

**BY EMAIL**  
Hospice managers

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Date 22 April 2022

Dear Hospice Manager

**UPDATED ASYMPTOMATIC COVID-19 TESTING ARRANGEMENTS FOR  
HOSPICES FROM MONDAY 25 APRIL 2022**

Thank you for your ongoing commitment and participation in the COVID-19 testing strategy for the hospice sector, which has been vital in helping to keep service users and staff as safe as possible. Testing, alongside other Infection, Prevention and Control (IPC) measures, continue to play an important role in continuing to keep patients and staff safe.

We have now entered a different phase of the pandemic. Whilst daily case numbers continue to be high, the risk of serious illness, hospitalisation and death for those who contract COVID-19 is now much lower than during previous waves. This is because we have successfully delivered a huge vaccination and first booster programme. A second 'Spring 2022' booster programme is currently underway for individuals who are eligible and we continue to utilise innovative antiviral treatments. These advances will remain key as we move forward together.

The Department of Health published the COVID-19 Test, Trace and Protect Transition Plan on 24 March 2022. The Transition Plan sets out a more targeted approach to testing, with a focus on supporting those at highest risk of serious illness. The Plan is available at the following link:

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/health/Test-Trace-Transition-Plan.pdf>

The Plan explains that changes will be introduced on a phased basis from 22 April 2022, with further planned changes taking place during a period of

transition through to a steady state for testing from the end of June 2022 onwards.

The main purpose of this letter is to provide an update on **asymptomatic testing arrangements** that is, testing of those (staff or visitors) who do not have symptoms, which will come into effect from **Monday 25 April 2022 onwards**. The table below sets out the current asymptomatic testing arrangements in hospices, and the new testing arrangements for those who do not have symptoms, to be deployed from 25 April 2022 onwards.

<b>Group</b>	<b>Current Guidance</b>	<b>New Guidance effective from Monday 25 April 2022</b>
Permanent Hospice Staff  (Agency staff should follow the same testing pattern)	Weekly Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) testing.  Lateral Flow Device (LFD) testing pre shift.	<b>Testing Pattern:</b> LFD testing to be undertaken twice weekly.  LFD tests should be taken 3 to 4 days apart, pre shift. If a member of staff is only working 2 days per week, they should take a LFD test on these days before beginning work.  <b>Test Type:</b> SureScreen nasal only test kits.
Visitors	LFD test minimum twice weekly.	<b>Testing Pattern:</b> Should undertake twice weekly LFD testing.  <b>Test Type:</b> Orient Gene or ACON Flowflex nasal only test kits.
Visiting Professionals (HSC and	LFD test before visiting a hospice (1 LFD test per day).	<b>Testing Pattern:</b> Should undertake twice weekly LFD testing.



Group	Current Guidance	New Guidance effective from Monday 25 April 2022
non-HSC)		<b>Test Type:</b> Orient Gene or ACON Flowflex nasal only test kits.

Hospices should continue to use the Salesforce channel to place orders for LFD test kits.

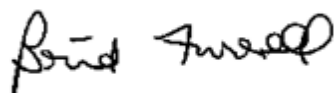
Arrangements are currently being put in place to allow Hospices to order LFD tests kits for their visitors through the Salesforce channel. In the interim, visitors should be directed to the NI Direct website which provides information on how to order LFD test kits online for delivery to their own home, or alternatively collecting LFD test kits from participating pharmacies across Northern Ireland. People should not use the pharmacy service to collect lateral flow tests if they have symptoms of COVID-19

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-testing>

If you have any queries in relation to the content of this communication please contact [Trudy.Brown@hscni.net](mailto:Trudy.Brown@hscni.net) or [Wendy.Thornton@hscni.net](mailto:Wendy.Thornton@hscni.net).

Thank you for your continuing support.

Yours sincerely



**Dr Brid Farrell**  
**Deputy Director of Public Health**

cc

SPPG Chief Executive  
 HSC Trust Chief Executives  
 RQIA Chief Executive

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