

Guidance for Care Homes in Northern Ireland: Supporting Visitor self- testing for COVID-19 using Lateral Flow Devices (LFDs)



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1 Introduction

Many people with coronavirus (COVID-19) have mild, or even no symptoms, but can still spread the virus. With regular self-testing we can slow the spread and help protect the most vulnerable in care homes and communities.

Lateral Flow Device (LFD) tests are widely used to check for transmissible coronavirus (COVID-19).

Lateral flow testing is currently being offered to people who do not have symptoms in a range of different settings in Northern Ireland including universities, schools and some health care settings.

Whilst it is not mandatory, asymptomatic¹ visitors to care homes should be encouraged to test twice weekly using a Lateral Flow Device (LFD) test.

Rationale for visitors to Care Homes taking a LFD test:

- Regular self-testing using LFDs can slow the spread of COVID-19
- Testing may pick up the virus even if the visitor does not have any symptoms of COVID-19
- A positive test will allow visitor to take steps to isolate and protect others
- Whilst not fool proof, testing offers another safety measure to keep our care homes safe and COVID-19 free
- The tests are voluntary however, the more people who participate in the testing programme the more likely we are to identify those who may be unknowingly carrying the virus

In the event of an outbreak, visiting will be stopped in line with Health Protection policy and guidance other than in exceptional circumstances.

What isolating means: https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus/covid-19-information-public/frequently-asked-questions#what-does-self-isolation-mean

¹ Visitors with symptoms should follow the guidance below, arrange to get a test at a Local test site and selfisolate immediately. Do not visit the Care Home.

Regional guidance on staying safe: https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-staying-safe-outside-your-home

What to do if you have COVID-19 symptoms: https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus/covid-19-information-public/frequently-asked-questions#if-i-have-symptoms-of-covid-19-what-should-i-do

Safe travel guidance https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/safer-travel-guidance-public-transport-users-walkers-cyclists-drivers

2 About LFD tests

- Lateral flow testing is a fast and simple way to test people who do not have symptoms of COVID-19, but who may still be spreading the virus.
- The INNOVA pack of 7 tests used in this programme are licensed for self-testing outside of a care environment. This means that the tests can be used by a member of the public with no previous experience of testing, in their own home or another community setting such as a place of work. <u>These particular tests</u> (INNOVA 7's) tests are licensed for self-use only i.e. should not be assisted. <u>Guidance, support and oversight should be offered where required</u>.
- The tests are easy to use and give results in 30 minutes. They can find positive cases with high levels of virus that are easy to transmit to others, helping to intercept and reduce further infections. Those who test positive must immediately self-isolate to avoid passing the virus on to others.
- Lateral flow is an established technology, adapted to detect proteins (antigens) that are present when a person has COVID-19. The best-known example of a lateral flow test is the home pregnancy test kit.
- The Lateral Flow tests used by the UK government go through a rigorous evaluation by the country's leading scientists.
- Lateral Flow tests are not offered in isolation, but alongside a range of other measures to drive down cases and break chains of transmission.
- Clinical evaluation by Public Health England (PHE) and Oxford University shows that the LFD tests perform best when levels of virus are at their highest. When a person has low levels of virus in their system, lateral flow tests are less sensitive than some of the other tests, such as PCR tests. <u>However, when levels of virus</u> <u>are at their highest and people are most likely to pass on the disease, lateral flow</u> <u>tests can detect the vast majority of cases.</u>
- Lateral flow tests are useful for finding out if a person is infectious now, and able to transmit the virus to others. The tests are accurate enough to detect the vast majority of these cases. The accuracy is improved further by testing more than once per week. The Northern Ireland Expert Advisory Group on testing in Northern Ireland has advised that Visitors to Care Homes in Northern Ireland should be asked to <u>use LFD tests twice each week</u>.
- PCR and lateral flow have different roles to play in controlling the virus, so it isn't helpful to directly compare them.
 - Polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests check for the genetic material (RNA) of the virus in the sample. This is done in a laboratory. PCR tests may still be positive even after the individual is no longer infectious as it can identify small fragments (genetic material) of dead virus. This is why individuals with a positive PCR test should not be tested again for 90 days.
 - Lateral Flow Device (LFD) tests detect proteins called 'antigens' produced by the virus. They give the results within 30 minutes after taking the test. LFDs are a fast and effective way of testing people who do not have

symptoms, but may be infectious. They are most accurate in individuals with a high viral load (level of infectiousness) who are at higher risk of spreading the virus.

