



UK Health  
Security  
Agency

3 February 2022

To: Adult social care service providers taking part in the Vivaldi study

**Testing Exemption - Vivaldi Research Care Homes to continue to offer weekly PCR tests for staff.**

Thank you for your ongoing participation in the VIVALDI study. By taking part in this study, you are helping us to answer important questions about COVID-19's impact on the adult social care sector, in order to protect care home residents and staff from the virus.

You will have received a letter on 27 January 2022 that sets out that the asymptomatic staff testing regime will change to pre-shift lateral flow tests and will remove the weekly asymptomatic PCR test by 16 February 2022.

**We are asking that for care homes participating in the VIVALDI study, asymptomatic staff continue to take a weekly PCR test as normal**, *in addition* to the pre-shift daily lateral flow test as stipulated in the revised testing guidance. This is because PCR test results provide additional scientific data that researchers need, to produce insights on the impact of COVID-19 in care homes. Continuing to take weekly PCR tests will allow this vital research to continue, helping to improve our understanding of COVID-19 in care homes and how we can keep staff and residents safe, as the pandemic continues to evolve.

Please note that this exemption only applies to the removal of the weekly asymptomatic staff PCR test – all other changes to restrictions and testing, as set-out in the letter to providers of 27 January 2022, should apply.

Further guidance and frequently asked questions can be found in the annex to this letter.

Yours sincerely,

**Dame Jennifer Harries**  
**BSc MB ChB MPH MBA FFPH FCMJ**  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
**UK Health Security Agency**



## **Annex: Frequently Asked Questions**

*I am a member of staff in a care home which participates in the VIVALDI study. What testing should I do each week?*

- You should take a lateral flow test (LFT) before the start of every shift. You should also take a weekly PCR test, ideally on the same day each week, and at the same time as your pre-shift LFT for that day.

*Why are homes which participate in the VIVALDI study retaining regular PCR testing for staff, when this is no longer required in other care homes?*

- Homes participating in the VIVALDI study are retaining regular PCR tests as these provide additional data which is necessary for scientific research and is not available from lateral flow tests (LFTs).
- For example, additional data can be obtained from PCR testing to measure how infectious an individual is likely to have been at the time of their test. The majority of positive PCR tests are also sent for whole genomic sequencing, which provides data on the genomic code of the virus which infected that individual, helping to identify which variant of COVID-19 caused the infection.
- These data allow the study team to undertake research to explore scientific questions such as how well the vaccines work at preventing infections for people who live and work in care homes, how effective vaccination is at reducing the spread of infection, and whether future boosters may be required to protect against COVID-19. This research is vital in helping inform Government policy in order to protect staff and residents in care homes from COVID-19.
- All data from individuals who are participating in VIVALDI is held anonymously, and it is not possible for the scientific team to identify any individuals from their test results.

*If I test positive with a lateral flow test (LFT), what actions should I take?*

- You should self-isolate immediately. You should follow the [management of staff and exposed patients or residents in health and social care settings guidance](#) on ending your isolation period.

*If I test positive with a PCR test, what actions should I take?*

- You should self-isolate immediately and follow the [management of staff and exposed patients or residents in health and social care settings guidance](#) on ending your isolation period.
- You should not take another PCR test until 90 days after you tested positive, however you should restart your daily pre-shift lateral flow testing (LFT) after your isolation period.



*What happens if I take a lateral flow test (LFT) and a PCR on the same day and they show different results?*

- If your LFT test is positive and your PCR is negative:
  - It is likely that your PCR may be a false negative. You should self-isolate immediately and follow the management of staff and exposed patients or residents in health and social care settings guidance on ending your isolation period.
- If your LFT is negative and your PCR is positive:
  - It is likely that you have Covid-19 but that the virus was not picked up on your LFT. You should self-isolate immediately, and follow the [management of staff and exposed patients or residents in health and social care settings guidance](#) on ending your isolation period.
  - If you had previously tested positive with a PCR test in the 90 days before this PCR result, you should disregard this new, positive PCR result. This is because it is possible that you would continue to test positive with PCR tests *after* your infection. Do not resume taking PCR tests until 90 days after your first positive PCR test, and continue to take only regular pre-shift LFTs until this point, unless you develop new Covid-19 symptoms.

*How should I order test kits for my care home?*

- Continue to order your lateral flow tests (LFTs), PCR tests and outer return boxes in bulk from the online portal. The number of LFTs provided in your orders will be increased to reflect the change in policy to daily orders.

*Are there any changes to outbreak testing?*

- No, outbreak testing will remain unchanged. If your care home has one or more positive cases (or multiple symptomatic individuals), please follow the outbreak testing guidance and contact your Health Protection Team (HPT) for advice. One positive test result may be the first sign of an outbreak, so you should also contact your Health Protection Team for advice in this instance.
- Staff should continue their regular PCR testing during an outbreak, as well as their new asymptomatic regular testing regime of daily lateral flow testing.

*Is it compulsory for me to follow this change?*

- No, you are not obliged to take a weekly PCR test if you do not wish to do so.
- However, if you are in a care home which has been declared as being in 'outbreak', you will need to follow the outbreak testing guidance, and advice from your local Health Protection Team.