Asymptomatic Testing in Scottish Primary, Secondary and Special Schools, and ELC Providers – fact sheet

The Scottish Government is working with the UK Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and other key partners to implement a programme of asymptomatic coronavirus testing in schools/ELC settings. This fact sheet provides some basic information about the programme. Further guidance and information will be provided to schools via local authorities.

What are the aims and objectives of the Schools/ELC Asymptomatic Testing Programme?

The Scottish Government is working with local authorities, schools and other key partners to put in place a testing programme for people without the symptoms of coronavirus as part of the package of coronavirus risk reduction mitigations in education settings.

Its aim is to contribute to the reduction of coronavirus-related risks in schools and, in so doing, to enhance the confidence of our school communities .

It will do this by helping to identify asymptomatic individuals in school environments at the earliest possible opportunity and asking them and their close contacts to self-isolate, thus minimising the likelihood of them passing on the virus.

Does this replace existing testing arrangements?

The asymptomatic testing programme does not replace the current testing policy for those with symptoms. School staff and pupils who experience symptoms of coronavirus must self-isolate immediately and arrange a PCR test at https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test. People with symptoms must not rely on a negative
LFD result to continue to attend school.

Which individuals and institutions can access asymptomatic testing under this programme?

The programme is initially available to:

- all primary, secondary and special school staff in local authority, independent and grant-aided schools;
- all ELC and childcare staff based in local authority, independent and grant-aided schools; and
- all senior phase pupils in local authority, independent and grant-aided secondary and special schools.

School staff include teachers, classroom -based support staff, administrative staff, facilities management staff (cleaners, janitors, etc.), school transport staff and other school-based staff who are critical to the effective delivery of school education.

If staff are working from home, and not attending school, they should not participate. This is because the goal of the programme is to minimise the risks of COVID-19 in the school environment.

Which ELC staff are included as part of the testing rollout?

All ELC and school-aged childcare staff working in settings attached to schools are included in the initial testing rollout.

What about ELC staff in settings other than schools?

With the exception of childminders, staff in all other ELC and childcare settings can currently access asymptomatic PCR testing through their employer if they have concerns about having been exposed to the virus.

We are working through the logistics of making the same testing available to standalone local authority ELC settings, and ELC settings and other day care of children services in the PVI sector.

What about childminders?

Consideration is being given to the clinical basis and practical options for expanding access to on-demand asymptomatic testing for childminders.

What are the key features of the programme?

Drawing on learning from pilots in pathfinder schools, we have worked with the UK Department for Health and Social Care and key stakeholders to agree a model of asymptomatic testing that is intended to be both effective and deliverable, minimising burdens on school staff while reducing risks in schools as part of a wider package of mitigations. The model involves the following:

- Schools will be provided with packs of Lateral Flow Device (LFD) test kits for staff and senior phase pupils.
- Schools will then be asked to distribute these test kits to consenting staff and senior phase pupils. Schools will be asked to keep a log of which kits have been distributed to which individuals. This is a regulatory requirement.
- Staff and senior phase pupils will take test kits home and, twice weekly, following clear instructions for use, perform the tests on themselves or with the support of a parent or guardian. They will then register both positive or negative results on a web-based portal, with the results shared with NHS Test and Protect. The processes that should be followed by individuals depending on a positive or negative result are clearly explained in the supporting guidance.
- Schools will be able to reorder test kits when they need to do so. The precise processes for doing so are still under development and will be communicated to schools as soon as they have been confirmed.

Is participation compulsory?

We expect all local authorities and schools will wish to participate and offer at home test kits to staff and senior phase pupils .

The programme is voluntary – nobody should be required to undergo testing without consent, and nobody should be excluded from school if they do not wish to test.

However, we are asking that school staff and senior phase pupils be strongly encouraged to participate, in order to contribute to the wellbeing of their school communities.
Staff who decline to participate should follow the usual national guidelines on self-isolation. Everyone should get tested if they show symptoms.

Do participants have to pay?
No. Tests are free of charge and will be provided to participants by the school.

