must not proceed with work and requires an immediate confirmatory PCR test. Provide the staff member with a PCR test kit and ask the staff member to test on site then isolate at home immediately, avoiding public transport and wearing a face mask.

Before the staff member leaves, they will need to register the confirmatory PCR kit online in the usual way, using the home's UON.

What if a member of staff refuses to be tested?

If staff refuse to be tested, you should discuss this choice with the member of staff and undertake a risk assessment, this may include finding them alternative work within the service .

When testing is taking place on site, how do we dispose of used Lateral Flow Tests?

If positive results come out of the test, then it is imperative that these are to be treated as clinical waste.

If negative result, then they can be put in the general waste.

Is LFT mandatory or voluntary for staff & visitors?

Visitors and visiting professionals should undertake LFT prior to every visit. Visiting professionals that are part of an existing regular testing regime as part of their work (e.g. other NHS professionals) do not need to be tested at every visit.

If a Care Home wants to manage LFT as drive-in - what is most up to date guidance on drive-in testing/visitors waiting in their cars to be swabbed?

The DHSC recommends that the LFT testing should be undertaken in a specific testing area of a care home. The current devices and kits must be stored at ambient temperature means that drive in testing will not work

What tests need to be carried out after a positive LFT?

The "Care Home Testing Guidance" say, "Those who have previously tested positive for COVID-19 with PCR should not test with PCR for 90 days unless they become symptomatic. After 90 days, staff should continue testing with PCR tests.". No testing (PCR or LFT) is needed in this 90-day period after a positive PCR result.

What do we do if someone becomes symptomatic in this 90-day period?

If someone becomes symptomatic in the 90-day period they need to be assessed and possibly will need a test. Nobody who is symptomatic should be presenting as staff or as a visitor.

What should the care home do if a member of staff tests positive?

If the confirmatory PCR is positive, care homes should contact their local HPT as soon as possible and if an outbreak is later confirmed they will provide care homes with PCR tests for whole home testing on day 1 and once more between day 4-7 of the outbreak.

Can Lateral Flow Testing be used if there is an outbreak situations?

If your home is experiencing an outbreak (two or more confirmed cases) please use PCR testing.

What should be done if a member of staff receives an inconclusive test result?

If this is the case, then re test until conclusive test result is shown.

If a member of staff has received a positive PCR in last 90 days and has recently developed symptoms of coronavirus, what do we do?

In this case, please arrange for the person to self-isolate and to be clinically assessed to decide if they need another test or other management.

How do Day Opportunities, Home Care and PAs obtain LFTs?

HCC will roll out LFT provision across the county from 20th January 2021. Key and essential workers in Hertfordshire will be able to book a testing slot. (this will be a phased roll out)

We recommend that staff who cannot work from home are tested twice a week at one of the HCC LFT centres.

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What do we do if someone becomes symptomatic in this 90-day period?

If someone becomes symptomatic in the 90-day period they need to be clinically assessed and possibly will need a test. Nobody who is symptomatic should be visiting or visiting the care home presenting as staff or as a visitor.

What should happen if a member of staff test results positive on PCR, then negative on LFT - What is advice?

PCR is the gold standard test, and therefore the results of that test must be followed. Please follow the PCR result

What should happen if staff test results negative on PCR, then positive for LFT – what is the advice here?

As the tests are done at different times there is the potential that you could have subsequently become positive even if the tests are on the same day. The positive LFT must be followed up by another PCR test.

Can HCPA / HCC recommend best place to privately source LFTs / “blood-prick” rapid tests?

HCC will roll out LFT provision across the county from 20th January 2021. It is recommended that providers use the government sourced testing either through DHSC or through those rolled out by Herts County Council

Currently not all supported living services are eligible for Lateral Flow testing – can providers challenge this view that they are not eligible?

As above, HCC will roll out LFT provision across the county from 20th January 2021. Key and essential workers in Hertfordshire will be able to book a testing slot:

Can the use of Lateral Flow tests allow for staff/clients to share vehicles – is this good risk management?

We do not recommend the use of LFTs in these circumstances. If vehicle sharing is absolutely necessary, please follow this guidance to reduce the risk of transmission from one staff member to another you should not mix work bubbles. Staff interactions should be compliant with IPC standards.

