

Care Home Managers

Date: 31st December 2021
Our Ref: DM/RO/RT
Enquiries to: Health Protection Team
Direct Line: 0300 790 6264
Email: health.protection@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk

Dear colleague,

As you will be aware, the number of cases of COVID-19 has been rapidly increasing in Scotland, including Lothian, over the last month. This has resulted in a very large number of social care settings with cases among staff and residents. The high number of facilities with cases requiring some degree of support has meant that the Health Protection Team (HPT) has been inundated with enquiries.

Please take the following steps if you have a case or an outbreak for which you need help.

Making Calls/Enquiries

- **Please do not email or phone simply to let us know you have a case of COVID.** If you have a case in a staff member or resident, please follow the guidance in this email, complete the details in the attached risk assessment and then email to HPT.
- Before telephoning or emailing, please consider whether you have implemented all the necessary control measures, from isolation to hand hygiene, as per national guidance. If you are confident that you have done everything, please check that you have looked for answers to your question on the NHS Lothian Care Homes and Social Care webpages (see sources of information below). Once you have done that consider options to discuss with the HPT when you make the call.
- Please only email HPT with questions if you really cannot find an answer in the documents and guidance below OR if you identify a group of three or more staff who appear to have caught Covid-19 through close contact in their workplace.

Whole Home Testing

- We are also making changes to the requirements and process for Whole Home Testing. We would therefore request that if you are advised that Whole Home Testing is required, and you have the capacity to take swabs from your residents and service users that you do so. Where possible the Health Protection Team through the Community Outreach Testing Team (COTT) will assist with this.

- We will now only request Whole Home Testing by prioritising homes where there is a possibility that transmission has occurred within the home. These include situations where there are possible links between staff cases; and/or situations where there are resident cases or a combination of staff and resident cases. No Whole Home Testing will be required where transmission in staff happened in the community.

Care Home Visits

In situations where there is a confirmed outbreak, visiting should be allowed in exceptional circumstance. In those circumstances a risk assessment needs to be undertaken on a case-by-case basis.

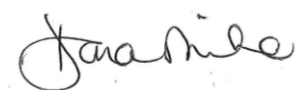
Sources of guidance:

- If you have any difficulty in completing the risk assessment, you can find advice and links to the wider PHS and Scottish Government guidance on the NHS Lothian Care Homes and Social Care webpages <https://services.nhslothian.scot/CareHomes/Pages/Latest-News.aspx>
- If a member of your staff is a contact of a positive case, please read the guidance on what to do here: <https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/test-and-protect/coronavirus-covid-19-self-isolation-exemption-for-health-and-social-care-workers>. Please pay close attention to the section entitled: 'When does exemption from self-isolation for work apply?'

The email address for the health protection team is health.protection@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk

Thank you again for your continued cooperation with our teams. We appreciate the time and effort that you have put in since the beginning of the pandemic in dealing with the challenges it has brought and we wish you a Happy New Year.

Yours sincerely,



Dona Milne
Director of Public Health and Health Policy
NHS Lothian