Testing Strategy Summary

January 2021

Testing strategy

Testing continues to play a pivotal role in preventing the transmission of Covid-19 across Wales. Testing can play a part in reducing the harms associated with Covid-19 and since the last strategy was published in July 2020 new testing technologies have demonstrated it is possible to test at far greater scale, frequency and speed than ever before.

Testing will continue to play an important role alongside the vaccine in supporting us to save lives during 2021 and the longer term.

Strategy

Our testing strategy aims to minimise or alleviate these harms wherever possible:

- Harm from Covid itself
- Harm from overwhelmed NHS and Social Care system
- Harm from reduction in non Covid-19 activity
- Harm from wider societal actions / lockdown
| Priorities | Test to diagnose | Supporting NHS clinical care | Harm from Covid-19 itself  
We need to identify patients who are infected/infectious as quickly as possible, particularly those presenting to hospital so that they may benefit from specific treatment for Covid-19.  
Testing of patients on admission; 5 days after admission; and within 3 days of a planned admission. |
|-------------|------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Harm from overwhelming NHS and Social Care system | Test to safeguard | Protecting our most vulnerable | Covid-19 is a challenge in closed settings such as hospitals, care homes and prisons because it can be difficult to control the spread once infection is introduced. Infected individuals may enter closed settings as symptomatic or asymptomatic residents, visitors, or staff members.  
Symptomatic staff, wherever they work, should self-isolate and request a test.  
Testing of asymptomatic staff working with vulnerable people, especially within closed settings, can potentially identify infected/infectious individuals who might otherwise pose a risk.  
Regular, asymptomatic testing of:  
• NHS staff  
• Care home staff  
• Supported Living staff  
• Special school staff  
• Domiciliary care staff  
• Staff working in other residential care and support settings  
• Prisoners  
• Care home residents  
• Visitors and visiting professionals |
| Harm from reduction in non Covid-19 activity | Test to find | Targeting outbreaks & enhancing community surveillance | Identifying and isolating Covid-19 cases in the community reduces the transmission of infection, supports contact tracing and helps to slow or stop the spread of the disease.  
Symptomatic testing through:  
• Regional Testing Sites (RTS) – provide drive through facilities  
• Local Testing Sites (LTS) – provide walk in facilities  
• Mobile Testing Units (MTUs) – can provide flexible facilities to increase accessibility and to focus in areas of need  
• Home testing – for people to have tests posted to them to take at home  
Asymptomatic testing through our Community testing framework to actively find cases that is:  
• locally led  
• based on evidence from surveillance and local knowledge  
• uses risk based assessments to target testing  
• integrates with other local testing arrangements  
• focusses on areas of need |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Harm from reduction in non Covid-19 activity</th>
<th>Test to maintain</th>
<th>Supporting education</th>
<th>We are exploring whether asymptomatic testing to find cases and potentially contacts (as an alternative to isolating for 10 days) could support learners and teachers to remain in work or education. Finding cases faster reduces the spread of infection.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harm from reduction in non Covid-19 activity</td>
<td>Identifying contacts of positive cases to maintain key services</td>
<td>We are working with organisations to introduce regular testing in workplaces to find cases and support surveillance. We are also exploring whether testing of asymptomatic contacts could allow them to remain in work, safely, as an alternative to isolating for 10 days. We are currently piloting and evaluating this approach, for example with South Wales Police. If effective, it will mean that the number of people not in work as a result of self-isolating could reduce, meaning key services can be more easily maintained. Whether this type of daily contact testing can or should be adopted will be dependent on whether the test results can be verified, whether the individuals concerned work with vulnerable people and findings from current pilots Pilots will give us more information upon which to base final decisions. We also need to evaluate this approach in light of the increased transmissibility associated with the new variant.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Harm from wider societal actions/lockdown</td>
<td>Test to enable</td>
<td>Promoting social, economic &amp; cultural wellbeing</td>
<td>As we move forward with the vaccine roll out and towards lower prevalence of the virus we will look to see how testing can further support a return to normality. Appropriate and effective testing schemes may provide additional safeguards alongside the vaccine.</td>
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