



Department
of Health &
Social Care

Alex Cooper
SRO
National Testing Programme

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21 Aug 2020

To: Directors of Public Health and Directors of Adult Social Services

CC: Local Authority Chief Executives

Dear Directors Public Health and Directors of Adults Social Services,

I am writing to notify you of our campaign to **promote weekend testing in care homes and ask for your help in promoting this in your local area.**

As you will be aware, the national testing programme has faced a variety of challenges in relation to testing capacity which, as announced on 31st July, has meant that we have had to push back the dates for rolling out regular testing to care homes. These issues are also affecting the turnaround times for test results. We are writing to ask for your help.

The vast majority of care home testing is carried out during the week. This means the labs have to be able to cope with a significant surge of swabs during the week, and then there is under-used lab capacity on weekends. Any capacity not used at the weekend is lost – we cannot roll it over into weekdays. The amount of care homes that test during the middle of the week reduces the lab capacity that we are able to use. This surge of testing during the week also means that test results can take longer because of the volume of tests that need processing at that time.

If care homes undertook testing more evenly throughout the week, we could test more people overall. Therefore we are asking care homes to consider testing at weekends where possible to help us get a test to everyone who needs it. Additionally, if homes test at the weekend, as the labs are less busy this should mean they receive results quicker.

Our request to you is that you encourage care homes in your area to test on a weekend wherever possible, both those already testing and those waiting for kits. All care homes who placed an order for test kits before 14 August will be contacted this week by NHS Test and Trace, asking them to commit to weekend testing if they are able to do so. All homes placing an order on or after 14 August are asked to commit to weekend testing when placing their order.

We will monitor the list of care homes who have committed to weekend testing to ensure that they are doing so. Where they are not we may reach out to you for support. Where they are, we will use any increased capacity as a result of this campaign to prioritise homes committing to weekend testing for their kit replenishment, where appropriate.

My team will be hosting a series of webinars for Directors of Public Health and Directors of Adult Social Services and your teams to explain the weekend testing campaign and detail the role that we need you to play in ensuring its success. These webinars will be hosted on

Tuesday 25th and Wednesday 26th August at 10:00am; you can sign up to attend them using this link:

<https://event.on24.com/wcc/r/2600042/0238F37C6FA2C85FAEC4C59D3088B48C/1447631>

Please make every effort to attend one of these webinars as your involvement will be key to unlocking full system capacity.

We will also be writing today to care home providers today to explain the importance of weekend testing and ask for their commitment to testing over a full seven days wherever possible to make full use of the testing capacity.

Thank you for your support in this important campaign.

As always, thank you for your continued involvement in, and support for, the testing programme and we sincerely apologise for the delays to the planned rollout.

Yours



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