

Welcome to the latest Residential and Nursing Home communication from Hampshire and Isle of Wight (8 July 2020)

Dear Colleagues,

Please see below for essential COVID-19 updates on:

- Message from local care home support teams
- Care Home COVID-19 Testing – new rollout of further testing

Other information

- Top Tips for Tricky Times (resources)
- National Mental Capacity Forum, Webinar

Message from local care home support teams

There have been several remarks in the press around social care and care homes and the management of COVID-19. We know that the care home sector particularly has been hit hard by COVID-19 because of the vulnerable population you serve and by the national operational issues around access to Personal Protective Equipment, testing and discharge of asymptomatic people from hospitals.

Our knowledge and capabilities around COVID-19 and, therefore, our decision-making, has evolved rapidly during the pandemic – and this is to be expected. But the commitment and care of staff in social care has never been in doubt.

We would like to take the opportunity to say thank you for the amazing work done by all social care providers in very difficult circumstances. Without your dedication and courage, many more residents and clients would have suffered. There have been many, many examples of outstanding practice within the social care sector and staff going above and beyond what could reasonably be expected of them. Everyone, whatever their experiences of COVID-19 can be very proud of what they have achieved – thank you.

Care Home COVID-19 Testing – new rollout of further testing

The DHSC have now released guidance on the next stage of care home testing. Further guidance is likely but a summary to support care homes regarding re-testing is provided below:

Routine testing:

- Accessed via [digital portal](#)
- All staff (including bank, agency and visiting staff (e.g. social workers, allied health professionals) – **weekly**
- All residents – **monthly**

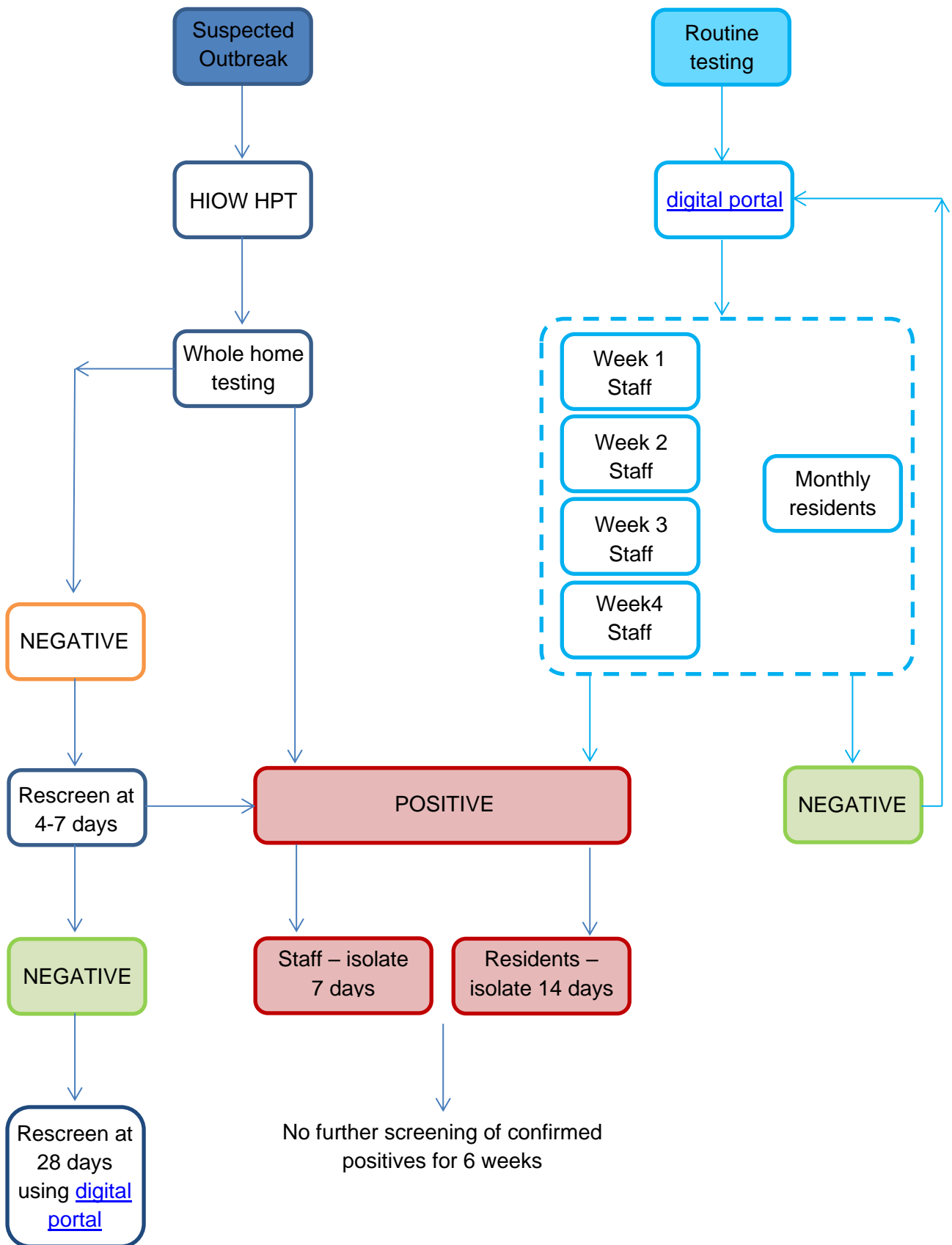
Ordering routine tests:

