

Lewis.Macdonald MSP
Convener
Health & Sport Committee

By Email.

2 December 2020

Dear Lewis,

I am writing to you today to provide you with two updates relating to adult social care and in particular care homes.

The first relates to testing. You know that I recently published the Strategic Testing Framework, which sets out plans to prioritise further testing across adult social care. This includes designated visitors to care homes, professional visitors to care homes and the care at home workforce, including adult residential services. I updated Parliament on 25th November, setting out the delivery routes and associated timelines for introduction of lateral flow testing (LFT) through the Innova SARS-Cov-2 Antigen Test IFU technology. For the pathway to support Designated Visitors to Care Homes, I informed the Parliament that delivery would start with a small number early care home adopters on 7 December, followed by a roll out across all care homes from 11 January. Arrangements were also outlined for temporary PCR testing for designated visitors to care homes over weeks commencing 21 and 28 December and 4 January to support Christmas and New Year visiting.

I am very pleased to advise you today that we are now able to significantly accelerate the delivery plan for designated visitors. The roll out of LFT kits to **all** care homes across Scotland will start on the 14 December following a compressed, but very important, roll out to the early adopters to test the web based training and guidance and allow both to be finessed.

You will appreciate that there is a significant amount of work required across national organisations, care homes and Health and Social Care Partnerships to support delivery and implementation. There will be undoubtedly be learning and support required along the way at a local level as we move to full implementation and we will work with local partners to ensure this in place. I will still make the necessary arrangements for PCR testing of visitors to be made available to care homes who, for logistical reasons, may not be able to deliver LFT over the Christmas period.

I believe that the introduction of visitor testing is positive for care homes, residents and their families, relatives and friends. This will provide an important layer of additional protection for

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG
www.gov.scot



INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE

Accredited
Until 2020



residents, staff and visitors and will complement the essential measures such as Infection Prevention and Control and PPE, already in place

I am mindful of the additional ask of care home staff and will continue to monitor this with support from Scottish Care, CCPS and COSLA. Initially the roll out of testing for designated visitors will support the current guidance as issued on 12 October for one designated visitor per week. I will however review this once the LFT testing is fully embedded and the UK wide access to stock of Innova SARS-Cov-2 Antigen Test IFU testing kits allows.

The second update relates to a review of the care home closure period following an outbreak. To date we have advised that care homes should remain closed to new admissions and visitors for 28 days following the last positive case or symptoms. In consultation with the Directors of Public Health and Public Health Scotland we are recommending that this is reduced to 14 days from the last date of COVID symptoms subject to a Health Protection Team (HPT) assessment and confirmation of safety. This brings the advice in line with advice from Health Protection Scotland / Antimicrobial Resistance and Healthcare Associated Infection (ARHAI) Scotland who declare an outbreak over after 14 days if no new cases or symptoms develop – with a HPT risk assessment.

The review will be a welcome development for residents in care homes and their visitors, allowing care homes to open to visitors, safely, in a shorter period of time.

I hope this update is helpful.

Kind regards,

JEANE FREEMAN

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG
www.gov.scot



INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE

Accredited
Until 2020