How do staff and senior phase pupils use the test kits?
The Lateral Flow Devices (LFDs) supplied do not require laboratory processing and can provide a quick result in around 30 minutes. They involve self-swabbing and following a simple process to achieve a test result.

Comprehensive guidance on conducting self-testing is contained in the 'Instructions for Use' leaflet which will be provided with the test kit. Other guidance documents will be made available to schools.

Once the test has been conducted, staff and senior phase pupils must log the test result – whether positive, negative or void – online at www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result.

When will testing start?
Schools will begin to receive deliveries of test kits during the **week commencing 8th February**. They will be asked to distribute test kits as soon as possible to staff and senior phase pupils who attend schools when it is permitted to do so. Staff and senior phase pupils will be encouraged to begin testing as soon as they are able to do so.

Are the tests safe and accurate?
LFD tests have been widely and successfully used to detect coronavirus in asymptomatic individuals. No test is perfect, but the speed and convenience of LFD tests supports detection of the virus in asymptomatic individuals who would not otherwise be tested. They are clinically approved and are crucial in the fight against the virus. The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has authorised the use of these at-home tests for the purposes of detecting the virus in asymptomatic people.

LFD tests are very accurate, which means that only a very small proportion of people who do not have coronavirus will receive a positive result (false positive). The tests are better at picking up true positive cases when a person has a higher viral load and is more contagious. There is a risk of returning a false negative result when viral loads are low (e.g. in the early stages of infection). This is why Public Health Scotland recommend two LFD tests 3 to 4 days apart, or regular testing, to enhance

detection by picking up any cases which were not detected during the first test and to catch any new infections.

If you test positive using an LFD, it is likely that you are infectious at that moment, whereas people testing positive on a 'Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR)' test could be in the less infectious early or late stages of disease. This m eans that by using the LFD, we can identify people with a high viral load who are the most likely to spread the virus further.

How is the use of test kits monitored?

Schools are required to keep a log of all of the test kits distributed to staff. This is a regulatory requirement, and helps ensure that test kits are being distributed to eligible individuals and that any consistent problems (e.g. individuals requesting more kits than expected due to successive void results) can be picked up.

The UK Department of Health and Social Care may from time to time request that schools share this log (or extracts from it) to assist in monitoring and responding to issues with test kits.

How should results be reported?

All individuals doing home testing must register the test kits at www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result, and report the results whether positive, negative or void/invalid. Alternatively, you can report by telephone by calling 0300 303 2713 in Scotland.

What happens if staff or senior phase pupils test positive?

If a participant receives a positive result on their Lateral Flow Device at home, they must report the result online at www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result (or by calling 0300 303 2713 in Scotland), self-isolate and book a confirmatory PCR test. This can be done at www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test. We advise visiting a community or drive through test site as this is the quickest way to get tested, or participants can order a home test kit.

It is important that test subjects begin self-isolation immediately after they receive the positive result from the LFD test, and do not wait until the result of their PCR test.

What happens if the test result is "void"?

This means the test has not run correctly. Participants should report the result online at www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result. They need to take another test. They should use a new test kit, and not reuse anything from the first kit.

What if a staff member or pupil has been in close contact with someone who tests positive under the programme?

If a pupil or member of staff has tested positive, they will have to self-isolate as per government guidelines. The pupil or member of staff should also inform the school of their absence, and are strongly encouraged to report a positive case to their school to support contact tracing activities.

Test and Protect and/or the school will contact staff members and pupils who were in close contact with a positive case to inform them that they need to self-isolate.

Does testing replace the need for other mitigations (e.g. distancing, wearing of masks etc.)?

No. A negative LFD result must not be taken as leave to relax or ignore physical distancing or other measures intended to reduce transmission – LFD testing is an additional intervention that contributes to reducing risk.

What happens if someone has a problem with the tests?