- All tests need to be ordered from the [digital portal](#)
- The portal is currently open for around 9,000 homes for the over 65's and those with dementia. Other homes will be added from early August
- You will receive enough testing kits to carry out 4x staff testing and 1x resident testing (i.e. 28 days' supply of test kits)

Outbreak testing:

- Accessed via HIOW Health Protection Team (HPT) at Public Health England
 - **In hours: 0344 225 3861 option 2**
 - **Out of hours: 0844 967 0082**
- HPT can authorise whole home testing (staff and residents) via the Community Testing Service (CTS will drop off and collect swabs – homes will need to complete their own testing)
- Repeat testing at 4-7 days of all staff and residents who screened negative via the Community Testing Service (CTS will drop off and collect swabs – homes will need to complete their own testing)
- Repeat whole home testing at 28 days to confirm end of outbreak via the [digital portal](#)

Testing pathways



Q&A

How does whole home testing apply to those who may not have the mental capacity to consent to a COVID-19 swab?

All decisions about whether to test a resident who lacks the capacity to consent should be made on an individual basis, taking into account the benefits and risks to the person. The DHSC have provided [guidance](#) and further information can be found on this [webinar](#).

How do I manage staff who refuse to be tested for COVID-19?

Staff do not have to agree to be tested for COVID-19 and no member of staff should or can be compelled to have a test. However, all staff have a duty of care to their residents and ethically should take reasonable steps to protect the people they care for. Recent studies indicate that staff (and particularly regular use of agency staff and those working across sites) are likely to be a major risk factor driving transmission within care home settings and 1.2% of staff without symptoms of COVID-19 tested positive during the last round of testing. Homes should work with staff to ensure they understand the reasons for weekly testing and ensure that staff who are required to isolate receive their full salary.

Do I need to swab staff or residents who have previously had a confirmed COVID-19 positive test result?

There is no national guidance on this issue. Swabbing a member of staff or resident who has had COVID-19 (confirmed) in the last 6 weeks is likely to produce a positive test result. This is because the current swab test looks for fragments of COVID-19 virus but it does not distinguish between virus that is live (viable) or dead (inactive). Fragments of dead COVID-19 virus (inactive) can be recovered from a person's nose for around 5-6 weeks following infection. Where the person is well, this does not mean your staff member or resident still has COVID-19 or is an infection risk to others.

We would advise that any asymptomatic member of staff or resident who has previously been COVID-19 positive (confirmed by swab) is NOT tested as part of routine testing for 6 weeks after first positive swab. Testing within this time period may result in staff and resident's being unnecessarily isolated.

What do I do if a staff member or resident tests positive but they are already suspected to have had COVID-19 (not confirmed by a previous test)?

It is not possible to distinguish between current asymptomatic infection and a false positive test due to a previous infection (where the previous infection was not confirmed using a COVID-19 test). In this situation, the staff member or resident must be managed as though they have active COVID-19 and isolated for the required period of time.

How will the new screening programme impact track and trace?

Routine testing is likely to identify a number of COVID-19 positive staff members and residents and these cases will be subject to test and trace.

It is critical that all homes follow the guidance contained in [How to Work Safely in Care Homes](#) to reduce the risk to residents from the spread of COVID-19 and also avoid unnecessary staff isolation.

In summary:

- When providing personal care which requires you to be in direct contact with the resident(s) (e.g. touching) OR within 2 metres of a resident who is coughing = **disposable gloves, apron and fluid resistant surgical facemask (+/- eye protection by risk assessment)**
- When performing a task requiring you to be within 2 metres of resident(s) but no direct contact with resident(s) (i.e. no touching) = **fluid resistant surgical facemask (+/- eye protection by risk assessment)**
- When working in communal areas with residents- no direct contact with resident(s) though potentially within 2 metres of resident(s) = **fluid resistant surgical facemask**

It is vitally important that all staff continue to follow social distancing of 2 meters or at least 1 meter plus precautions. This includes socially distancing from each other as well as residents and not taking breaks together or sharing offices in close proximity without wearing face-coverings. It also includes not sharing cars to work where possible and wearing face masks whilst working in communal areas.

How does this testing link with the Capacity Tracker?

Care home should enter any new information on test results on the Capacity Tracker and update this daily. This includes information reported to them of any further cases notified by staff who are not at work but tested in the community or advised they need to self-isolate (e.g. through NHS Test & Trace programme).

Top Tips for Tricky Times (resources)

These are resources developed by care home managers, with support from academics, clinicians and commissioners. They answer questions like: "How do you comfort someone you can't hug or touch? How do you help someone self-isolate when they don't understand why? What do you do if you are not sure what is happening to the resident? How can I support staff in dealing with multiple deaths? How do we communicate with worried and grieving families at a distance?"

The resources are free - you do have to register to be able to download the different sheets but it doesn't take more than a minute.

<https://arc-eeo.nihr.ac.uk/covid-19-projects-innovations-and-information/covid-19-resources-training-information/top-tips>

National Mental Capacity Forum, Webinar

Please follow the link for a short Webinar from the National Mental Capacity Forum, specifically in relation to testing for Covid-19

<https://www.mentalcapacitylawandpolicy.org.uk/testing-capacity-and-covid-19-shedinar/>