# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE** | **Pause in Asymptomatic Testing for Covid-19** |
| **DATE** | **02 September 2022** |
| **BY** | **Eluned Morgan Minister for Health and Social Services** |

Our surveillance data continues to show a decline in the prevalence of Covid-19 in communities and hospitals following the recent wave caused by the BA.4 and BA.5 subtypes of the omicron variant of coronavirus.

Vaccines continue to be our best defence and we have just started to roll out the autumn Covid-19 booster vaccine. Everyone who is eligible will be offered a booster vaccine by December and I would encourage everyone to take up the offer.

As we move into autumn and winter, and respiratory viruses become more common, we can keep each other safe by following simple steps, such as frequent handwashing, staying at home and avoiding contact with others if you have symptoms and wearing a face covering in healthcare settings and crowded indoor places.

Based on the latest available clinical advice about the benefits of asymptomatic testing when the prevalence of coronavirus is lower, from 8 September we will be making changes to our testing arrangements in health and social care.

We will pause regular asymptomatic testing of staff in the following settings:

* the NHS (including independent healthcare providers treating NHS patients)
* social care settings, including care homes and hospice services
* special schools

We will also pause asymptomatic testing for visitors to care homes, visitors to those eligible for Covid-19 treatments and prisoners on admission to prisons.

Under our patient testing framework, decisions about the need for asymptomatic testing for patients will be based on local decisions and a risk assessment, which will based on clinical judgement about the risk to the patient, to others, the nature of the procedure and local prevalence/outbreaks.

We will continue to provide symptomatic testing for patients, those eligible for Covid-19 treatments, health and social care staff, care home residents and prisoners. We will also continue to provide tests for those being discharged from hospital into care homes. For care home residents, prisoners and some patients we are providing multiplex tests that detect Covid-19 and other respiratory viruses.

We will be setting out our approach to respiratory viruses during autumn/winter in October. This will include increasing our surveillance and use of multiplex testing due to the potential threat of a further wave of Covid-19 infections and a challenging respiratory season.

We will continue to review the most recent surveillance data and keep the position on testing under review. Guidance will be updated and shared with the NHS and social care providers before 8 September.

This statement is being issued during recess in order to keep members informed. Should members wish me to make a further statement or to answer questions on this when the Senedd returns I would be happy to do so.