

To: • NHS trust and foundation trust
medical directors
• CCG medical directors

NHS England and NHS Improvement
Skipton House
80 London Road
London
SE1 6LH

31 March 2022

Dear Colleagues,

Action to take: Contact your highest risk patients about using lateral flow tests to access COVID-19 treatments

On 1 April 2022 the Government is changing its policy on coronavirus testing in England. The changes will mean that highest risk patients eligible for COVID treatments can still access lateral flow tests from the Government, but they will no longer be issued PCR tests.

The lateral flow test result **must** be submitted to www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result or 119 in order to enable referral to a COVID Medicines Delivery Unit (CMDU) for assessment and potential treatment. Results of privately bought tests cannot be registered.

You need to notify some of your patients of the change. Most eligible patients are being sent a [letter](#) by NHS England and NHS Improvement to inform them of the change and remind them about treatments. However, some of your patients are not currently captured in national datasets and will therefore not be automatically contacted.

We are asking you to contact these patients using the attached template letter. This letter is also an opportunity to remind patients about access to coronavirus treatments following a positive test result.

Action to take:

- Contact **all eligible** patients under your care outlined in the table at Annex A (including any patients that you previously wrote to) and using the template letter attached (Annex B). It is important to include their NHS number.
- Familiarise yourself with the latest [policy](#) for non-hospitalised individuals at highest risk from COVID infection – especially the annex detailing who is considered ‘highest risk’.
- Continue to contact newly eligible patients on an ongoing basis.
- Familiarise yourself with the process for referring patients for assessment for COVID treatments, and the [new CMDU directory](#).

Who you need to contact

We have identified patients who are unlikely to have been captured in NHS Digital national datasets in Annex A.

As a reminder, in the event these patients test positive they will **not** be automatically contacted by a CMDU, so they will need to proactively contact a GP, 111 or a consultant for a referral to a CMDU.

A template letter which you can adapt for your patients is attached at Annex B. The letter can be modified and addressed to parents/carers if needed.

Referrals to a CMDU

In some cases, you may want to make a referral directly to a CMDU for a patient under your care who has tested positive following a lateral flow test. You can refer them using a new version of the CMDU directory which is now available [here](#) (**patients cannot self-refer**).

Please send an email (via NHS Mail or other compliant service that meets [the secure email standard](#)) to the CMDU including patient details, NHS number, underlying qualifying clinical condition, relevant medication history, date of symptom onset and date of positive lateral flow test. Please notify the patient and their GP that you are referring them to the CMDU.

More information on COVID-19 community-based treatments is available for healthcare professionals on the [NHS England and NHS Improvement website](#), where you can also find a copy of this template letter.

Information for patients can be found at www.nhs.uk/CoronavirusTreatments.

Thank you for your ongoing work to contact these patients to ensure they can benefit from COVID-19 treatments.

Yours sincerely,



Professor Stephen Powis
National Medical Director
NHS England and Improvement

ANNEX A: Patients that need to be contacted

The table below sets out which of your patients need to be contacted. Full details of the patient cohorts can be found in Appendix 1 of the clinical commissioning [policy](#).

You will need to contact any patients that you previously wrote to and continue to contact newly eligible patients on an ongoing basis.

Policy cohort	Who you need to contact
Down's syndrome	<i>No action required</i>
Patients with a solid cancer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All patients with active solid and active metastatic cancers • All newly diagnosed patients commenced on radiotherapy within the last 3 months • All patients started on chemotherapy (as defined in the clinical policy) within the last 3 months
Patients with haematological diseases and stem cell transplant recipients (<i>note: this cohort now includes sickle cell which was previously a separate cohort</i>)	<p>Please note: the patient cohorts under haematological diseases have changed since the original policy was published on 9 December. You may be contacting some patients for the first time. This change includes the addition of other types of haematological malignancy, myelodysplastic syndrome and some non-malignant haematological disorders. Please refer to the policy for the full detail.</p> <p>Please contact all patients:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With a haematological cancer started on chemotherapy within the last 3 months • With a haematological cancer started on chemotherapy (as defined in the clinical policy) within the last 3 to 12 months apart from acute lymphoblastic leukaemia • With a haematological cancer started on radiotherapy within the last 3 months • With myelodysplastic syndrome • With non-malignant haematological conditions as defined in the clinical policy • Newly diagnosed (from 28 January 2022) with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Chronic lymphocytic leukaemia (CLL) – B-cell lymphoma – Follicular lymphoma – Waldenstrom's macroglobulinaemia – Multiple myeloma – Acute lymphoblastic leukaemia – Sickle cell disease