More information is available at the following links.

https://www.gov.uk/guidance/understanding-lateral-flow-antigen-testing-for-people-without-symptoms

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-tests-and-testing-kits-for-coronavirus-covid-19work/for-patients-the-public-and-professional-users-a-guide-to-covid-19-tests-and-testing-kits

3 Scope of Visitors to Care Homes LFD testing protocol

- All visitors to Care Homes in Northern Ireland over the age of 16 years
- Visiting chaplains, hairdressers or other visitors who may attend care homes regularly to provide services and support for residents. These individuals should identify a single care home to collect tests from. Two LFD tests should be completed within each week. Proof of negative results within the timeframe should facilitate them being able to visit more than one care home within the same seven day period without further testing.

Exclusions:

- Children under age of 16
- Children already using twice weekly tests as part of the school LFD testing programme may provide evidence of their negative tests prior to visiting a care home
- Care partners In view of the enhanced roles that Care Partners may undertake in providing more close contact care for residents, existing testing arrangements for Care Partners should continue with weekly PCR tests being offered alongside Care Home staff. This approach will be kept under review.
- Health and Social Care professionals separate arrangements for regular testing of health care professionals are under review.

4 Drawing down and replenishing stocks of LFD tests

Care Homes will be able to draw down tests based on the number registered beds in their care home. This information along with current care home visiting policy on the number of visitors to care homes will determine how many tests will be available for visitors to each care home. This information has been uploaded centrally to DHSC who will be co-ordinating the dissemination of tests.

• Please use the following link to initiate the process. You will need your Care Home's Unique Organisation Number (UON) which is an 8 digit number.

Apply for coronavirus test kits - GOV.UK (test-for-coronavirus.service.gov.uk)

You will receive confirmation of your order by return email. If you have any issues with the process, please use the 119 helpline.

• The tests will be delivered free of charge to your Care home by Sales Force and you should receive them within 7 to 10 days. If you do not get a delivery within this time period, please contact 119.

- Care Homes will be supplied with enough tests for 1 month. Estimates have been informed by assumptions that all visitors to a care home (in line with NI Visiting to Care Homes guidance) will avail of the offer of LFD testing. This will be kept under review.
- Care Homes cannot reorder tests within a 21 day period. When reordering tests, please use an email which will be monitored regularly so that confirmation of the order may be received.
- Tests should be stored in a clean, dry, secure environment.
- Once the test kits are received please keep a record of the lot numbers (also be referred to as batch numbers) on the test kits received in your care home.
- It is important that visitors are asked to remember to register the results of <u>every</u> test on line <u>https://www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result</u> or by calling 119.
 If tests are not registered as being used, it will impact on the ability of the Care Home to refresh supplies of tests. THIS STEP IS VITAL

5 Frequency of testing

Visitors should complete 2 LFD tests per week. These tests may be undertaken in the **VISITOR'S OWN HOME**.

- For visitors only planning to make 1 visit during the week, they should complete the first test 3 days before the planned visit and the second test on the day of the visit.
- Where more than one visit is planned the tests should be carried out on two separate days which are three days apart. For example Monday & Thursday, Tuesday & Friday, etc. Tests would ideally coincide with visits to the home.

Visitors **MUST REGISTER THE RESULT OF THEIR TEST** online via the web portal at <u>https://www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result.</u> Test results may also be registered by phoning 119 (see section 10).

Visitors will be asked to share the results of their tests with the Care Home at the time of their visit.

The number of packs of LFD tests given to each visitor will be at the Care Home manager's discretion based on the frequency of visits to the care home. Please provide no more than two week's supply to visitors in the first instance. Once the Visitor is comfortable with the process, Care Home managers may revisit this, however no more than a month's supply should be issued at the time.