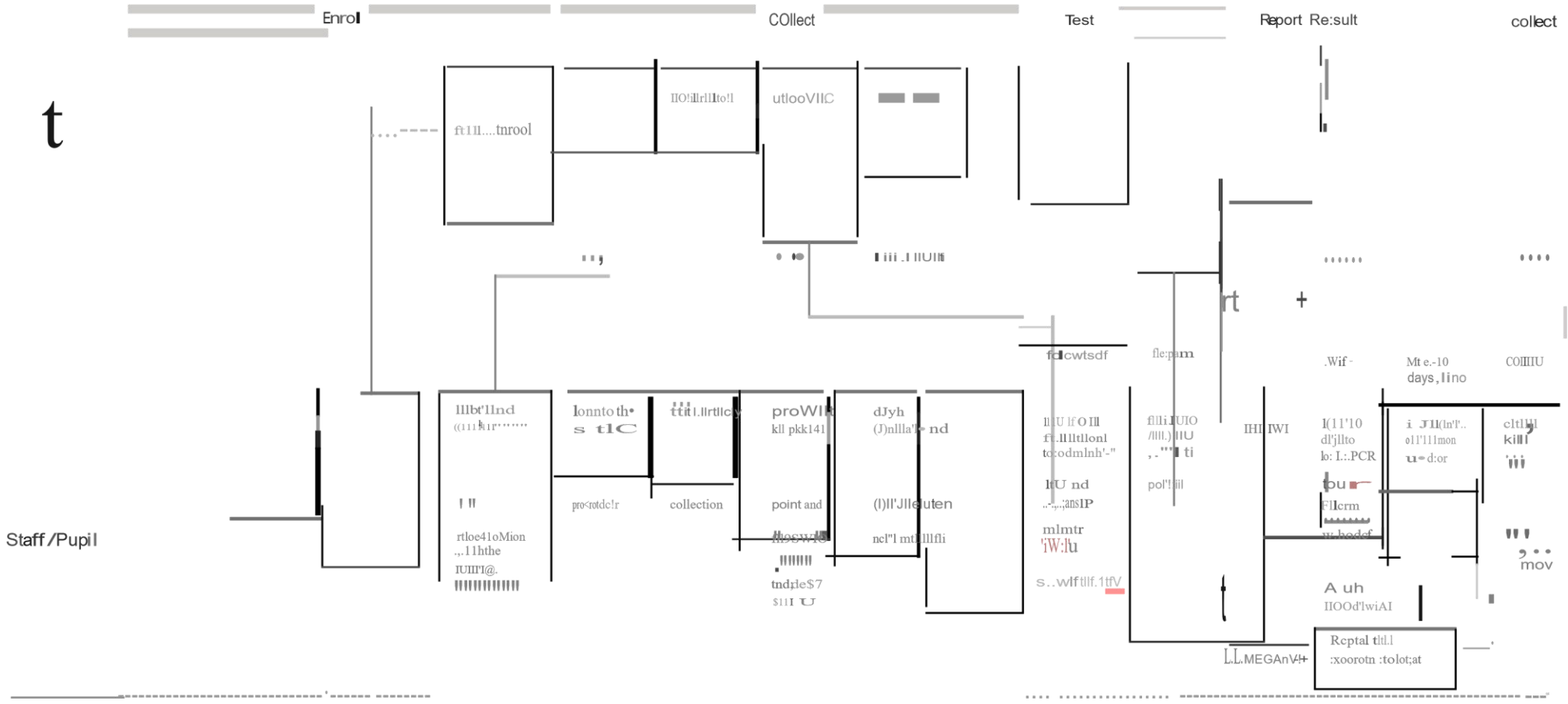
Any incidents that could potentially impact the quality or safety of testing should be reported to the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).

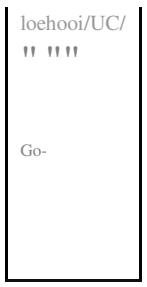
Incidents occurring in a home setting (for example: something damaged, or missing or difficult to use in the kit, unable to log result) should be reported to **0300 303 2713.**

If there is a clinical incident which led to, or has the potential for, harm (e.g. swab breaks in the mouth, bleeding, allergic reaction on using the kit etc.) this should be reported on https://coronavirusyellowcard.mhra.gov.uk.

This is not for seeking immediate medical care. Medical care should be sought through the usual route of contacting 111 or 999.

Annex: User journey





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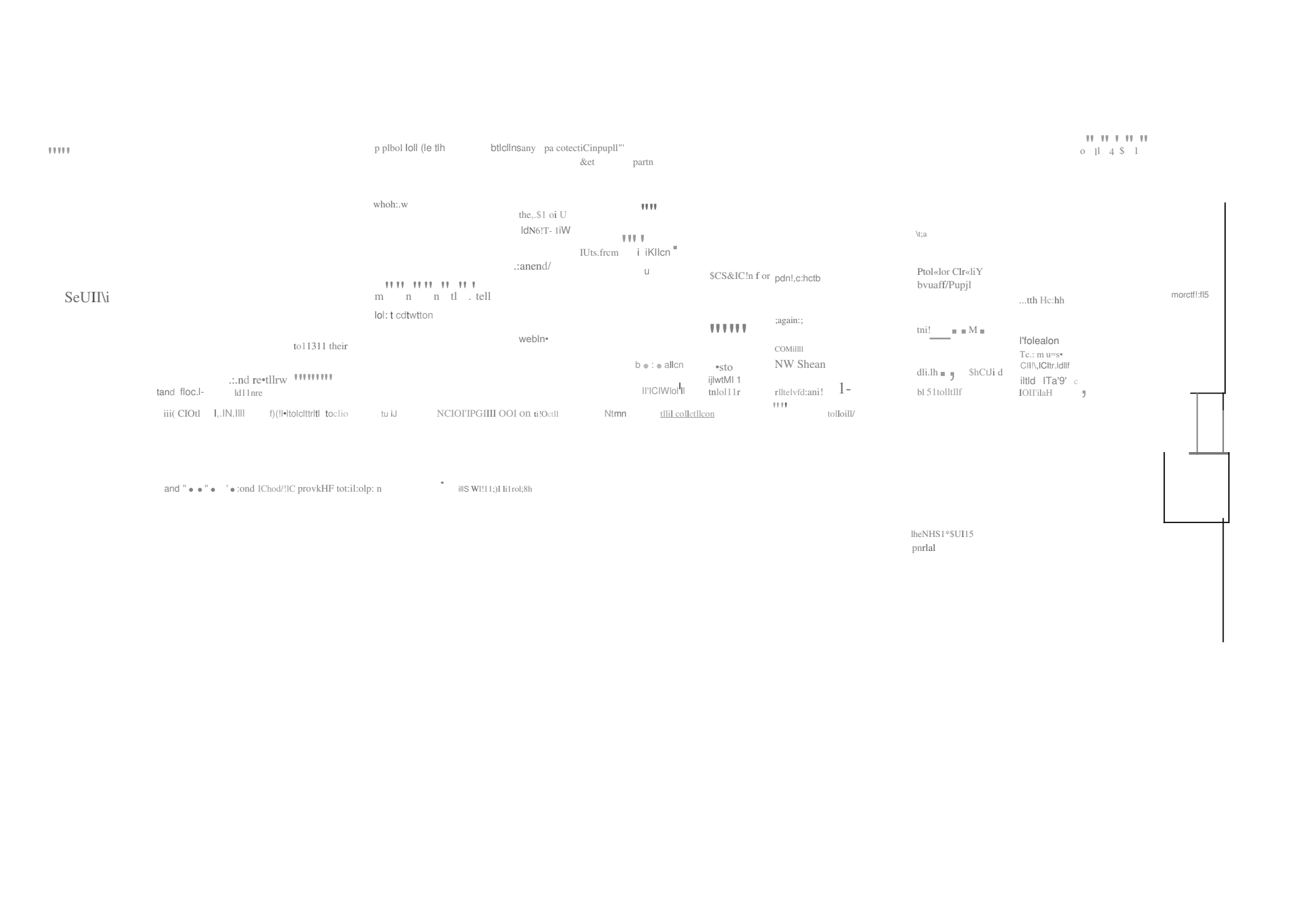
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