

Dear Colleague,

Coronavirus: NHS support to testing prior to admission to Care Homes in Birmingham

I am writing to you on behalf of the Birmingham Health & Care system and would like to thank you once again for the critical role you continue to play as we manage the COVID-19 pandemic.

The increased pressure that Care Home providers are working under is clearly highlighted both nationally and in our local conversations and reflects the continued effort of all your staff to continue to provide safe high quality care to your residents.

The reason for writing to you is that following publication of the 'COVID-19 Social Care Action Plan' on Thursday 16th April, I wanted to provide clarity and assurance regarding the plans we are putting in place to both implement the requirements to swab all patients prior to discharge from hospital to a care home, and also how we support you to accept these patients into a residential/care home setting.

Conversations have therefore taken place by partners across the Birmingham Health & Care system on how we propose to operationally deliver this requirement and I can confirm that the following approach is in place with immediate effect:

- If a patient has tested negative for COVID-19 during their stay in hospital, then they will be re-tested prior to discharge to a Residential/Care home.
- If a patient has not been tested for COVID-19, then they will be tested prior to discharge to a Residential/Care home.
- If a patient has already tested positive for COVID-19, then no further testing will be required prior to discharge. This is because the test will remain positive for 21 days (if not longer) and as such well beyond the period within which one can pass the infection on to the others.

The result of any COVID-19 tests undertaken will be included in the ward discharge letter and also communicated to you by the appropriate hospital discharge team.

Where a test result is negative, it is still recommended that the individual is isolated for 14 days from the date of the original negative test, and we will clearly inform you of this date in our discharge communication to allow for the necessary arrangements to be made in the care home.

For those patients who have a positive test result and are ready for discharge, we would expect to work closely with care homes on safely discharging these patients in a timely way. The bed capacity that we have been able to create within the hospitals across Birmingham, however, will see the majority of these individuals receive

appropriate care and recovery within the NHS and therefore it is expected that for most patients they will be discharged with a COVID-19 free status.

The arrangements outlined above are for discharges from University Hospitals Birmingham and Birmingham Community Healthcare.

Our aim is to do all we can to support care homes to take patients on discharge from hospital (as many people will be returning to their home) and in line with the points above to provide support and advise on isolation, good infection control practice, availability of PPE etc.

Please be aware that the BCHC Enhanced Care Home Support Service is available to provide this service and can be contacted between 8.00am – 8.00pm, seven days a week on:-

0121 466 6390

or via email at

bchnt.COVID-19pathway3@nhs.net

Additionally please also be aware that general practice is also available to support you and your residents. Please contact your local GP for medical queries.

Whilst the current situation continues to rapidly develop, we will also aim to work with you to respond to national policy and guidance and provide advice and support from within the local system. It remains one of our main priorities that we support you, your staff and residents to manage the difficult challenges we are currently facing.

Yours Sincerely



Richard Kirby

Lead – Birmingham & Solihull Discharges & Care Home Support

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