Remember that Care Homes will not be able to reorder LFD tests for 21 days and subsequent orders may be affected if visitors do not register the results of their tests.

Visitors should be reminded that the tests are provided for their sole use and should not be shared with or used by others.

If the visitor is coming from the Republic of Ireland to visit a resident in Northern Ireland, they should be asked to register their Test result using the Care Home post code.

NOTE: individuals who have previously tested positive for COVID-19 (PCR test) should be exempt from lateral flow testing for 90 days

6 Raising awareness and encouraging uptake

- Once the Care Home makes an application to draw down LFT tests, all opportunities should be taken to encourage visitors to take up the offer of testing using LFDs. Please discuss the advantages of using LFD tests with visitors when they are making bookings to visit their loved ones in the Care Home.
- Share written information on testing using LFDs with all visitors. This can be done by e-mail where appropriate. Please provide a hard copy of the information for those visitors who cannot access e-mail correspondence. All information is available on the PHA website at the following link

Testing for visitors to care homes.

- Encourage visitors to share information about LFD testing with other family members or friends who may be planning to book a visit to the Care Home
- Remind visitors that regular testing does not replace the need to maintain regular handwashing, wearing of masks and adhering to all IPC measures in the Care Home visiting policy.
- Remind visitors that the tests should only be used if they do not have symptoms of COVID-19. If they DO have symptoms they should isolate, arrange to have a PCR test at a local test centre and follow guidance on NI Direct².

² **Regional guidance on staying safe**: https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-staying-safeoutside-your-home

What to do if you have COVID-19 symptoms: https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus/covid-19-information-public/frequently-asked-questions#if-i-have-symptoms-of-covid-19-what-should-i-do What isolating means: https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus/covid-19-information-public/frequently-asked-questions#what-does-self-isolation-mean

• Whilst the test is simple to use - care must be taken to ensure that visitors are confident that they can self-test and can report their result either on line or by calling 119 (sections 7-10). Everything the visitor needs to know is detailed within the information leaflet in the pack of tests. Actions that Care Homes should take to support Visitors are outlined in section 8.

7 Consent to participate

- Each visitor using the LFDs will need to sign a consent form (appendix 1). To enable the Care Home to comply with obligations under General Data Protection Regulation, each visitor participating in the programme must provide express consent for the use of their personal information in the NI Lateral Flow COVID-19 Testing Programme for Visitors to Care Homes.
- A copy of each completed consent form should be retained by the care home and a copy offered to the visitor (scan and e-mail, photograph on smart phone or provide a hard copy if requested).

8 Supporting familiarisation with the testing process



Documents and resources to support self-testing are available on the PHA website using the link below. <u>Testing for visitors to care homes</u>.

Visitors may also access a video explaining the testing process using the QR link below.

How to do a Covid-19 self- test



Scan the QR code above to be taken to an instructional video on how to self-test. Alternatively follow the link for the video: www.youtube.com/watch?v=S9XR8RZxKNo

Care Homes should:

- Demonstrate contents of the testing box to each visitor and explain the process of preparing to take the test, swabbing and using the test and registering the result. The steps are briefly summarised in the box overleaf.
- Offer to answer any questions that visitors may have. Full instructions are
 provided in the box. Ensure that demonstration kits are easily available for this
 purpose and ensure there are enough staff on duty that are familiar with the
 process and test kits.
- Care Homes should confirm with each visitor that they have had the process satisfactorily explained to them and that they are content to proceed. Visitors should be asked to complete and sign the consent form (appendix 1)

Brief summary of LFD testing steps

- Store tests in cool dry place $(2^{\circ}C 30^{\circ}C)$
- Prepare testing area clean, dry, flat surface. Access to a mirror and good lighting.
- o Wash hands thoroughly before starting
- Check you are familiar with the contents of the kit and everything you need is close by
- \circ $\,$ Set up the test, take the swab and process the swab
- \circ $\,$ Wait for 30 minutes and read the result
- **Report the result**. The first time this is done it takes a little longer as all of the personal details need to be entered.
- Dispose of the test and make a note of the result (space at the back of the instruction booklet to do this).
- Do 2 tests per week as the tests are more accurate at picking up infection if done regularly

Visitors needing further guidance or assistance:

For those visitors who are not able to manage testing using the self-test kits please use one of the following options:

- 1 Explore with the visitor if there is a family member or friend within their household or 'bubble' that may be able to assist them with testing and/or registering the results **OR**
- 2 Care Homes may offer to supervise the tests and assist with registering the results.

