

## EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION FROM THE MANAGING DIRECTOR - COVID-19, NO 57,

5 JANUARY 2022

Happy New Year to you and your family, I hope that this latest briefing finds you all well and that you were able to benefit from some time off work over the festive period to rest and spend time with loved ones. 2021 once again sent us many challenges both personally and professionally and I continue to be thankful and extremely grateful to each and every one of you for your commitment and hard work in providing essential services to the communities of Tayside.

This briefing provides information regarding the importance of taking regular lateral flow tests, the recent changes to self-isolation rules and PCR testing requirements as announced by the First Minister today and other information relating to COVID-19 and its impact.

### Regular Lateral Flow Device (LFD) Testing

Approximately 1 in 3 individuals with COVID-19 do not display symptoms and so can pass the virus to other without knowing. Lateral flow device (LFD) testing is a fast and simple way to identify positive cases in individuals who have no symptoms but who are still infectious. If individuals who test positive self-isolate, the chain of transmission is broken, and this helps limit the spread of the virus, and keeps you and your loved ones safe.

The Scottish Government is encouraging everyone to do regular LFD tests and especially before we meet up with others, before we travel and before we return to work.

There are several ways to access LFD testing kits – you can collect these from a COVID-19 testing site, from your nearest participating Pharmacy or order them online to be delivered to your home address. Please follow [this link](#) to find further information on how to access LFD tests.

School/ELC based employees are also encouraged to take twice weekly LFD tests and can collect tests from their base school/ELC setting. Written consent is no longer necessary in order to be issued with these tests, employees can simply present to the relevant issuing station and you will be issued with tests for use.

All individuals are encouraged to report the results of their LFD tests online [here](#).

### Changes to Self-Isolation Rules

The First Minister announced today (5 January 2022) that the Scottish Government were **introducing two changes to the rules on self-isolation** with effect from 12 midnight on 5 January 2022.

The **first change to self-isolation applies to those who test positive for COVID.**

While the initial advice when someone tests positive will still be to self-isolate for 10 days, there will now be an option to end isolation after seven days as long as you, firstly, have no fever and, secondly,

you record two negative lateral flow tests, one no earlier than day six after testing positive and another at least 24 hours after that.

The **second change applies to close contacts of positive cases** – and this includes household contacts - who are either under the age of 18 years, four months, or who are older than that and fully vaccinated\*.

\*By fully vaccinated, it is meant that you have received the first, second and booster or third doses.

For close contacts in these categories the requirement to self-isolate will end and be replaced by a requirement to take a lateral flow test every day for seven days. If one of these tests is positive, self-isolation will then be required.

Anyone identified as a close contact who is over 18 years and four months and not fully vaccinated will still be asked to self-isolate for 10 days and to take a PCR test.

### **Changes to PCR Testing Requirements**

As part of the same briefing, the First Minister also announced changes to PCR testing requirements. Again, with effect from 12 midnight on 5 January 2022, for those who have symptoms of COVID-19, the advice remains to book a PCR test, even if you have a positive lateral flow test.

However, from 6 January 2022, if your **lateral flow device test is positive, and you do not have symptoms, you will no longer be required to take a PCR test to confirm the result.**

Instead, you must immediately isolate and also report your result online so that Test and Protect can commence the contact tracing process and give you advice as quickly as possible. You will also receive an online form that you must fill in, as would happen with a PCR positive in to ensure your contacts are notified.

This change is to allow the Scottish Government and the NHS to maximise testing capacity and ensure a speedier start to the process of contact tracing and advice.

### **Absence Reporting**

As a consequence of the extremely high positive case numbers being experienced across the Tayside area, which is being driven by the more transmissible Omicron variant, we are starting to see a much greater impact on our employee absence levels and therefore our ability to provide the essential services that we are in existence to provide. With this in mind and in order to allow our supervisors and managers to manage service delivery as well as they can, I would encourage employees to ensure that they are reporting any absences, COVID-19 related or not, to their relevant manager as quickly as possible. This will allow managers to make the necessary decision at an early stage and avoid any service failure situations wherever reasonably possible.

### **Risk Assessments and Control Measures**

In order to keep yourself as safe as possible, I would remind you that it is vitally important that you adhere to the risk assessments and control measures we have in place. All our COVID-19 Risk Assessment can be found on the Tayside Contracts' website [here](#).

If you have any difficulties or questions regarding any of the risk assessment or control measures in place relevant to your job, please speak to your line manager in the first instance.

### **NHS COVID-19 Vaccination Programme**

The Scottish Government, NHS Scotland and Public Health Scotland strongly recommend that all eligible individuals get the first, second and booster COVID-19 vaccine as it provides the best protection against COVID-19. I would therefore once again encourage every employee who can be vaccinated to make an appointment to be vaccinated or utilise a drop-in clinic to be vaccinated. This applies whether it is a first, second or third dose of the vaccine i.e. it is not too late to get even a first vaccination in order to protect yourself and others.

For further information regarding the NHS Tayside Vaccination Programme, please visit their website by clicking [here](#).

Please continue to adhere to all the rules and guidance to keep yourselves, your colleagues and your families safe.

If you have any queries regarding the above temporary change, please speak to your line manager in the first instance.

Please continue to refer to Tayside Contracts' website [www.tayside-contracts.co.uk](http://www.tayside-contracts.co.uk) on a regular basis.

If you have not already done so and wish to provide your email address to us in order to benefit from electronic access to communications such as these, please forward your email address to [Communications@tayside-contracts.co.uk](mailto:Communications@tayside-contracts.co.uk) We will not forward your email address onto any third parties or use it for any other purpose other than to communicate with you.

**Keith McNamara, Managing Director, 5 January 2022**