# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **TITLE** | **Coronavirus testing in care homes** |
| **DATE** | **2 May 2020** |
| **BY** | **Health and Social Services Minister, Vaughan Gething AM** |

Our testing policy is based on scientific evidence. We are testing people with symptoms in the following priority areas:

* People admitted to hospitals with suspected coronavirus
* Frontline NHS and social care staff
* Care home residents
* Other critical workers

At present, the evidence does not support blanket testing – it points to testing people who have symptoms and isolating them until the test results come back.

We are learning more about coronavirus every day – the evidence is constantly changing and emerging and we keep it under constant review.

In the case of care homes, where a number of older people are living closely together, many of whom will have underlying health conditions, if the results of the tests are positive, we should assume – and take actions – as if everyone in the home has tested positive.

As April has progressed and as the evidence has continued to develop, we have moved to a position where we have been testing all care home staff and residents when they show symptoms of coronavirus. We have also tested people who are discharged from hospital to a care home, admitted to a care home or transferred from one home to another.

The latest evidence now shows we should extend testing in care homes to manage outbreaks. This means we will be testing all staff and residents in those care homes when an outbreak of coronavirus is identified.

The evidence also suggests there is a greater prevalence of coronavirus in larger care homes, where there are more people living and working.

We are therefore introducing a new, three-stage testing and rapid response to help protect care home residents and staff. This does not rely on testing alone:

* Making it easier to get a test done – The eight new mobile testing units, which will be available from the week beginning May 3, and home testing kits, when they become available, will be focused towards care homes to ensure testing is easily available.
* Targeted testing on outbreak hot spot areas–We will target testing and deploy the mobile units to test all residents in care homes in cases where an outbreak occurs (and potentially in neighbouring care homes) and repeat testing the following week.

Testing will also be available in the largest care homes (those with more than 50 beds) which are at greater risk of experiencing an outbreak because of their size.

* Environmental and hygiene support –we will combine testing with environmental support for care homes when hotspots are identified. Increased cleaning, including the provision of hand sanitiser and increased infection control measures will accompany the testing regime. Updated guidance to support these environmental measures will be provided to the sector.

We will continue to use our testing capacity in care homes to support the diagnosis and the effective treatment of coronavirus.