

FAQ information from DHSC to The Independent Care Group

Following on from yesterday's Living with COVID-19 update, I wanted to reassure you that colleagues in ASC policy are working through the next steps for ASC. We remain committed to supporting the adult social care sector through the next phase of COVID-19 response and protecting the most vulnerable whilst enabling people to live their lives with as few restrictions as possible. From the emails we've received, we've put together a few top FAQs about next steps, IPC and testing. I hope you find it helpful – please let me know if you have further questions or concerns.

What does the removal of self-isolation regulations mean for ASC? Should staff still self-isolate if necessary from Thursday 24th?

There will be no change in advice for staff who currently need to self-isolate across ASC from Thursday 24th. Guidance will be updated to remove references to the legal requirement but anyone who tests positive and who is an unvaccinated contact should still stay at home and avoid contact, and should stay away from work. This advice will also be provided to the general public so although self-isolation will no longer be the law, there will continue to be strong guidance to stay at home and avoid contact with people. The same applies for care home residents where guidance currently advises self-isolation.

From Thursday 24th, does anything change about testing to reduce isolation periods e.g. if you're a vaccinated contact or if you've tested positive?

There will be no change in advice in when to test from Thursday 24th apart from updates to guidance to remove references to the legal requirement. For example, if staff are asymptomatic vaccinated contacts, advice remains that they should stay away from work, take a PCR, and if negative, they can return to work whilst testing daily. Or, if an individual has tested positive, the advice continues to be that individuals should stay home, and only come back to work following two negative consecutive LFD tests from days 5 and 6.

Is the ICTF still available to fund ICF and testing measures including self-isolation?

Providers can still use the ICTF to pay their staff full wages whilst they are self-isolating, and is available until the end of March 2022. This is not impacted by the legal duty to self-isolate being dropped.

If everything is staying the same for ASC right now, when will there be changes to IPC guidance?

We are reviewing measures over the coming weeks, and as discussed, we are looking at providing updates guidance by 1st April. We want to develop this with the sector and will continue engagement with you on what the future guidance to the sector will be over the coming weeks.

The PM's speech and Living with Covid document didn't mention continued free asymptomatic testing for staff. Should we keep testing now and will testing provision end?

Testing for all staff, residents, and visitors should continue in line with the relevant testing regimes set out here at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-testing-for-adult-social-care-settings> testing remains important to quickly identify individuals who are likely to be highly infectious and enables them to self-isolate to reduce transmission and keep the most vulnerable safe. Further detail on future testing will be provided in due course.