

## **HEMOCARE WORKERS TO BE TESTED WEEKLY FOR COVID-19**

- Registered carers looking after people in their own homes will be able to access weekly coronavirus tests
- Care providers will be able to book tests for their staff through an online portal from Monday
- The rollout marks the next stage in the Government's expansion of mass testing

Care workers looking after people in their own homes will be offered weekly coronavirus tests from Monday the Government announced today.

Those working for CQC registered providers will receive weekly PCR tests to administer at home, which will help identify more asymptomatic cases and protect care users who are more vulnerable to the virus.

Regular testing will give workers peace of mind by picking up on any asymptomatic transmission and protect those they care for.

The expansion of testing to homecare workers is the next phase in the rollout of mass testing across the country, and has been made possible by the huge increase in testing capacity in recent weeks. Nearly 35 million tests have now been processed in the UK since the service began and this week the government announced two new 'mega labs', which will add a further 600,000 to daily UK testing capacity in early 2021.

### **Minister for Care, Helen Whately said:**

"Homecare workers have been doing an incredible job throughout the pandemic, caring day in and day out and going the extra mile to keep people they care for safe from Covid.

"As our testing capacity continues to expand, I'm glad we're able to take this next step and make regular testing available to Homecare workers. Now, as well as having PPE, Homecare workers will be able to take a weekly test to check they don't have Coronavirus.

"We now have the largest testing capacity in Europe, so we're using this to protect those who are at greater risk if they catch Covid."

Proactively testing asymptomatic individuals helps to identify those who unknowingly have the virus and enables those who test positive and their contacts to self-isolate. This is crucial to break the chains of transmission of the virus.

All registered homecare agencies will be contacted with details of how to apply for test kits for their carers next week. Homecare agencies will be responsible for ordering and distributing tests to all homecare workers for them to conduct at home on a weekly basis, testing on a Thursday, Friday, Saturday or Sunday. This approach will maximise capacity available in our laboratories.

We will be expanding testing further to all other homecare workers, including live in carers and personal assistants in a phased rollout. We will provide further details in due course about how these groups access testing.

A month's worth of test kits will be delivered to care providers directly who can distribute tests to their staff using the same channels used to distribute PPE.

Over 120,000 tests are already ring fenced for social care every single day, and a testing pilot has begun in care homes this week to support visiting ahead of a national rollout starting in December.

Work is also currently being carried out to explore making the rapid 30-minute lateral flow tests, currently only conducted by dedicated trained personnel, available for self-administration at home. This would allow workers to quickly find out if they are COVID-19 positive and have to isolate.

**Interim Executive Chair of the National Institute for Health Protection Baroness Dido Harding said:**

“NHS Test and Trace has worked tirelessly to increase capacity for testing achieving its target of capacity for 500,000 tests by the end of October. This is testament to a huge amount of work up and down the country by unsung heroes in labs, distribution centres, test centres and manufacturing plants.

“I am delighted that this capacity means that we can now roll-out regular, weekly testing to our domiciliary care staff. This has long been a priority for us and it will ensure greater protection to this vital, often unseen workforce and the people they care for.”

Our approach to testing health and care workers is guided by the latest scientific advice, which finds that regular testing of people without symptoms can be most effective among populations where prevalence is higher and where individuals are more at risk from coronavirus.

The government continues to expand asymptomatic testing for Covid-19, with the rollout of lateral flow test kits across schools, universities, local authorities, and whole area pilots in Liverpool and Merthyr Tydfil, Wales.

This expansion in testing is the latest measure the Government has introduced as part of wider ongoing support throughout the pandemic.

The government has made £4.6 billion available to councils in England so they can address pressures on local services caused by the pandemic, including in adult social care, on top of a £1.1bn Infection Control Fund and free PPE supply for care homes and domiciliary care.

Guidance for homecare providers can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-testing-for-homecare-workers>