If staff are told they are close contact (Test & Trace, contact tracing, etc) and they have a negative LFT result, can they return to work?

Not at present. This is because the person could still go on to test positive within the 10-day isolation period.

When using the LFT, is it to be carried out using throat or nose... or both?

The devices require a throat and nose swab. Unless there is a particular medical issue for an individual which means they are unable to do both throat and nose swab in which case a swab test should be taken from each nostril

How often should care staff be tested?

Staff will be asked to take LFTs twice a week, in addition to the weekly PCR test they have already been receiving as part of urgent government action to protect those most at risk. Agency staff should always be included in regular and scheduled testing

Why has there been a change in LFT frequency and policy?

A new plan has been accelerated and put in place in light of the new, more transmissible, strain of COVID-19.

Where should LFTs take place

Ensure there is a designated area for staff to be tested — whether specifically for staff or using the same visitor testing area — to complete a self-assisted swab and wait on results, maintaining social distancing.

<https://www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result>

How do we register the results of staff LFTs?

The staff member can complete these steps themselves unless they are unable to do so. If you are completing registration on their behalf, make sure that you have explained why you are taking down this information and how it will be used.

How do we order more / replacement LFT testing packs?

If you call 119 and request replacements, they should be sent automatically to your care home. Confirmatory PCR kits (these come with a priority sticker so you can post them - you do not need a courier for any confirmatory PCR tests)

You may call 119 if you have used more than 25% of the LFD kits already, or if you look like you will run out. Keep on top of ordering.

Can the care home have visitors if there is an outbreak amongst staff?

Care homes which are facing an outbreak will not be able to receive visitors, apart from in exceptional circumstances such as end of life. Care homes will manage the number of visits to ensure they can enable safe visiting and the programme will be continuously reviewed.

Who should deliver LFT training?

Training in handling and analysis of the samples, including relevant principles of infection prevention and control, will be provided to all operators at each care home.

Additional Questions from Webinar

Outside of any outbreak, can I have the frequency with which staff should be tested, and the residents? And which test type should they do?

Staff should have lateral flow testing twice a week (every 3-4 days) in addition to the once a week PCR testing. Residents should have PCR testing every 28 days.

Does testing for staff need to change frequency if there is a known outbreak at a setting?

The Health Protection Team will advise on the frequency of testing for staff during an outbreak.

What is the official stance on if staff are refusing to be tested as there is confusion over whether it is a legal requirement to work or not?

There is no legal requirement for staff to be tested, however staff should be encouraged to be involved in testing to benefit their colleagues and residents.

Is LFT a good enough way to manage spreading infections from home to home if for example a member of staff or agency works across multiple sites? Must they be tested at each site?

Regular testing with LFT will help to reduce the spread of COVID-19 by identifying those who are asymptomatic, along with other preventative measures. Current guidance states that where staff are working in multiple locations, they should be tested before a shift.

Is there any support in terms of how to report all results? This is a very time-consuming process. Some form of spreadsheet to log results at all?

Staff can register their own results online - this may be one way to reduce the workload on one person to enter all the results

Do we have an update from Public Health as to if or when staff might be able to do LFT at home, before coming in to work?

Staff can do their own test at home after they have satisfactorily completed the required training.

Do we need to register LFT results for all staff, even if negative?

It is important that all staff register their results even if they are negative. This is to ensure that we understand the level of infection in local communities and can provide respond quickly to changes.

When staff have had the second vaccination will the LFT testing stop?

It is important to continue to LFT as you may still be carrying the virus even when vaccinated. This means that someone who is vaccinated could potentially transmit to others.

Sources & Additional Information

For Further information on Lateral Flow Testing, Care Staff expectations, visitor protocols and all associated Department of Health & Social Care advice, please visit the following links;

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-lateral-flow-testing-of-visitors-in-care-homes>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evidence-on-the-accuracy-of-lateral-flow-device-testing/evidence-summary-for-lateral-flow-devices-lfd-in-relation-to-care-homes>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/149-million-to-support-increased-care-home-testing>