

13th November 2020

Deputy Eoghan Murphy
Dáil Éireann
Kildare Street
Dublin 2

Re: PQ 33174/20 Question: “To ask the Minister for Health the protocol and processes in place when the first contact with a positive Covid-19 case does not cooperate with the requirements to provide contacts for tracing”.

Dear Deputy Murphy,

I refer to the above Parliamentary Question which has been referred by the Minister for Health to the Health Service Executive for direct response.

We are conducting a study of compliance which may guide us in future communications and contact tracing work. The importance of complying with Public Health advice continues to be an essential part of the Public Health message. The contact tracing process is a three call process. Call 1 informs the patient of the result, checks their health status and provides the necessary Public Health advice. Call 2 collects the details of people who are deemed close contacts, from 48 hours prior to the onset of symptoms. Call 3 is calling the close contacts, advising them to restrict their movements and arranging for them to be referred for a test.

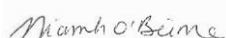
The vast majority of people listen to, and engage with the Public Health advice when contacted. On occasions there can be some fear and distress and our contact tracers are trained to take the necessary time to ensure the person fully understands the process, and how important it is to the country's response to Covid-19, that they follow the Public Health advice. If a tracer finds a person very reluctant to engage, or difficult to deal with, they will escalate to a supervisor who will endeavour to resolve the situation. There is also the option of referring the person to the relevant Department of Public Health for further engagement.

When a person becomes a close contact of a confirmed case, they are referred for a test on day 0 and day 7. Day 0 is the day they are identified as a close contact, and day 7 is seven days after they were in contact with the confirmed case. We have had increased numbers attending both tests.

It is important to note that not attending for a test does not necessarily indicate a refusal on behalf of the individual to participate in testing. There are a variety of reasons why people do not attend, and this can include where a person becomes symptomatic between the first and second test, contacts their GP, and tests positive. Even if a person does not attend for a test, if they restrict their movements for 14 days, they are complying with the most important Public Health advice.

I trust this addresses your question.

Yours sincerely,



Niamh O'Beirne
National Lead for Testing and Tracing