

**By e-mail**

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14 June 2021

Dear Visitor

## **Self-test Lateral Flow Device Testing for Visitors to Care Homes in Northern Ireland**

The Chief Medical Officer, Dr Michael McBride recently announced the introduction of a programme to offer Visitors the opportunity to self-test for COVID-19 using Lateral Flow Device (LFD) tests prior to visiting in Care Homes.

Visiting is a central part of care home life and is crucially important for maintaining the health, wellbeing and quality of life for residents and their friends and families. With this in mind, Lateral Flow tests will now be offered to all visitors as an additional infection prevention control measure. Testing is optional and visiting will not be restricted if you chose not to take the test, however it is hoped that where possible, visitors will participate in this programme.

Whilst testing is voluntary the more people who participate in the testing programme the more likely we are to identify those who may 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.

The tests are quick and simple to use and can be undertaken in the visitor's own home prior to visiting the care home. Packs of tests may be collected at the Care Home where staff will explain the process to you and ensure you are confident in how the tests should be used and the results registered. Visitors will be asked to complete 2 LFD tests per week and your consent will also be sought to store your data in line with data protection laws. Full instructions are ***Improving Your Health and Wellbeing***


provided in the test kits and further information is also available on the PHA website at [Testing for visitors to care homes](#)

Please remember that while testing visitors can reduce the risk associated with visiting, it does not completely remove the risk of infection. When used alongside robust Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) measures such as Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and handwashing, it can support care homes to safely maintain a balance between infection control and the vital benefits of visiting to the health and wellbeing of residents. **All visitors are strongly encouraged to use the LFD tests prior to visiting Care Homes.**

Friends and relatives have a very important role and responsibility to help Care Homes keep their loved ones safe. Please think of yourself as part of a team with the care home staff. By taking a test you will be playing your part in helping to protect not just your loved one, but all the people with whom they share their home, from the risk of infection.

In the event of an outbreak in a care home please note that, apart from exceptional circumstances, visits will not be allowed.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Olive MacLeod". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'O'.

**Olive MacLeod**  
**Interim Chief Executive**