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WELSH HEALTH CIRCULAR

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Enclosures: Appendix 1

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg hefyd / This document is also available in Welsh
Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth a galwadau ffôn yn Gymraeg / We welcome correspondence and telephone calls in Welsh

Changes to accessing Covid-19 lateral flow tests and Covid-19 antiviral treatments from 1 February

Dear Colleagues,

Higher rates of immunisation, natural immunity and improved pharmaceutical treatments, have reduced the severity of Covid-19 infection in Wales and across the UK.

Last spring, routine testing for Covid19 was [paused](#) for health and social care workers, care home residents, and staff and residents in special schools. Only individuals who are at high risk of becoming severely ill due to Covid-19 remain [eligible for free Covid-19 lateral flow tests](#) and [Covid-19 Antiviral treatments](#).

This reduction in testing has also been implemented in the rest of the UK. Therefore, the testing infrastructure managed by the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) on behalf of the four nations is being decommissioned. This means that from 1 February, the gov.uk portals currently being used by individuals and organisations in Wales to order tests and report results will no longer be available.

This letter sets out what is changing, what will remain the same, and how eligible individuals can continue to access testing and treatment.

Eligible individuals in the community

From 1 February, eligible individuals in the community:

- will no longer be able to order lateral flow tests online via the [Gov.uk order lateral flow tests](#) portal. Instead, tests should be collected from participating pharmacies. From 1 February, [individuals will be able to search for participating pharmacies here](#).
- will no longer be able to report their lateral flow tests results on the [Gov.uk results reporting](#) portal. Instead, positive results should be reported directly via [the online self-referral portal](#) or for people who cannot access the online portal, by calling NHS111. Once completed, the relevant health board's antiviral service will make contact as per current processes. This will usually be within 48 hours, but may take longer at weekends and bank holidays. Treatment will be arranged if appropriate.

Eligible residents in care homes and special schools

There will be no change to the way eligible care home residents access Covid-19 treatments. Eligible residents displaying [symptoms of Covid-19](#) should continue to be tested using a multiplex PCR test. Care home staff should liaise with their local Health Board to arrange this as they do currently. Treatment will then be arranged if appropriate. PCR tests are necessary to detect which viruses are present, determine the correct treatment, and to provide valuable genomics material.

A lateral flow test *may* be used if [eligible](#) residents display [symptoms of Covid-19](#) and a more rapid result is required to start Covid-19 anti-viral treatment. This should be in *addition to, and should not replace*, the PCR test.

From 1 February, care home and special school staff will no longer be able to order lateral flow tests online via [Gov.uk order tests for your organisation](#) for eligible individuals within their care. Instead, tests should be collected from participating pharmacies. From 1 February, [care homes will be able to search for participating pharmacies here](#).

Secondary Care

Testing will continue where clinically indicated in secondary care settings. There will be no change to the way Health Boards order their lateral flow tests for clinical use. These should continue to be ordered through NWSSP via the Oracle ordering system.

[Guidance on respiratory viruses including Covid-19 for staff in health, social care and special schools can be found here](#).

Current advice and guidance on [Covid-19 testing](#) and [Covid-19 antiviral treatment](#) on Welsh Government's web pages will be updated from 1 February to reflect the changes detailed within this circular.

Kind regards,



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