



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte, Aonad 7A, Áras
Dargan, An Ceantar Theas, Baile Átha Cliath 8
T: 076 695 9991

Health Service Executive, Unit 7A, The Dargan Building,
Heuston South Quarter, Dublin 8
T: 076 695 9991

30th June 2020

Deputy Boyd Barrett,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House
Dublin 2

PQ Ref 11553/20 To ask the Minister for Health the length of time between all persons with suspected cases of Covid-19 that requested a test and the completion of the contact tracing for these cases in the weeks commencing 18 and 25 May and 1 June 2020, by county; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Boyd Barrett,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response. I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position.

Please note that the HSE does not report on contact tracing detail by county, so the figures provided below are national.

The process of requesting a test to completion of contact tracing has a number of steps as set out below:

1. Member of the public contacts their General Practitioner due to displaying symptoms of Covid, or related concerns. The GP then refers the person via an electronic referral system for a swab.
2. The member of the public is notified of a date to attend for a swab, which involves collecting a nasal and throat sample.
3. The samples are then referred to a laboratory for testing.
4. The detected results (positive) or not detected results (negative) are reported to the HSE and are uploaded onto the Covid Care Tracker IT system.
5. Patients with a detected result will receive a call advising them of the result; asking after their health and whether they require any support; and providing them with the public health advice to self-isolate and advise the household contacts to restrict their movements. They will also be asked to think about anyone they were in close contact with (less than two metres for 15 minutes or more) since 48 hours before they symptoms began, and write down those contact numbers. They will then receive a second call, approximately one hour later, to collect the phone numbers for all their close contacts. Then each of their close contacts will receive a call, advising them that they are a close contact of a confirmed case; assessing if they have symptoms; and advising

them to restrict their movements for 14 days from the time they were in contact with the confirmed case.

As the process above demonstrates there are a number of steps involved from referral to contact tracing. In particular delays can occur where incorrect phone numbers are provided, or people do not answer their phone. If a person with a detected result does not answer the phone, they will receive a total of five calls, each a minimum of one hour apart and the fifth must occur the following day. Voice messages are left on calls 1, 3 and 5. For close contacts they get three calls, each an hour apart and the final call occurs the following day. Voice messages are left on calls 1 and 3.

In the period requested in your question, the following sets out the number of confirmed cases each week, and the average and median time to complete the process from referral to contact tracing.

For patients whom the Contract Management Programme has referral and contact tracing information available for in the period 18th May to 5th June, the contact tracing completion timeline is indicated below:

Week ending 22nd of May

916 confirmed cases, median time from referral to contact tracing was 3.0 days, and the mean time was 3.83 days.

Week ending 29th of May

722 confirmed cases, median time from referral to contact tracing was 3.0 days, and the mean time was 4.0 days.

Week ending 6th of June

295 confirmed cases, median time from referral to contact tracing was 4.0 days and the mean was 3.72 days. (Please note that during the course of this week, there was a data cleansing exercise carried out on the national system during which a number of historic cases were closed on the system, causing the median time to be pushed out.)

I trust this clarifies the matter.

Yours sincerely,



**Mary-Jo Biggs,
General Manager**