

Chief Executives  
Medical Directors  
Directors of Nursing

NHS England and NHS Improvement  
Skipton House  
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24 April 2020

Dear Colleagues,

**Expansion of patient testing for Covid-19**

As more test capacity has been made available to us, we can now go beyond PHE's original advice which prioritised symptomatic patients and key workers.

To further support the effective management of COVID-19 in healthcare settings, we are therefore now asking you to expand testing to all non-elective patients admitted into your organisations that require a bed overnight, effective from Monday 27<sup>th</sup> April or before.

**This includes patients who are asymptomatic.**

This should include making preparations to cohort patients as possible COVID cases who need to be admitted whilst they await a test result. Appropriate [infection prevention control](#) recommendations must then be followed. Where this isn't immediately possible, you should work to put this in place as soon as possible.

A similar approach will be applied to elective patients from next week, and further advice on protocols for doing so will be issued shortly.

We will work with your laboratories and your pathology incident directors to ensure enough supplies of swabs. Samples should be sent to local testing laboratories as per routine arrangements.

With ongoing thanks for your leadership during such unprecedented times.

Yours sincerely,



**Ruth May**  
Chief Nursing Officer  
NHS England and NHS Improvement



**Professor Stephen Powis**  
National Medical Director  
NHS England and NHS Improvement