



Memo: Serial testing of staff in Residential Care Settings for Older Persons

The National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE) have requested that the Health Service Executive (HSE) continues the programme of serial RNA/PCR testing for Covid-19 for two cycles of testing of all staff working in Residential Care Facilities (RCFs) for Older Persons. The revised programme will continue with all staff being tested every 2 weeks commencing from week beginning 10 August 2020.

As with the previous programme, testing will be performed on dedicated days with each facility provided with a specific day, every 2 weeks, for the collection of swabs.

The HSE appreciated the collaboration of all stakeholders in the successful delivery of the previous serial testing programme including RCF management and staff, Public Health teams, local CHO area teams, the National Ambulance Service, laboratory and logistics teams, Nursing Homes Ireland and the technology partners. During this programme a number of lessons were learned which have helped inform us as we design this new programme of serial testing. This memo sets out these changes and details the required actions to ensure the successful execution of this programme.

Frequency of testing

Testing will take place at each Residential Care Facilities (RCFs) for Older Persons every 2 weeks.

Dates of testing

Testing will be conducted on weekdays with swabs collected by courier on a nominated day for each facility between Tuesday and Thursday every 2 weeks. Approximately, half of the facilities in each CHO area will be tested each week, meaning that testing of some facilities will start during the week of the 10 August 2020 and others will start during the week of 17 August 2020.

You will be notified in the week commencing 3 August 2020 of the nominated date and time for first swab collection and this day/time will serve as the nominated collection slot for the duration of the programme.

Process for management of data associated with persons to be tested

During the previous programme, a technology solution was developed which allows residential facilities to directly manage changes to the data for their staff on the SwiftQueue system. This system will be used for all facilities for this new programme.

Most facilities have already received access to the SwiftQueue system and have been trained in how to use it. If you have not received access for your facility, the following steps should be followed:

- Each facility is asked to nominate an individual to get access to SwiftQueue
- This person will need to sign a HSE mandated *Confidentiality Agreement for SwiftQueue COVID19 Referral and Appointment Scheduling* (enclosed with memo).

- This form should be submitted (photo acceptable) to appointment.support@hse.ie who will grant access. We ask you to do this as soon as possible
- A training manual will be provided to all users to detail how to use the system. This will include clear step by step instructions and screen shots to demonstrate how to complete each type of change.

Once logged into the system, you will have full access to the data associated with all staff that were scheduled for testing in the last round of the recently completed serial testing programme. You will then have the ability to amend data (e.g. change contact numbers), add new staff members for testing and remove staff members who are no longer working at the facility.

Feedback from users to date has confirmed that the system is very user-friendly and easy to follow. Additional training sessions are being organised to walk through the system and its use. These will take place as follows:

Date & Time	Link to join training session
Tuesday 4th August 2020 2.30pm - 3.00pm	Join Microsoft Teams Meeting< https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting_ZGJmNDA2MmYtZTcyYy00NTc5LW11OWMtMGRjZWRIMTkyMjUz%40thead.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%225f67d4cc-5c90-402d-9d6f-aaf23a4a5c81%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%22f3d0a165-d992-4871-ab24-83f5bc3fff33%22%7d > Telephone : 01 592 3510 Conference ID: 200 093 081#
Wednesday 5th August 2020 10.00am - 10.30am	Join Microsoft Teams Meeting< https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting_ZjczYjg4YTgtYjlyZi00NmI4LTk4NTYtYTY4NTM5ZjJhZmYz%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%225f67d4cc-5c90-402d-9d6f-aaf23a4a5c81%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%22f3d0a165-d992-4871-ab24-83f5bc3fff33%22%7d > Telephone : 01 592 3510 Conference ID: 895 616 197#
Thursday 6th August 2020 1.00pm - 1.30pm	Join Microsoft Teams Meeting< https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting_MzgyM2U5MTEtYzFIZC00NjUxLWExNTgtODE5ZDc5M2JjODM2%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%225f67d4cc-5c90-402d-9d6f-aaf23a4a5c81%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%22f3d0a165-d992-4871-ab24-83f5bc3fff33%22%7d > Telephone : 01 592 3510 Conference ID: 657 646 395#

Requirements for when data changes are to be made

It is the responsibility of the facility to ensure that all data is up to date and that all required data changes are made. The only means of doing this is through the facilities direct access to SwiftQueue.

We ask that you make changes to the data as soon as possible. In order to guarantee that changes (new staff added, changes to contact details) are incorporated into any testing cycle, the changes should be made at least 6 days before swab collection. This timeline gives the local CHO team the necessary time to prepare and distribute labels and associated documentation to you to facilitate testing. Data changes made less than 6 days before swab collection will only be incorporated into subsequent testing cycles.

Swabbing supplies & Timing of testing

Swab testing kits and associated administration (labels and packing lists) will be provided to your facility a number of days in advance, which will allow you to organise and schedule testing with staff members. We recommend that testing is undertaken no more than 48 hours before sample collection. Samples should be stored in a cool, dry location until courier pick-up.

Conduct of testing

At this stage, the vast majority of facilities are independently swabbing their staff. Ideally, we wish to see all facilities become independent in swabbing. This offers the greatest flexibility to your facility to conduct the testing of staff with minimal disruption. The HSE, through the National Ambulance Service, are able to continue to offer some support, but such support will only be available on fixed days for your facility, meaning that all staff will have to attend for testing at very fixed times on fixed days.

Should your facility require support for testing, please liaise with your CHO contacts who will do their best to accommodate this request.

Support materials

A revised SOP will be provided during week of 3 August 2020 to describe revisions to the process. In addition, we will be preparing a training video to guide you through the sample preparation and packaging steps in order to protect samples and minimise issues seen with incorrect packaging. It is important to follow this guidance to minimise the risks of a sample being rendered as unable to be tested. This training will be available during the week of 10 August 2020.

Duration of programme

There will be two rounds of serial testing in each facility (week of 10th Aug and 24th Aug 2020; and week of 17th Aug and 31st Aug 2020). A report from this serial testing programme will be submitted to NPHE for their review and consideration in relation to future serial testing programmes.

Team Support

Please note that the NHTesting@hse.ie email address has been retired and is no longer being monitored. Available support and training materials should be accessed in the first instance in the event of questions. If these materials are insufficient to address your specific queries, then the nominated CHO contact for your facility should be contacted (Monday to Friday, 09.00-17.00).

National Community Testing Team
