

Scottish Affairs Committee

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From the Chair, Pete Wishart MP
Dr Gregor Smith, Interim Chief Medical Officer for Scotland

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Dear Dr Smith,

Thank you for appearing before the Committee on Thursday 21 May. I am writing to follow up on an issue raised during the evidence session.

Giving evidence to the Committee on 14 May, the Secretary of State for Scotland, Rt Hon Mr Alister Jack, suggested that the Scottish Government should carry out more testing in care homes. According to the National Records of Scotland, as of 13 May 2020, 45% of Covid-19 deaths registered related to deaths in care homes, and the Secretary of State suggested that an increase in testing could in turn bring down the R number for the whole of Scotland ([Q.49](#)):

‘We need a stringent testing regime in Scottish care homes, using the extra capacity that is available, which will then...bring down the R number and Scotland.’

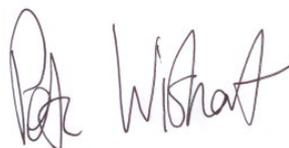
During the oral evidence session, which you attended on 21 May, my colleague Andrew Bowie MP asked whether mandatory testing should have been introduced in Scotland’s care homes sooner ([Q.88](#)). You responded that this was a policy-based decision outside of your remit, however we were hoping that you could provide some additional information to help the Committee understand the medical and scientific advice given by SAGE and the Scottish Government COVID-19 advisory group that informed decisions made by policy-makers on testing in care homes.

I would be grateful if you could share with the Committee answers to the following questions:

- What does the scientific evidence suggest about the relationship between the number of tests taking place in care homes and Scotland’s R number? Is the scientific consensus consistent with the assertion that increasing testing in care homes would contribute to bringing down Scotland’s R number?
- Beyond testing, what other measures are necessary to protect people in care homes and bring down the number of deaths from Covid-19? Have these been implemented in Scotland?

I look forward to hearing from you,

Yours sincerely,



Pete Wishart MP
Chair, Scottish Affairs Committee