



Department of  
**Health**

An Roinn Sláinte

Mánnystrie O Poustie

[www.health-ni.gov.uk](http://www.health-ni.gov.uk)

## **BY EMAIL**

COVID-19 Directorate  
Castle Buildings  
Stormont Estate  
BELFAST  
BT4 3SQ  
Email: [Covid19Directorate@health-ni.gov.uk](mailto:Covid19Directorate@health-ni.gov.uk)

Our Ref:

Date: 30 September 2022

Dear Client,

## **PAUSE OF ASYMPTOMATIC TESTING FOR PERSONAL ASSISTANTS**

We would be grateful if you would ensure that your Personal Assistant(s) is given a copy of this letter.

### **Introduction**

The Department of Health's COVID-19 Test, Trace and Protect Transition Plan published on 24 March 2022 set out the revised approach to test and trace for COVID-19 in Northern Ireland. The Plan explained how test and trace would change with arrangements becoming more proportionate, targeted and focused. The Plan also committed to keep all testing under review.

The Department continues to monitor COVID-19 information and data very closely. While COVID-19 is still in circulation, levels of infection in the community are currently falling and the overall impact from serious illness remains low at this time. The COVID-19 UK alert level has reduced from Level 3 to Level 2. Continued protection against the worst impacts of the COVID-19 virus is largely due to the success of our vaccination programme and the use of new COVID-19 treatments to protect those who are most at risk.

Immunity in the population is high due to the vaccination programme and natural immunity from prior infection. The winter vaccination programme, which includes the COVID-19 booster and Influenza vaccine has now commenced (starting with care

home residents and staff) and will be extended over the coming weeks and months. This will further boost immunity and further protect our most vulnerable.

### **Purpose of letter**

Given the position set out above, the purpose of this communication is to advise that **asymptomatic testing** (that is testing of those who do not have symptoms of COVID-19) for **Personal Assistants** using Lateral Flow Device (LFD) tests is to be **paused** in Northern Ireland.

This updated advice will take effect from **Monday 3 October 2022**.

LFD testing will continue to remain available and free of charge to those for whom testing is still advised. This includes all Personal Assistants who develop symptoms of COVID-19. Further information on symptoms of respiratory infections including COVID-19 is available on NI Direct at :


<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/symptoms-respiratory-infections-including-covid-19>

Information on how Personal Assistants can continue to access LFD testing if they develop symptoms and advice for those who test positive for COVID-19 is also available on NI Direct at: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-testing-and-stay-home-advice>

The Department will continue to monitor the situation closely as it is likely that case numbers will increase as we progress through the Autumn and Winter period. All advice in relation to testing will continue to be kept under review and asymptomatic testing may be reintroduced if necessary into the future.

I would like to thank you for your continuing support.

Yours sincerely,



Kieran McAteer  
**COVID-19 Response Directorate**