



Ein cyf/Our ref WQ81028 - WQ81029

Andrew RT Davies MS
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

5 October 2020

Dear Andrew,

Thank you for your Written Questions WQ81028 to me and WQ81029 to the First Minister, both asking for confirmation of the date when we were first told about patients with a positive Covid-19 test were being discharged from hospitals into care homes. I am responding to both written questions.

In our response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Welsh Government has consistently listened and acted upon evidence and advice provided by experts including the Chief Scientific Adviser for Health and the Technical Advisory Cell. As new evidence has emerged, we have taken swift action to revise our approach to prioritise the most vulnerable in our communities and to save lives. It is also important to highlight that although testing in care homes has been central to preventing and managing outbreaks, testing could only support a reduction in infection rates if coupled with actions to promote infection control more generally. Similarly, in order to protect people, clinical and non-clinical staff act in a way that assumes the potential for an individual to be carrying an infection.

The chronology below describes our evidence based approach to hospital discharge and support for care homes during the pandemic, which has been quickly adapted and enhanced in the light of new information as it emerged.

- On 7 April, the Welsh Government published the **COVID-19 Hospital Discharge Service Requirements (Wales) (ver1)**. This guidance did not make reference to testing as a requirement for discharge. This was followed on 8 April by a letter from the Director General of Health and Social Services, Andrew Goodall and Deputy Director General, Albert Heaney, to local authorities, local health boards and regional partnership boards raising awareness of hospital discharge guidance.
- On 9 April, Public Health Wales published **Admission and Care of Residents during COVID-19 Incident in a Residential Care Setting in Wales (Ver 1)**. This version stated on page 3 that patients can be cared for safely if guidance is followed. Page 4 stated negative test is not required prior to transfer/admission to care

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Gohebiaeth.Vaughan.Gething@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Vaughan.Gething@gov.wales

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

home. Section 3 set out information which should be given when person has tested positive for Covid. The guidance also contains details of the wider approach to testing managed by Public Health Wales.

- On 22 April, a joint letter was issued from the Chief Medical Officer and the Deputy Director General of Health and Social Services to registered providers and responsible individuals of care homes. This confirmed testing would be undertaken before hospital discharge and guidance would be updated to reflect the discharge pathways for all patients due to admitted into care homes.
- On 29 April, revision to discharge guidance and flowchart was published, the Public Health Wales guidance for care homes was then revised to be consistent with Welsh Government policy on testing on hospital discharge and requirement for negative test result prior to admission/re-admission to care home.

Since then, prompt action has been taken by Public Health Wales, Swansea University and all health boards in Wales, to assess the impact of our interventions. This is reviewed in the paper due to be published ***Risk factors for outbreaks of COVID-19 in care homes following hospital discharge: a national cohort analysis***. The conclusions drawn by Public Health Wales was that the analyses showed that large homes were at considerably greater risk of outbreaks throughout the epidemic, and after adjusting for care home size, a discharge from hospital was not associated with a significant increase in risk. The analysis is still subject to peer review. A preview has been published on a pre-print website which can be accessed here: <https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2020.08.24.20168955v1>.

As we approach the winter months, our focus on protecting the most vulnerable people in our communities, and particularly people living in care homes will continue to be our top priority. We want to ensure the measures we have introduced to minimise transmission of the virus are maintained until risk of Covid can be reduced over time.

Yours sincerely,



Vaughan Gething AS/MS

Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services