9 Results

Images of results are provided in the 'Guidance for Visitors' document which may be used for reference.

• Negative result

If the test result is negative (one line next to C), the visitor may continue with their visit as planned. If there is a coloured smudge next to C this should also be interpreted as a negative result.

Visitors should be reminded that no test is fool proof and they must continue to follow national and local rules and guidelines including regular handwashing, social distancing and wearing face coverings, where required.

• Positive result

If a positive result is returned from these self-tests (two lines, one next to C and one next to T), it is extremely likely that the individual is currently infected with COVID-19 and at risk of infecting others.

The individual should follow the 5 steps below:

- 1 isolate in line COVID-19 guidance (links in box below);
- 2 arrange to take a PCR test to confirm the result at a local test centre. Instructions on how to do this are included in appendix 2;
 - a. If the confirmatory PCR is positive, the visitor should be asked to continue to isolate with their household for 10 days from the date of the LFD test.
 - b. If the confirmatory PCR is negative, the visitor may continue with planned visits and resume the twice weekly LFD testing protocol.
- 3 inform the Care Home of test results to support risk assessment and contact tracing;
- 4 report their positive result at <u>https://www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result</u> or by calling 119;
- 5 put their positive test in the bag provided in the kit and place in a second plastic bag (for example a small food bag), seal the bag and keep it for 48 hours before disposing in household waste.

Regional guidance on staying safe: <u>https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-</u> covid-19-staying-safe-outside-your-home

What to do if you have COVID-19 symptoms: <u>https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus/covid-19-information-</u> <u>public/frequently-asked-questions#if-i-have-symptoms-of-covid-19-what-should-i-do</u>

What isolating means: <u>https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-</u> <u>coronavirus/covid-19-information-public/frequently-asked-questions#what-does-self-</u> <u>isolation-mean</u>

Safe travel guidance <u>https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/safer-travel-guidance-public-transport-users-walkers-cyclists-drivers</u>

• Void result

A void result (no lines or one line next to T) means the test did not run correctly. The visitor should do a further test.

If the second test is also void, the visitor should be asked to contact the care home for advice. The care home should supervise a third test to check technique.

More than one void test from the same visitor should be reported as it may indicate that there is a problem with the batch of tests. Please contact 119 to report any issues with the tests.

10 Registration of LFD tests

All results, including negatives, positives and voids, MUST be reported

Linking test results to the Care Home enables public health teams to better support reducing the transmission of coronavirus and prevent outbreaks.

You must ensure that all visitors using the LFD self-test kits are provided with the Care Home's unique organisation number (UON). The UON is used to link the test result to the Care Home when the result is reported. A template is provided in Appendix 3.

Registration should happen as soon as the test result is determined (and no later than one day after testing). Visitors will need the ID number on the test device to register the result or they can scan the QR code if they have a smart phone.

Step-by-step result reporting instructions

Visitors should report their rapid lateral flow test result at home, before beginning their visit to the Care Home.

Please ask visitors to follow these steps to report their result. A printable summary of how to do this is provided as appendix 3 and screen shots of the steps may be accessed on the PHA website at <u>Testing for visitors to care homes</u>

- 1. <u>Report online https://www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result</u> or call 119.
- 2. Select 'Myself' when asked who you are reporting a result for.
- 3. You can choose to continue 'without an account' or 'create an account'. Creating an account will save your details each time you report a test result. <u>Creating an account only takes 2 minutes and you'll save 5 minutes when</u> <u>reporting each test result.</u>
- 4. If continuing without an account, select 'A social care service' when asked who the test was for.
- 5. Select 'I'm visiting someone who gets care or support'.
- 6. Enter the UON of the care setting you are intending to visit. This should already have been provided to you by the setting manager.