Policy cohort	Who you need to contact
Patients with renal disease	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any patient newly started on immunosuppressants (from 28 January 2022) All patients on immunosuppressant medication supplied by a hospital and not supplied by their GP (eg. JAK inhibitors) as per the clinical policy Any <i>newly diagnosed</i> patients or those who have had a recent renal transplant (since 28 January 2022) All patients with CKD Stage 4.
Patients with liver disease	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any patient newly started on any immunosuppressants (from 28 January 2022) All patients on immunosuppressant medication supplied by a hospital and not supplied by their GP (eg. JAK inhibitors) as per the clinical policy Any <i>newly diagnosed</i> patients or those who have had a recent liver transplant (since 28 January 2022)
Patients with immune-mediated inflammatory disorders (IMID)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any patient newly started on immunosuppressant medication (since 28 January 2022) as detailed in Appendix 1 of the policy All patients on immunosuppressant medication supplied by a hospital and not supplied by their GP (eg. JAK inhibitors) as per the clinical policy
Immune deficiencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any newly diagnosed patients (from 28 January 2022) Any patients with Autoimmune polyglandular syndromes / Autoimmune polyendocrinopathy, candidiasis, ectodermal dystrophy (APECED syndrome)
HIV/AIDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any newly diagnosed patients (from 28 January 2022) Any patient who has not listed their HIV status on GP records (if known)
Solid organ transplant recipients	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any patients who have had a recent transplant (since 28 January 2022)
Rare neurological conditions (multiple sclerosis, motor neurone disease, myasthenia gravis, Huntingdon's disease)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any newly diagnosed patients (since 28 January 2022)

ANNEX B: Template letter to send to patients

[Patient Name

Patient address Line 1

Patient address Line 2

Patient address Line 3]

XX XXXX 2022

Your NHS number: [NHS NUMBER]

Dear [Patient],

Important information about new treatments for coronavirus

You may have received a version of this letter before. It has been updated because the Government has changed the way you test for coronavirus. From 1 April you should check coronavirus symptoms using lateral flow tests, and not PCR tests.

If you need this information in easy read, braille or other languages, please visit [england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/patient-letter](https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/patient-letter) or contact england.contactus@nhs.net

Your medical records currently show you **might** be suitable for treatments if you get coronavirus.

This letter explains that:

1. You should keep lateral flow tests at home.
2. You should take a test if you have coronavirus symptoms. **Important:** You must report your test result.
3. If a test confirms you have coronavirus, call your GP, 111 or the specialist team sending you this letter, so they can refer you for potential treatment.

More information: www.nhs.uk/CoronavirusTreatments

Why are we sending you this letter?

Health experts have looked at the health conditions which put people at more risk from coronavirus. Those health conditions have been agreed by UK chief medical officers.

Your medical team believes you might currently have, or have previously had, one or more of these health conditions. This means that treatments **might** be suitable for you if a test confirms you have coronavirus. This also means you can still access Government coronavirus tests.

These treatments can stop you from getting seriously ill and need to be given quickly after you start to have symptoms.

1. You should keep lateral flow tests at home

You must keep lateral flow test kits at home so you can get tested quickly if you have any coronavirus symptoms.

You won't be automatically sent tests but you can request them on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) or by calling 119 if you don't have any.

You can use any lateral flow tests supplied by the Government. Tests bought from a shop cannot currently be registered via GOV.UK or 119.

If you were previously sent a PCR test you can keep it. You might be asked to take a PCR if you receive treatments from the NHS.

2. You should take a test if you think you have coronavirus

If you have coronavirus symptoms you should take a lateral flow test immediately, even if your symptoms are mild.

You **must** report your result at <https://www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result> or by calling 119, and provide your NHS number and postcode correctly.

If your test is negative but you still have symptoms, you should take another test on each of the next two days (three tests in total over three days).

3. If a test confirms that you have coronavirus call your GP, 111 or specialist team

Following a positive test, most eligible patients will be contacted by the NHS to assess symptoms and discuss treatments.

However, it is not possible for the NHS to identify and contact all patients, and this applies to you.

Once you receive a positive test result, immediately contact your GP, 111 or the specialist team sending this letter. They will be able to make a referral.

Once you are referred, the NHS will contact you about treatments that may be available to you. You will be asked about medication you are taking, including vitamins. They will then advise which treatment, if any, is suitable, and make any necessary arrangements.

Yours sincerely,

[Insert consultant / team name]