

COVID-19 Notice

Thursday 26 March 2020



Testing for Covid 19 to be made available for symptomatic, patient facing NIAS staff

Testing of Health Care Workers (HCWs)

To date the laboratory response to testing for COVID 19 has been limited by the need to protect laboratory capacity for testing hospitalised patients, for whom the result will influence clinical management and infection prevention and control decisions. In N Ireland, laboratory capacity for testing is expected to increase following introduction of local testing outside Belfast.

It is recognised that there is a need for an approach which supports testing HCWs under certain conditions. The DoH have approved interim guidance/criteria to support this approach.

Testing Health Care Workers (HCWs): Interim Criteria

Ambulance staff providing patient facing clinical care will be considered for testing. This will also include family members who are symptomatic requiring HCWs to self-isolate as well as symptomatic HCWs who are self-isolating.

NIAS are currently working to put appropriate governance and assurance arrangements in place alongside the necessary training to deliver this service for our staff in NIAS from 26th March 2020.

The priority for laboratory testing will continue to be for hospitalised patients so samples from HCWs may have longer turnaround time than those from hospitalised patients and turnaround time will depend on whether laboratory testing is at capacity or not.

Process for testing Health Care Workers within NIAS:

NIAS staff who are isolating because they or a family member are symptomatic should contact the Operational Support Unit to seek isolation advice and subsequently inform the RMC and their line manager that they are isolated and the duration of time.

The swabbing team will subsequently contact you to carry out an assessment and if eligible will ask if you or your family member wish to be swabbed and arrange an appointment for swabbing.

Please note that the member of staff or member of the household who require swabbing **must** be symptomatic.

This position will be subject to regular review.