

## **BBC Wales Release from the Carningli Trust on The Lack of Covid Testing in Wales that has most likely left Around 1000 Infected but Asymptomatic Care Workers looking after some of the most Vulnerable People in Wales.**

### **THANKS**

First of all I'd like to thank the media and the many others for taking our real concerns about the lack of Covid Testing in Wales so seriously. But most of all I would like to thank the Care Workers in our own charity and in the many other organisations across Wales, who continue to go to work despite the impossibility of social distancing, despite being at the end of the queue for PPE and despite the fact that the Welsh Government does not think testing them is the best use of our resources. We deeply regret that this release has become necessary as the Welsh Government alone seems unconcerned by the inadequacy of Welsh covid testing capacity and has not been responding to our emails for over 2 weeks.

### **THE FACTS**

Ministers have argued that we have the capacity to do the clinical testing we are doing, that this is sufficient and that testing is not a good use of resources because someone tested today could be cleared but then catch the infection tomorrow. This argument completely misses the point about infection control in care homes, where we are not so much trying to identify those free from infection but we are trying to identify and isolate those in the workforce who may have the infection without showing symptoms. Clearly only testing can do this.

Without testing it is not surprising that experts cannot evidence the scale of the asymptomatic infection risk in Wales. So, a lack of evidence that can only come from testing is being given as a reason for not testing? This sounds more like the script of Catch 22 than a basis for Government Policy!

Fortunately, there is now new evidence from countries who have been employing mass testing. Germany is reported to have produced some interesting findings<sup>1</sup>:

- There are reports that in Germany the death rate was actually less than one in 200 of the people infected but this is because mass testing identified a much larger infected community than was suspected before.
- With the 30,000 plus deaths that have been recorded in the UK, the German data would indicate that about 6 million people could have been infected in the UK or close to 10% of the population.
- The German data also indicates that about one in five of the people who were infected were actually asymptomatic.
- So, taking both of these indications from Germany it seems entirely likely that 2% of a population can be infected but not showing symptoms.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.dw.com/en/18-million-people-in-germany-could-be-infected-with-coronavirus-researchers-find/a-53330608>  
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/04/german-covid-19-cases-may-be-10-times-higher-than-official-figures>

- With the 64,000 care workers reported to be in Wales this would indicate that there have been around 1000 infected but asymptomatic care workers looking after for the most vulnerable people in Wales.

A large-scale testing program could have significantly reduced this risk and could still save many lives if testing were to be extended to staff in smaller asymptomatic care homes that are not yet infected.

## THE SITUATION

A BBC report of 14th April 2020 indicates that:

- There were confirmed cases in 81 Adult Care Homes in Wales.
- CiW reported 221 homes with suspected infection.
- Health Minister reported 75 care homes with confirmed cases.
- Chief Medical Officer reported 61 infected homes.
- Only 128 tests were carried out in care homes in Wales during the preceding week.

It is unimaginable that all these homes have been infected by staff with symptoms as this would be in clear breach of standards. We also now have evidence to indicate the scale of likely asymptomatic infection. So, we must surely conclude that asymptomatic infection routes are the most likely source of the danger once all other infection control steps are in place. The only way to defend against this infection route is by testing and isolating all asymptomatic carriers that may otherwise be delivering close personal care.

We have been asking The First Minister for 2 weeks now but have had no answers about:

- How many care homes are now infected in Wales?
- What level of testing in care homes exists to validate this data?
- What is the most likely route for new infections into well managed care homes?
- The correct testing priorities, targets and delivery rates now needed in Wales?

We have also suggested that as England seems to have significant capacity, then perhaps Welsh care homes can be allowed to take advantage of the English postal kit capability to do an initial screening of our care home staff pending Welsh testing coming on stream?

## CALL TO ARMS

If valid analogies can be drawn between what we're going through now in Wales and the Victory in Europe commemorations, then for me the parallel would be between the care workforce in Wales and the forgotten army that on VE day was still continuing to fight and to die in the Far East. So, I am asking for everybody's help to make sure that this army of Welsh Care Workers is not forgotten and I'd ask the people of Wales to join our campaign to make sure they are properly equipped to continue what is literally vital work.

I hope you share my sense of shock at being told by the Welsh Government that testing in smaller asymptomatic care homes is not a good use of resources. I think this clearly speaks to the critically low capability of testing that there is in Wales, which is in the region of 1 to 2% of capacity but they currently available in England. If so, please do **contact your Member of the Welsh Parliament** <https://business.senedd.wales/mgMemberIndex.aspx> and represent your concerns about the way Welsh Care workers are being left without the testing that is necessary to safeguard their workplaces.