- 7. Check the details of the organisation are correct.
- 8. Enter 'Today' when asked when the test was taken please test on the day of your visit.
- 9. Enter the ID number printed on the plastic test strip. You can also scan the QR code on the test strip if you are using a mobile device.
- 10. Follow the remaining steps entering your personal details to complete your report.

Visitors will receive a text message and email from NHS Test and Trace confirming their test result has been reported. This should be shown to the Care Home on arrival for their visit.

11 Record keeping

LFD Kit lot numbers	A record of the lot numbers from all of the LFT kits received should be retained by the care home. This will support any potential requirements for batch recall.
Consent forms	Keep a copy of all signed consent forms in line with data protection laws
Positive results	Keep copies of contact details of visitors returning a positive test result (LFT and any PCR tests undertaken to confirm the result). This information may be used to assist in contact tracing and/or risk assessment.
Void results	The Care Home should also call 119 if a visitor has reported more than one void test

12 Further information

• Copies of all documents are available on the PHA website at:

Testing for visitors to care homes

• All questions or queries should be directed to the LFD testing team by calling 119 in the first instance.

Appendix 1

NI Lateral Flow COVID-19 Self-Testing Programme for Visitors to Care Homes

Consent form

Rapid testing has been identified as an appropriate non-clinical intervention (NCI) to identify cases of COVID-19 which may be asymptomatic.

This initiative which is supported by the Department of Health is being led by the Public Health Agency.

The programme involves offering visitors to Care Homes the opportunity to self-test in their own home using a Lateral Flow Device (LFD) test twice a week. Lateral Flow Device (LFD) testing is a fast and simple way to test people who do not have symptoms of COVID-19, but who still may be positive and be spreading the virus.

You will be given a leaflet to explain how the test will work and you can find out more about the tests at the following link or by asking your Care Home manager.

Testing for visitors to care homes

This letter outlines how and why the care home will record your consent to participate in the programme as the process involves processing personal data under data protection laws.

To enable us to comply with our obligations under General Data Protection Regulation, we are required to obtain express consent for the use of your personal information for participation in NI Lateral Flow COVID-19 Testing Programme for Visitors to Care Homes.

Without your consent we will not include you in the programme and will not issue you with Lateral Flow Device Testing Kits.

Taking part in testing is voluntary. There is no expectation or obligation to participate. Nobody should be required to undergo testing without consent and nobody will be excluded from visiting if they do not wish to test.

Whilst testing is voluntary the more people who participate in the testing programme the more likely we are to identify those who may be positive but not have symptoms. Regular self-testing using LFDs can help us slow the spread of COVID-19 by identifying those who are infectious so that they can isolate promptly. Testing visitors offers another safety measure to keep residents and staff in our care homes safe and COVID-19 free.

Please complete the form on page 2 of this letter and return it to your Care Home.

Visitor Consent for NI Lateral Flow COVID-19 Self-Testing Programme for Visitors to Care Homes

Care Home Name:

Please read the following conditions carefully and provide your consent as appropriate by circling either 'yes' or 'no' for each criterion.

Consent

I consent to participating in this testing programme	YES	NO
I understand that my data will be held and shared in accordance with	YES	NO
data protection laws.		
I agree that if my LFD test results are confirmed to be positive, I will isolate at home and inform the Care Home to support risk assessment	YES	NO
and contact tracing		
I agree that if my LFD test results are confirmed to be positive, I will	YES	NO
also take a PCR test to confirm my result and inform the Care Home of		
the result of the PCR test to support risk assessment and contact		
tracing		
I agree to accurately record all of my test results at	YES	NO
www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result or by calling 119 where staff will		
register test results on my behalf.		
I understand that by participating, I am agreeing to use the test kits	YES	NO
according to the instructions included.		
I have had the opportunity to consider the information provided to me	YES	NO
by the Care Home about the LFD testing programme and am content		
to proceed		

Appendix 2

How to access a confirmatory PCR test if visitor has a positive LFD test result

Testing is available across a number of testing sites. Information on testing site locations is available at the following link:

https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus/testing-and-tracing-covid-19/testing-covid-19

