

## Briefing Note

Serial number 2022/075

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Event	Pause of asymptomatic COVID-19 testing in high-risk settings
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NIERP Level	Standard

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### Background and Interpretation:

As set out in the Living with COVID strategy, the government's objectives in this phase of the COVID-19 response are to increasingly enable the management of COVID-19 in line with other respiratory illnesses, whilst protecting and treating those who are most vulnerable to more serious outcomes.

Testing of residents, patients or staff who are symptomatic or to manage an outbreak in high-risk settings will continue throughout 2022/23. At times of high prevalence, when transmission of COVID-19 from the community is more likely, asymptomatic testing may also be deployed in some settings.

The recent BA.5 wave has now peaked. Prevalence and other epidemiological indicators are declining and are likely to continue to decline in the coming weeks, and so **routine asymptomatic testing is to be paused from 31 August 2022 in the following settings:**

- Staff in adult social care services and hospices, and visitors and visiting professionals who provide personal care to the residents in care homes and hospices Patient-facing staff in the NHS and NHS-funded Independent Healthcare Provision
- Elective care, and some other, patients and service users prior to admission
- Some staff in prisons and other places of detention (including Immigration Removal Centres)
- Staff in respite rooms, homelessness night shelters, hostels and other temporary accommodation and outreach services

Individuals and settings continue to be protected by COVID-19 vaccination, population immunity from infection and, for individuals at higher risk of severe illness in high-risk settings, ongoing availability of symptomatic testing. This will continue to provide vital protection against outbreaks in these settings and those who are at highest risk of serious illness will continue to be able to access testing and treatments for COVID-19.



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## Implications for UKHSA Regions

Pausing of testing will impact on adult social care settings, NHS settings and some areas of detention, for example prisons and young offender institutions, homeless shelters and asylum centres

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## Implications for UKHSA sites and services

Announcement of pausing was released on 24 August. This may result in a spike in demand over the week prior to implementation on 31 August. Home Testing channel is aware of the policy and has prepared additional capacity in mitigation

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## Recommendations to UKHSA Regions

Health Protection Teams should share this briefing note with Local Authority Directors of Public Health.

[A fact sheet](#) setting out the new testing recommendations is now available to support this communication.

The following guidance will be updated to reflect the pause in routine asymptomatic testing:

- [COVID-19 testing in adult social care](#)
- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) testing for hospices](#)
- [Preventing and controlling outbreaks of COVID-19 in prisons and places of detention](#)
- [Managing healthcare staff with symptoms of a respiratory infection or a positive COVID-19 test result](#)
- [COVID-19 testing in homelessness, domestic abuse refuge and respite room settings](#)

The [COVID-19: guidance for providers of accommodation for asylum seekers](#) will be withdrawn on 31 August. From this date the [COVID-19 testing in homelessness, domestic abuse refuge and respite room settings](#) guidance will be updated to include information on testing in accommodation for asylum seekers.

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## Recommendations to UKHSA sites and services

No actions required

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## Implications and recommendations for local authorities

Changes will impact some employees who work at affected settings such as within adult social care or homeless shelters.

All settings set to be impacted will receive direct communications advising of the changes via Department of Health and Social Care external affairs team.

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## References/ Sources of information

Press release sharing the announcement was made 24/08/22 and can be found here: [Regular asymptomatic testing paused in additional settings - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Factsheet for asymptomatic testing pause  
[COVID-19: testing during periods of low prevalence - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)