

Meeting:	Board Meeting
Meeting date:	25 August 2021
Title:	Extended community testing for COVID-19, 2021/22
Item:	9.1
Responsible Executive/Non-Executive:	Dr Maggie Watts, DPH
Report Author:	Dr Maggie Watts, DPH

## 1 Purpose

**This is presented to the Board for:**

- Awareness

**This report relates to a:**

- Government policy/directive

**This aligns to the following NHSScotland quality ambition(s):**

- Safe
- Effective
- Person Centred

## 2 Report summary

### 2.1 Situation

NHS Western Isles submitted a proposal for extended community testing for COVID-19 infection in response to a Scottish Government letter inviting such proposals to be brought forward. We have received £626,506 until the end of 2021/22.

### 2.2 Background

The intention of the extended community testing funding was to expand access, particularly to those groups where access might be more difficult, and to encourage asymptomatic testing to identifying people carrying the infection and therefore able to pass it on unwittingly.

NHS Western Isles offers testing through a number of different routes.

**NHS Western Isles laboratory based testing** ('Gold standard' PCR testing) for:

- all symptomatic testing including those in health and social care settings
- asymptomatic testing for:
  - pre-operative assessment
  - care home pre-admission testing and random sampling of residents
  - confirmation of any positive lateral flow device (LFD) testing
  - unreadable or inconclusive routine care home testing.
  - testing of asymptomatic contacts of cases
  - testing of individuals when requested to do so by Incident Management Teams (IMTs).

**NHS Glasgow laboratory based testing.** This is available for all routine PCR testing of care home staff.

**UK Government Scheme.** We do not operate any UK Government testing sites on island and there is no postal facility for returning swabs from the general public.

**Lateral Flow Device Testing.** This testing is now in place across health and social care settings for twice weekly LFD asymptomatic testing.

**Business Operated Lateral Flow Device Testing.** We have sought to encourage major employers outwith the food sector to consider the value to their business of routine LFD testing.

**Universal Offer of Testing by Lateral Flow Device.**

## 2.3 Assessment

The proposed additions submitted for the extended community testing service were:

**PCR testing in outbreaks.** Establishing a mobile testing service will allow the extension of testing to address any hot spots that appear, primarily due to imported infection with anticipated rapid spread of variants of concern. This will provide for symptomatic testing of people who find it difficult to reach the testing centres, are unaware of home testing or are reluctant to come forward for testing. It will also offer testing to contacts (and contacts of contacts as appropriate) and others as determined by the Incident Management Team. This extension will require a mobile testing facility to be set up with resources for the purchase, equipping and running costs of the vehicle. Alongside this, we will address the consolidation of the testing teams with newly recruited staff who require to be trained, in anticipation of the remobilisation of the dental teams

**PCR testing for remoter island populations.** Reviewing availability of testing in outer parts of the islands and considering additional venues to enhance access to PCR testing

**PCR testing for asymptomatic ‘worried well’** Seeking additional PCR testing capacity through the use of the UK Government laboratory to address requests from the general public for asymptomatic testing

**Extension of availability of LFD testing.** Offering support to small and medium-sized businesses to operate home LFD testing twice weekly for their staff; this will include transport operators including bus and taxi services and road hauliers, fishing vessels, local shops and hospitality premises

**Easy access to LFD testing for wider public.** Through the use of additional testing venues, explore distribution of home LFD testing for general public without symptoms

### **2.3.1 Quality/ Patient Care**

Increased access to testing is anticipated to enable earlier detection of infection, earlier tracing of contacts and thereby reduce the spread by isolating those who are infected or at highest risk of incubating the virus. This should assist in reducing the number of hospital admissions and deaths from COVID-19.

### **2.3.2 Workforce**

Replacement of the existing deployed workforce is core to the proposal and will enable those services affected to remobilise whilst maintaining testing services.

### **2.3.3 Financial**

All costs were to be included in the proposal and the allocation (for 8 months of the year) reflects this.

### **2.3.4 Risk Assessment/Management**

Current risks are associated with insufficient workforce to undertake the roles of swabber and administrator. It is anticipated that the funding will enable security of staffing to cover COVID019 swabbing across the islands. The Western Isles population remains at high risk of imported infections across from the mainland and easy access of rapid testing and contact tracing will mitigate this risk.

### **2.3.5 Equality and Diversity, including health inequalities**

.Expanded community testing is intended to enhance access to testing and remove barriers of geography, disability, ethnicity and other inequalities.

### **2.3.6 Other impacts**

N/A

### **2.3.7 Communication, involvement, engagement and consultation**

The Board has carried out its duties to involve and engage external stakeholders where appropriate:

Regular updating to NHS Board, Chief executive of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Area Partnership Forum, Area Clinical Forum and Remobilisation meetings.

### **2.3.8 Route to the Meeting**

This has been previously considered by the following groups as part of its development. The groups have either supported the content, or their feedback has informed the development of the content presented in this report:

- Health protection team meetings
- Corporate Management Team 17.08.21

## 2.4 Recommendation

- **Awareness** – For Members' information only.

## 3 List of appendices

The following appendix is included with this report:

Expansion of Community Based Testing for Covid-19 in Western Isles Extended Proposal  
2021-22