

Testing of Personal Assistants for COVID-19

Personal Assistants providing social care support are critical workers and if they become ill with symptoms of Coronavirus, they can access testing for Coronavirus. This means that if they test negative they may be able to return to work sooner and may not have to isolate for the full 7 days.

If the Personal Assistant is self-isolating because a person they live with has symptoms, they can refer the person with symptoms for testing. If the test negative the Personal Assistant may be able to return to work without having to isolate for 14 days.

Notes about testing

- The test is only reliable for those who have symptoms.
- You should get tested in the first 3 days of coronavirus symptoms appearing, although testing is considered effective up until day 5.
- No testing should be undertaken after day 5, unless it's for a specific reason
- By testing the household member(s), we can be more certain that either you should be self-isolating or you can return to work.
- Family members can only be tested if they are aged 5 or over.

If as a result of a personal assistant being ill you are not able to get the support you need, you should contact the Social Work Duty Team on 0131 271 3900. For emergencies outside of normal office hours you should contact emergency Social Work on 0800 731 6969.

Where testing takes place

Local testing is at a drive through site at Edinburgh Airport or there may be an option of attending a mobile testing unit at more local locations.

Home tests

Those with symptoms who have completed a self-referral may have the option, depending on availability, to book a home-test kit. Home-test kits are an option for people who are seeking a test and are unable to attend a drive-through centre.

The option for home testing is covered within the booking process.

How to arrange a test

A Personal Assistant can make a self-referral for themselves or a member of their household who is symptomatic through the self-referral portal on the following website:

<https://self-referral.test-for-coronavirus.service.gov.uk/>

Once they have registered, the Personal Assistant will receive a text offering either an appointment at one of the testing sites or a home testing kit.

Home testing kits

How home testing works:

- If you complete a self-referral and order a home-test kit, the test will be delivered the next day.
- You will self-administer the swab, packing it up as instructed.
- Each kit comes with comprehensive instructions to guide you through how to administer the swab yourself. Test kits come with further instructions and a short video to take you through the process step by step.
- A Royal Mail courier will arrive the day after to collect your test and take it to the lab. The aim is that you will receive your results via text within 48 hours.

Reliability of home testing

Evidence suggests that those with no clinical background or training should be able to secure an effective sample. Full instructions are included with the kit.

International peer-reviewed evidence suggests that self-swabbing is just as effective as securing a valid sample as clinician-administered testing.

Protection of personal data

Amazon and Royal Mail are the commercial partners who are delivering and collecting home testing kits nationwide. They do not have access to the results or any health data.

Test results

Results are sent to you by text and should be with you within 48 hours.

Negative tests and returning to work

Even if the Personal Assistant has had a negative result, it is important to continue to apply caution. If everyone with symptoms who was tested in their household receive a negative result, the employee can return to work if their work cannot be done from home, providing they are well enough, and have not had a fever for 48 hours.

If, after returning to work, they develop symptoms they should follow the NHS Inform guidance and self-isolate. Employees should discuss their return to work with their employer.

Test results and staying safe

The test will confirm if a person who is showing symptoms of the virus - actually has it.

It will not confirm whether they have had it and have now recovered.

It is vital those who test negative continue to follow guidance including precautions related to physical distancing and handwashing. A negative result is only for a point in time – if after a negative result you or your household member continues to feel unwell please refer to NHS Inform guidance.

What happens to the test results?

Results under the UK testing programme are communicated to individuals directly by text message and are intended to be fed back into public health records in due course.

If you require further information or have difficulties accessing testing you can contact the Social Work Duty Team on 0131 271 3900.