



19 March 2021

Yorkshire Ambulance Service response to new guidance for NHS professionals attending care homes

Important information for care home staff and other stakeholders

This communication outlines the measures being taken by Yorkshire Ambulance Service (YAS) to support delivery of new national guidance which comes into operation on Monday 22 March 2021.

[Testing for professionals visiting care homes - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-lateral-flow-testing-in-adult-social-care-settings/testing-for-professionals-visiting-care-homes)
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YAS has robust policies and procedures in operation to ensure the safety of patients, staff and the public, in line with national COVID-19 guidance.

We have a number of controls in place to ensure staff attending work are fit to be here. All staff are aware of the symptoms of COVID-19 and are instructed not to attend work if they develop any of these and go to get tested. We run an internal test and trace process in liaison with Public Health England colleagues, with oversight from our Infection Prevention and Control team, to ensure any staff who have had close contact with another staff member that tests positive is excluded from work. We currently have no COVID-19 outbreaks within any of our operational sites, and this is a position we have maintained for some weeks now.

All sites have a COVID-19 symptom checkpoint zone, where temperatures are checked prior to the start of shifts. Twice weekly lateral flow testing is in place for patient-facing staff, in line with the national guidance. Staff are trained in the selection and wearing of appropriate PPE for their patients, and we follow standard infection prevention and control procedures during care delivery. The vaccination programme has been rolled out to frontline staff in line with the national plan for priority groups.

In terms of this recent guidance we understand that for emergency visits such as a 999 response, it is not appropriate to ask for or provide proof of a negative lateral flow test (LFT) before entry to a care home, given the potential delay this could cause and the implications for prompt management of an emergency situation.

We request that YAS staff attending care homes, in response to a 999 call, will not be expected to provide evidence of their LFT results prior to entry to ensure the timeliness of patient care. We have informed our A&E Operations staff of the exception and we hope care homes will make their staff similarly aware.

Where we are required to attend for planned care, such as non-emergency Patient Transport Service (PTS), we have advised staff of the requirements in the new national guidance and the expectation that staff will need to provide evidence of a recent negative test result, or to be tested prior to entry to the care home. It is important to be aware that lateral flow testing is not mandatory for NHS staff in the existing national guidance for NHS trusts and we are therefore working with our staff to ensure that they are fully sighted on the increased level of expectation in the new care home guidance.

We have communicated this new guidance to our PTS staff, volunteers and sub-contractors to clarify the new arrangements coming into operation from next week. Where a member of staff is not able to provide evidence of a negative test result within the last 72 hours (please note that current NHS guidance to staff is for self-testing twice a week), staff are aware that they would routinely need to complete a test at the care home prior to entry.

For some patients, however, such as those attending hospital for renal dialysis or other time-critical appointments, a 35-minute delay due to the LFT process could lead them to miss their vital appointment. In these circumstances, and in light of the other significant control measures in operation in the ambulance service, we hope that care homes will work flexibly with our staff, to take a pragmatic risk-based approach to allowing entry to the home in line with the guidance. Where appropriate, care homes may also consider bringing patients to the entrance upon arrival of the ambulance. This will help to support the smooth implementation of what is quite a complex change in guidance and avoid unnecessary delays and disruption to patient care.

We will closely monitor the impact of this change in guidance over the coming weeks and will continue to work with our system partners, as we have throughout the pandemic, to support the safety and quality of patient care.

If you wish to provide feedback on this or other aspects of our services please contact our Patient Relations team in the first instance: yas.patientrelations@nhs.net

Thank you.