

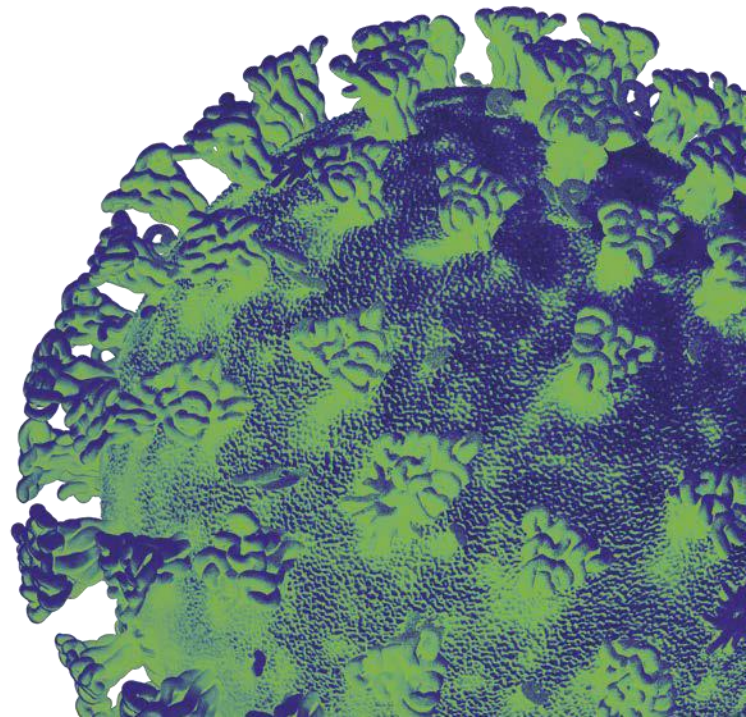
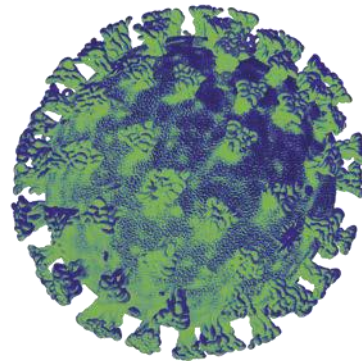
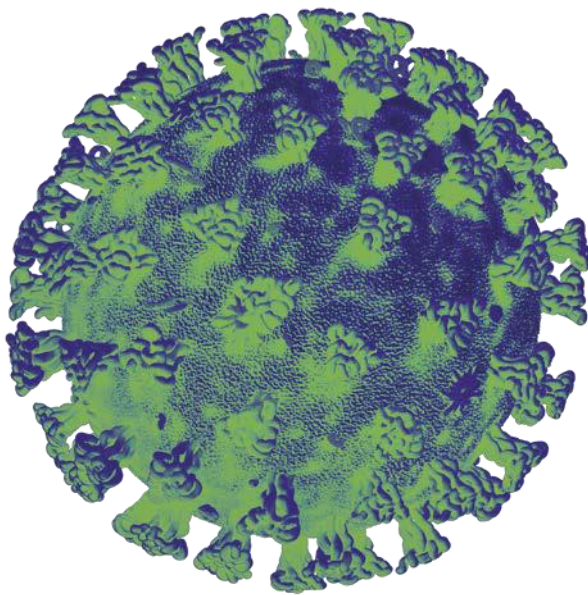


Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Technical Advisory Group

Consensus statement on testing in the context of vaccination associated with care homes

25 January 2021



Welsh Government COVID-19 Technical Advisory Group: Consensus statement on testing in the context of vaccination associated with care homes

Background

The Welsh Government Testing Clinical Advisory and Prioritisation Group has sought the view of the testing sub-group of the COVID-19 Technical Advisory Group (TTAG) on implications of vaccination for testing to detect infection with SARS-CoV-2 virus. The care home setting was identified as a priority setting for which guidance was urgently required and this statement seeks to inform that guidance.

Assessment

- The roll-out of vaccine is in its early stages.
- While the residents and staff of care homes are high priority cohorts, there is variation in vaccine coverage both between and within individual care homes.
- At the current time, the magnitude of the positive impact of vaccination – which will itself depend on a number of factors - on the epidemiology of SARS-CoV-2 infection in care homes is uncertain.
- There is also likely to be some variation in the interval between the administration of the first and second doses of vaccine, although current policy is that this interval should be no longer than 12 weeks.
- At the current time, levels of community infection and transmission are high with a consequently high risk of incursion into care homes. This situation is compounded by the evolving role of the recently identified variant of concern (VOC 202012/01) in driving local epidemics.
- Infections are continuing to occur in both residents and staff of care homes and testing remains a pivotal component in the response.

Recommendations

- Given the above, the roll-out of vaccination to residents and staff in care homes is not a sound basis to reduce the testing effort associated with this setting at this time.
- While this position will necessarily require review, a change in this position would be premature in advance of completion of the roll-out of the full course of vaccination to residents and staff of care homes.

Caveats

- Many of the factors relevant to this position, not least the understanding of the protection afforded by vaccines in field conditions, will change over time. The situation, and the policy response, should therefore remain under review.