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Thank you for your email of 11 May regarding the situation in Inverclyde. I am aware of these statistics and I am acutely aware that these are not just numbers. They represent individuals whose loss is a source of sorrow to many and I want to extend my deepest condolences to everyone in the area who is being affected by this.

I would be happy to discuss this matter further with you to see what more we could do. Please contact my Private Office, at CabSecHS@gov.scot to make the necessary arrangements.

I would like to set out how we are working closely with many partners to provide an effective response in relation to testing. Our testing strategy thus far has focused on three priorities: directing our testing capacity effectively to save lives and protect the vulnerable; ensuring that critical staff can return to work as soon as possible; and monitoring and reporting on the spread and prevalence of the virus in the population to understand the impact of public health measures.

To provide clarity on how we are delivering this policy on testing, I thought it might be useful to set out who is eligible for a test. All patients in intensive care and all hospitalised symptomatic patients will be tested for COVID-19. From 29 April, testing has been expanded to all hospital admissions for those aged over 70 with further testing every four days during their inpatient stay for those testing negative. COVID-19 patients discharged from hospital to a care home are required to have received 2 negative tests before discharge; and it is expected that other new admissions to care homes should be tested and isolated for 14 days in line with guidelines on clear physical distancing and infection control.

In addition to these measures, the First Minister set out expanded criteria for testing eligibility on 1 May. This now includes the following categories who are self-isolating because they are symptomatic: all key workers, other workers who cannot work from home, those over 65 and members of their households who are over the age of 5.

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot



We are also ensuring that Scotland benefits from UK-wide efforts to expand the testing capacity. Five drive-through sites are now available in Scotland, such as the one at Glasgow airport that you mention in your letter. Additionally, 12 mobile units are currently deployed across Scotland. These units will generally stay in a location for 5 days, to enable testing for key workers, other workers who cannot work from home, those over 65 and members of their households who are over the age of 5.

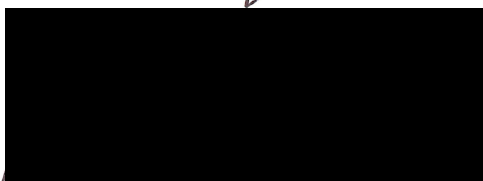
NHS National Services, in conjunction with local and regional resilience partnerships, are considering the rolling deployment programme, which can include rapid deployment to deal with local issues. We understand that as yet, no request has been made for deployment of a mobile testing unit in Inverclyde. However, NHS National Services are aware there is a meeting of the local resilience partnership on Friday 15 May where this issue may be discussed and they are ready to assist. It is also worth noting that home testing kits are also available as part of the UK Testing programme, although we recognise that the demand for these is currently greater than the supply, significant efforts are being made by UKG to increase capacity. Requests for these along with bookings for the drive through and mobile testing units can be made via the UK online digital portal: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-getting-tested>

We have published detailed guidance on who is eligible for testing and how to arrange for that testing, whether through the NHS Scotland route or the UK expanded programme: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-getting-tested/pages/overview/>.

On 4 May the Scottish Government published its paper “COVID-19- Test, Trace, Isolate, Support” which sets out how we will use this approach to support maintaining low levels of community transmission of COVID-19. Test, trace, isolate, support is a public health approach to supporting the management of outbreaks of infectious diseases. It is used to interrupt chains of transmission in the community. The approach will not be effective in Scotland on its own but must be used alongside other public health measures, such as physical distancing, good hand and respiratory hygiene, and appropriate use of face coverings.

Finally, I am grateful for you bringing this to my attention and I hope that my reply is helpful.

Kind regards



JEANE FREEMAN