



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

10<sup>th</sup> June 2020.

Deputy: Reada Cronin

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**PQ7976/20:**

**Question:** To ask the Minister for Health the reason testing and tracing is still taking up to ten days while a laboratory (details supplied) is not running at full capacity with staff, many of whom left jobs at home and abroad to join Be on Call for Ireland, having shifts cancelled - Réada Cronin.

**Details Supplied: the Enfer testing laboratory in Naas**

Dear Deputy Cronin,

I refer to the above Parliamentary Question.

The HSE had to develop a national testing and tracing model for up to 15,000 tests a day from a low base of a couple of thousand tests per day. This had to be done in weeks to meet the immediate need of the pandemic response. In a short time 50 sampling centres and 48 laboratories were put in place. In addition there were serious challenges in securing sufficient reagent and test kits for the laboratory that had to be overcome. This is now in place.

While there were significant delays in test results in the early days of this operation the turnaround times have improved significantly with the opening of all the additional testing capacity. Turnaround time is now under three days. As with any laboratory system, let alone one established at the pace which was required as part of the pandemic response, we appreciate that for various reasons samples can be delayed. As a result we have established a GP helpline and also have the HSE information line service for people whose samples may be delayed.

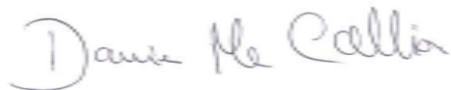
Enfer is a key part of the HSE's overall capacity. Since joining the Covid-19 laboratory network in mid April Enfer has reported on over 100,000 tests.

Demand has eased over recent weeks as societal measures have thankfully had a positive impact. This means the laboratories are not currently fully utilised at this time. You have highlighted the difficulties this gives labs in scheduling services and the impact on their staff. We are working closely with them to minimise any impact.

Clearly, while it is positive that demand for testing has reduced in this context forecasting future demand for testing is subject to a range of unknown inputs at this point in time. A core focus of the national response to the pandemic is to ensure we retain capacity in the event of a future surge of the virus.

I trust this information is of assistance to you, but should you have any further queries please contact me.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Damien McCallion". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D'.

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**Damien McCallion**  
**National Director, HSE**