

**Written response to question / issue
raised at Council**

Meeting Date: 2nd March 2021
Public / Private*: Public
Minute Reference: C.54/21 – Portfolio Holder Reports
Written response to: Cllr Mrs P Birks
Written response from: Cllr P Nedved

Resolution / Question:

That the Economy, Enterprise and Housing Portfolio Holder provide Councillor Mrs Birks with confirmation that Carlisle City Council was taking part in lateral flow testing for front line staff.

Response:

Ongoing regular reviews of the Homeless Prevention and Accommodation Services teams service level Covid-19 health and safety risk assessments, systems and operational management plans are undertaken in line with Government and Public Health England advice and guidance to ensure that the frontline services remain Covid safe and secure.

Additional measures have been implemented to minimise the risks in line with the services control of infectious diseases protocols; for example changes to occupational lettings; increased PPE; screening / distancing, health triaging, vulnerability screening, vaccination monitoring and daily symptom tracking as part of welfare assessments. In addition, all residents are supported to access a GP if they do not have one to enable early vaccination and treatment options; the service also continues to safely support those who are Covid positive or symptomatic to access support, testing and emergency food / medical supplies.

Following discussion with the City Council's Health and Safety Manager, and in consultation with the frontline staff working within the Homeless Prevention and Accommodation Services and review of the service level Covid-19 risk assessments; it was determined that the implementation of Lateral Flow Testing (LFT) as a preventative measure was not required at this stage as the other operational measures already in place were appropriate and adequate in keeping the services Covid safe. Consideration has been given to support new residents to access LFT however as this cannot be administered by staff or a factor in offering accommodation placements, appropriate health screening and symptom checking is deemed a more appropriate and effective safety measure.

The key priority is to ensure that frontline staff are fully vaccinated; and all residents are supported to access early vaccinations in line with Government advice as it is recognised that people who are experiencing homelessness / rough sleeping are likely to be more vulnerable to Covid-19. As such, the Government have advised that local vaccination systems consider a universal offer to adults experiencing homelessness and rough sleeping alongside those in priority group 6: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/jcvi-advises-prioritising-homeless-people-and-rough-sleepers-for-covid-19-vaccine>. This means that everyone in this population should receive a first offer of the vaccine by 15th April 2021. The service has input local data to support this.

Date: 22nd March 2021