

By email

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6 July 2021

Dear Hospice Manager

Self-test Lateral Flow Device (LFD) Testing for Visitors to Hospice Settings in Northern Ireland

This letter and attached documentation outlines the actions that hospices should now put into place to implement self-testing for COVID-19 using Lateral Flow Devices (LFDs) for visitors to hospice settings in Northern Ireland. 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 voluntary however, the more people who participate in the testing programme the more likely we are to identify individuals who may be positive but not have symptoms.

Please read the documentation carefully and encourage all visitors over the age of 16 to your hospice to participate in this LFD testing programme. Arrangements have been made with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) London to facilitate visitors to all hospices in Northern Ireland to access a supply of Lateral Flow Device tests. Tests will be available to be drawn down from the 7th July. Visitors will be able to use the LFD tests in their own homes twice a week as an additional infection prevention control measure prior to visiting the hospice.

The tests to be used in this programme come in packs of 7 tests and hospices are asked to provide a supply of tests to visitors who have booked to visit a patient in their care and wish to participate in the visitor testing programme. The number of packs provided to each visitor will be at the discretion of the hospice manager, based on frequency of visiting. Instructions on how to initiate the

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programme by drawing down supplies of the LFD tests is included in the attached guidance document.

Hospices are asked to ensure that all visitors participating in the programme are provided with clear instructions on how to use the LFD tests and register the result. All visitors will be required to provide informed consent before participating in the programme. Alternatives for visitors who would wish to participate with testing but have been assessed as not being able to complete the testing or result registration process themselves. Options are outlined on page 11 of the guidance document.

More detailed guidance on the steps listed below is included in the attached document which is also available on the Public Health Agency (PHA) website by clicking on the following link:

[Testing for visitors to hospices | HSC Public Health Agency \(hscni.net\)](#)

- Information about LFD tests
- Scope of LFD testing protocol for visitors to Hospices
- Drawing down and replenishing stocks of LFD tests
- Frequency of LFD testing
- Raising awareness and encouraging uptake
- Consent to participate
- Supporting familiarisation with the testing process (including supporting Visitors who cannot self-test)
- Results
- Registration of LFD tests
- Supporting visitors who cannot self-test
- Where to get more information
- Managing a positive result
- Record keeping

Information on where to access further information is also included in the guidance document.

Recognising that it will take some time for both visitors and hospices to get used to the process, the PHA are hosting a number of 'Drop-in' clinics for care homes and hospices via ECHO to add further support. If you have not already received notification about how to join these events, please contact Heather.reid@hscni.net or Kathy.Fodey@hscni.net

Thank you for supporting this initiative.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Aidan Dawson', written in a cursive style.

Aidan Dawson
Chief Executive

cc Dr Stephen Bergin, PHA
Rodney Morton, PHA