

**Public Health Link**

**From the Chief Medical Officer for Wales**

**Distribution:** As Appendix 1

**From:** Dr Frank Atherton, Chief Medical Officer for Wales

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**Reference:** CEM/CMO/2021/8

**Category:** Immediate (cascade within 24 hours)

**Title**: **Lateral Flow Devices (LFDs) for visiting professionals to care homes**

Dear colleagues,

**Background**

Ensuring our most vulnerable individuals are protected during these unprecedented times is paramount. As we have seen since the pandemic began, few are as vulnerable as our care home residents and so it is vital we have in place robust measures to protect their health and wellbeing. In doing so, we also protect the wider NHS in Wales, enabling safer hospital admissions and discharge and prioritising the safety of our health and social care workforces across the country.

On 7 January the Chief Medical Officer for Wales and Deputy Director General Health and Social Services, Albert Heaney, issued guidance on the Lateral Flow Device (LFD) testing that should be in place in respect of care homes in Wales to minimise the risk from visitors and visiting professionals. It was advised that in respect of alert levels three and four, routine testing of visiting professionals to care homes was now recommended.

Care homes have been asked to take a risk based approach for example in relation to emergency care staff or ambulance staff (or any end of life visitors) for whom awaiting a test result would add significant risk or detrimental impact.

**Current position**

Whilst the wider roll-out of LFD testing twice per week of public-facing health and social care workers in all settings and services is now underway, urgent work is being undertaken to put in place a digital solution to register the test kits and record the results for contact tracing through the CRM to support LFD testing to all cohorts of staff. Pending the full roll-out of the programme, the advice is that any public-facing health or social care professional who is not part of a regular asymptomatic testing programme but is visiting a care home should be asked by the care home to undertake an LFD test if they have not been tested in the previous 4 days.

We recognise that the dissemination of this guidance has not reached all frontline visiting staff and that there have been some instances in which staff have, regrettably, been unable to enter a care home. This was never the intention and we apologise this messaging was not better communicated to all whom it could affect.

**The LFD process in care homes**

Full visitor guidance can be accessed here: [content.govdelivery.com/attachments/UKWALES\_CSSIW\_INT/2020/12/11/file\_attachments/1623574/LFD%20Visitor%20Testing%20Guidance%20pack%20%20Roll%20out%20in%20Wales%20Dec%2011-20%20%20final%20amends%20v2-HR.pdf](https://content.govdelivery.com/attachments/UKWALES_CSSIW_INT/2020/12/11/file_attachments/1623574/LFD%20Visitor%20Testing%20Guidance%20pack%20%20Roll%20out%20in%20Wales%20Dec%2011-20%20%20final%20amends%20v2-HR.pdf)

Full care home guidance can be accessed here: [Care Home LFD Testing of Visitors Guidance Roll out in Wales Dec 11-20 final amends v2-HR.pdf (govdelivery.com)](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fcontent.govdelivery.com%2Fattachments%2FUKWALES_CSSIW_INT%2F2020%2F12%2F11%2Ffile_attachments%2F1623523%2FCare%2520Home%2520LFD%2520Testing%2520of%2520Visitors%2520Guidance%2520Roll%2520out%2520in%2520Wales%2520Dec%252011-20%2520final%2520amends%2520v2-HR.pdf&data=04%7C01%7CPaul.Labourne%40gov.wales%7C82c4b6702deb49ce264408d8c8468be4%7Ca2cc36c592804ae78887d06dab89216b%7C0%7C0%7C637479552598340063%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=kxLPqFUroTTzR4E%2F5dCu34hEE5INuZLLX%2FKvEGEhzkc%3D&reserved=0)

**How will the test be carried out?** Care homes have been provided with a supply of LFD test kits which can be used for testing of professionals. Care home staff have received training in utilising the LFD tests and should be made available to test visiting professionals, if the professional is not already subject to regular testing.

Pre-arranged visits will help to shorten the time between arrival and admittance, ensuring both the tests and staff able to carry out the tests are available.

**How will the test be recorded?** Once your result is determined, your test kit needs to be registered online using a self-test registration form. You can complete this form using your own mobile phone or a mobile device provided by the home.

The online form links the visitor to their test kit barcode and test result. The form will ask for the individual’s personal details, barcode of the LFD, and whether the result was positive, negative or void. Results are not sent to The Wales Test Trace Protect Service system, but notifications will be sent to you as the visitors via SMS or e-mail and this can be used as a pass for future visits over the following 4 days to any care home.

**How long does the test take?** Completing the test and waiting for the result should take no more than half an hour; a negative result will be required in order to allow entry to the care home. We understand that this adds additional time and further considerations for workload planning and visit scheduling but the importance of identifying anyone who could potentially carry Covid-19 into a care home is paramount.

**How will the test result be known?** The care home visitor testing programme has a digital upload of LFD results. Individual results can be uploaded by the visiting professional directly and they will then receive a notification of their test result by text message, which can be used as a ‘pass’ for subsequent visits to care homes.

**How often will visiting professionals need to be tested?** It is recommended atwice-weekly at up to a 4 day interval a LFD test is required for staff who undertake multiple or regular visits to care homes over most days of the week. The ‘pass’ provided by the test notification message should be considered valid for all care homes over the following 4 day period.

**What action will visiting professionals who test positive need to take?** If a visiting professional receives a positive LFD result they should immediately isolate themselves and book a RT-PCR test through the Gov portal or contact their health board to book an immediate confirmatory RT-PCR test at a local Community Testing Unit (CTU). This will usually occur later that day.

**Will visiting professionals need to isolate if a positive test is received?** Prior to the confirmatory RT-PCR test, those with a positive LFD test should isolate immediately avoiding any contact with others. Following a confirmatory RT PCR test the individual should return home directly and isolate until they receive the result.

**Does the LFD result feed into the Test, Trace, Protect (TTP) system?** No, the results of the LFD test are not yet fed into the TTP system so professionals will need to organise a confirmatory RT-PCR test and self-isolate until a negative test is returned.

**What is the advice on false negative results?** We recognise that there is a higher risk of LFDs producing false negative results compared to RT-PCR tests, as such alongside the added precaution of twice-weekly testing, protocols relating to the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), hand hygiene and social distancing where possible will still need to be fully observed.

Yours sincerely



**DR FRANK ATHERTON**

Appendix 1

To: NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership to forward to:

 All General Practitioners for information

To: Health Boards and NHS Trusts:

Chief Executives

Medical Directors for onward distribution to:

Assistant Medical Directors

Directors of Primary Care

Heads of Primary Care

Directors of Therapies and Health Science

Nurse Directors

GPC Wales

Community Pharmacy Wales

Optometry Wales

British Dental Association

Directors of Public Health

Cc: Public Health Wales: