

**29<sup>th</sup> June 2020**

Deputy Róisín Shortall  
Dáil Éireann  
Kildare Street  
Dublin 2

**Re: PQ 11019/20**

**Question: “To ask the Minister for Health the number of Covid-19 tests carried out each day here since the start of February 2020, by county in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the current testing strategy”**

Dear Deputy Shortall,

I wish to apologise for the delay in issuing a response to your above question.

Due to the current demands of the Covid-19 pandemic and the numerous queries we have received to date it has taken longer than I would've liked to respond.

Please see attached the breakdown from the labs of Covid-19 tests per county per day since the start of February 2020.

The current testing strategy focuses on testing those who meet the case definition for COVID-19 and close contacts of confirmed cases. This assumes the case definition is regularly reviewed and updated in line with emerging evidence of new symptoms of COVID-19. A sensitive case definition is key to detecting as many cases of COVID-19 as possible.

Where outbreaks of COVID-19 occur in the community, a targeted testing approach will be required by Public Health as part of the investigation and control of the outbreak and will be defined by Public Health.

Where cases of COVID-19 occur in a setting where vulnerable populations are cared for/reside or where vulnerable workers are employed, testing will be based on Public Health risk assessment. This includes both acute and community-based settings, and workplaces, e.g. hospitals, nursing homes, residential care facilities (RCF), home care settings, direct provision centres, facilities for the homeless or Irish Traveller community settings. Public Health will maintain a high index of suspicion and a low threshold for testing.

COVID-19 testing has no role in decisions to re-open services for vulnerable groups, including addiction and detoxification services and Tusla (Child and family Agency). Similarly, there is no role for testing in decisions taken to re-open businesses in the public or private sector as lockdown restrictions ease.

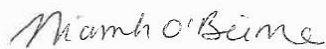
Much consideration has been given to the testing strategy for health care workers (HCWs). All symptomatic HCWs will be tested for SARS-CoV-2 if they fit the case definition for COVID-19. Asymptomatic HCWs will also be tested under certain circumstances, e.g. in the context of an outbreak in an acute (hospital) setting, all HCWs in the affected ward/unit/setting will be tested for SARS-CoV-2.

The National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE) has requested that the Health Service Executive implements a programme to perform weekly PCR/RNA testing for COVID-19 of all staff in Residential Care Facilities for Older Persons over a four-week period. This activity began the week commencing Monday June 22<sup>nd</sup> with tests being performed at each nursing home in the country once per week for four weeks.

Patients in the hospital setting will be tested according to agreed protocols for various clinical scenarios, including day case procedures, planned hospital admissions for non-COVID care and in the outpatient care setting.

I trust this clarifies the question and many thanks again for your time yesterday.

Yours sincerely,



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**Niamh O'Beirne**  
**National Lead for Testing and Tracing**