Fixed drive through centres:

- Belfast: SSE Test Centre, Odyssey Car park
- Derry/Londonderry: The LYCRA Company Car Park
- Craigavon: Central Sports Arena
- Enniskillen: St Angelo Airport

Walk through test sites:

- Ulster University (Car Park 4), Coleraine
- Magee Ulster University, Londonderry
- Ballymena Showgrounds, Ballymena
- Car Park at Queen's Sports Club (PEC), Belfast
- Longstone Car Park, Lisburn

Testing at one of 8 mobile testing units. **PLEASE NOTE:** The mobile testing units provide a temporary testing site that is set up in response to local demand. Individuals should therefore arrange to check the locations of the mobile testing units available at the following link: <u>https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-</u> coronavirus/testing-and-tracing-covid-19/testing-covid-19

In advance of attending a test centre, it will be important for you to have watched the videos on how to perform the test (nose and throat swab). This is available at the following link: <u>https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus/testing-and-tracing-covid-19/testing-covid-19</u>

PLEASE REMEMBER to register your test kit on the website (<u>https://test-for-coronavirus.service.gov.uk/register-kit</u>) so that your test result can be sent to you. This registration is completed after the test with the unique number you have on your test sample. The unique number will look like this example "AAA12345678"

If you do not have access to a computer, ask a family member or friend to assist you. If that is not possible, please contact the Care Home for advice.

When will I get my test result?

Once your test kit is registered (where you are asked to provide a mobile phone number and an email address) and you have completed your swab, you should normally receive your results within 24 hours by text and email.

Will having a negative test mean that visiting is safe?

No test is 100% accurate all the time. All visitors should continue to follow all instructions from the care home to make each visit as safe as possible. This includes washing your hands thoroughly, wearing PPE as required and staying within designated parts of the care home.

Appendix 3

Visitors to adult social care settings: reporting rapid lateral flow tests at home

This leaflet is provided for visitors to adult social care settings, on how to report rapid lateral flow tests, if self-testing at home.

Introduction

We have shared our Unique Organisation Number (UON) with you in the box below.

The UON is used to link your test result to us when you report your result to NHS Test & Trace. All results, including negatives, positives and voids, <u>must be reported</u>. Linking your test result to us enables public health teams to better support us to reduce the transmission of coronavirus and prevent outbreaks.

Visitor self-test for a visit to a Care Home

Please conduct a rapid lateral flow test twice every week to help keep us safe, reduce the spread of coronavirus and prevent outbreaks.

- We are now able to provide you with a box of rapid lateral flow tests to take at home.
- To ensure that your test is linked to our care home when you visit, please ensure all tests are reported to our Unique Organisation Number (UON). How to do this is detailed on the next page.
- Proof of a negative result may include an **e-mail** or **text from NHS Test and Trace** or a date stamped photo of the test cartridge itself.
- Please remember that you must continue to adhere to all other infection prevention control measures including regular hand washing and wearing PPE

Our Unique Organisation Number (UON) is:

Step-by-step reporting instructions for visitors to adult social care settings self-testing at home.

1	Go to <u>www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result</u> or call 119 .			
2	Select 'Myself' when asked who you are reporting a result for.			
3	You can choose to continue 'without an account', or, 'create an account'.			
Creating an account will save your details each time you report a test result. Creating an account only takes 2 minutes and you'll save 5 minutes when reporting each test result				
4	If continuing without an account, select, ' A social care service' , when asked who the test was for.			
5	Select, 'I'm visiting someone who gets care or support'.			
6	Enter the Unique Organisation Number (UON) of the care setting you are intending to visit.			
The UON should already have been provided to you by the setting manager.				
7	Check the details of the organisation are correct.			
8	Enter 'Today' when asked when the test was taken –please test on the day of your visit.			
9	Enter the ID number printed on the plastic test strip. You can also scan the QR code on the test strip if you are using a mobile device.			
10	Enter your personal details and follow the remaining steps to complete the process.			

If you have any questions, call our 119 helpline