

The following key messages are aimed at GP practices, PCN Directors, Primary Care Leads, Practice Managers and Practice Staff and Community Pharmacists and relate to COVID19 testing and vaccination delivery

Current Issues and actions:

From the 1st of April 2022 there will be a number of guidance updates issued to assist with adapting to “Living with COVID19”. The first of those guidance was released this week, which sets out the approach to delivering the UK Health Security Agency’s (UKHSA) advice in relation to staff and patient testing. Although the general public will not be offered COVID-19 tests routinely if symptomatic, there may be some instances where a clinician will want to offer a COVID-19 test as part of a diagnostic pathway.

Patient Testing:

Inpatients in a healthcare setting

- Testing for asymptomatic inpatients on day 3 and days 5-7 of their stay should now be undertaken by lateral flow device (LFD). Trusts can order a supply of LFDs for this use case from UKHSA via the trust’s usual ordering route
- There will be no variant of concern genotyping of positive samples in NHS laboratories
- Other than locally determined specific use cases, visitors to hospital (including women and their birth partners attending for routine antenatal care, and end of life visitors) should not be tested
- Patients requiring clinical decision for their treatment pathway, immunocompromised patients who move beds, patients on discharge to other care settings and outbreak testing will remain as is requiring PCR tests.

Patients on admission to a healthcare setting

- Asymptomatic patients requiring emergency admission to a mental health unit, and NHS patients in mental health and learning disability settings returning from a period of planned leave should be tested using LFDs. Trusts can order a supply of LFDs for this use case from UKHSA via the trust’s usual ordering route
- Planned elective admissions should be tested using LFDs, in advance of admission. Patients should be directed to the gov.uk website to order their tests, where they will be asked to confirm that they have a planned upcoming admission
- Testing for all asymptomatic patients requiring emergency/unplanned admission via emergency departments or via any other route and women admitted to a labour ward will still require PCR tests.

Patients in the community

- All NHS patients in a community or primary care setting requiring a test by a clinician to support clinical decisions during their care and treatment pathway should be offered a lateral flow device (LFD) test as part of their usual diagnostic pathway. Patients should be directed to the gov.uk website to order their tests, where they will be asked to confirm that their clinician has requested this
- High risk patients in the community identified for COVID-19 MAB/Antiviral treatment will continue to access tests from UKHSA.

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Staff Testing:

- NHS patient facing staff should continue to test twice weekly when asymptomatic. LFD tests will continue to be available through the gov.uk portal for NHS staff working in a patient-facing role
- Symptomatic NHS staff should test themselves using LFDs
- Staff who are household contacts of a positive COVID-19 case will now be able to continue to work as normal if they remain asymptomatic and continue to test twice weekly. They will no longer be required to have a PCR test in order to return to work.
- Staff should undertake COVID-19 tests on an ad hoc basis if instructed by their employer or director of public health in specific circumstances. Staff will be notified via their line management structure if this applies to them
- Staff who test positive should continue to follow the current return to work guidance.
- Staff undertaking COVID-19 tests as part of a research study (e.g., SIREN) should follow the protocols of their study. Please contact your local study coordinator for further details.

General Testing Update:

- Difficulties around NHS, Health and Social Care and Primary care staff being able to access lateral flow testing kits via the national .gov portal is much improved now. Staff are asked to continue to access test kits from the .Gov site where there are test kits ringfenced for NHS staff working in a patient-facing role
- **Lateral Flow Test Kits for Vaccination Sites:** Please note that staff should be accessing test kits via the national government website and should be testing and reporting before attending site. Order: <https://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests> and Report: Report a COVID-19 rapid lateral flow test result - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).
- **Lateral Flow Instructions in other languages:** SEL have successfully managed to petition for the 3 main languages used by Afghanistan's to support the many other translations already available. These can now be found on the government website: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-self-test-help>
- Any testing questions please contact Avril Satchwell; Head of SEL CCG Covid Testing @ avril.satchwell@nhs.net or the wider SEL Testing Team @: selccg.covidtesting@nhs.net