

Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Report
Health and Adult Social Care System COVID-19 Response
System responses –Testing

5. Testing for COVID-19

- 5.1 There are a number of different routes that key workers and residents can get a COVID-19 test. Some of these are determined by national protocols and in the case of care homes through our locally determined protocol (see care home section of this report). As of 27 May 2020 only the antigen (swab) test, that seeks to detect active COVID-19 is available although central government have promised to make an antibody test that seek to determine whether someone has had COVID-19 in the past and recovered available to frontline NHS and care staff in the near future.

National COVID-19 Testing Arrangements

- 5.2 Anyone can apply to be sent a postal kit if they are within the first five days of symptoms. Kits can be provided either through the post or the individual can access one of the government drive in testing services. Our nearest one is at Stanstead
- 5.3 In addition the Ministry of Defence provides ‘pop up’ drive through testing facilities are various sites. The times and dates when these are available are advertised on the COVID-19 testing section of the GOV.UK website, and this facility has been provided at Blackshots Leisure Centre.

Local COVID-19 Testing Arrangements

Drive through testing for NHS and LA staff including care home staff

- 5.4 The Mid and South Essex Hospital Group has developed local drive in locations at Basildon, Southend and Chelmsford for health and local authority workers including all care home staff. For council staff and care home staff (including private sector care home staff) these are booked using the Council’s Testing Hub. To be eligible, staff must have had symptoms five or fewer days ago. Local NHS staff can book a test through a similar local NHS booking hub.

Care Homes

- 5.5 In an outbreak situation (one or more residents and staff with COVID-19 symptoms), we commission a company called Commisceo to attend care homes and swab all residents and staff. Tests are booked by the council’s Public Health team as part of outbreak testing with on-going testing for all residents and asymptomatic staff each week until everyone tests negative and the home is declared outbreak free. Central government has also launched a dedicated care home testing portal that couriers tests directly to and from the care home and relies on care home staff to undertake self-swabbing or

swabbing of each other. Where the care home is not experiencing an outbreak we are using this testing mechanism to undertake regular testing of all staff to confirm that they remain COVID-19 negative and are safe to work (see section 4.3 on care homes for more details).