

20th November 2020

Deputy Sean Sherlock
Dáil Éireann
Kildare Street
Dublin 2

Re: PQ 34079/20

Question: “To ask the Minister for Health if he will open testing centres in north and east County Cork in view of the fact that two centres are operating in Cork city”.

Dear Deputy Costello,

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

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.

The Health Service Executive (HSE) has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question, which you submitted to the Minister for response.

The HSE provides Covid-19 testing in the community as part of its pandemic response. There are currently 37 testing centres in operation nationally, a combination of permanent Community Testing Centres and temporary “pop-up” testing centres. Currently all counties in Ireland have at least one testing centre with the exception of County Leitrim where a centre will open in November 2020.

As part of the HSE Test and Trace Operational Model a comprehensive assessment of locations for the establishment of Community Testing Centres was undertaken with the goal to establish at least one testing centre in each county and to ensure that well in excess of 90% of the population have access to a testing centre within a 45 minute drive from their residence. This assessment evaluated criteria, including suitability and sustainability of the location as a long term testing centre as well as the location of this centre relative to observed travel times to test centre. This concluded that the establishment of facilities in both north and south Cork City and in Dunmanway best met these criteria for testing centres in Cork providing good access to members of the public requiring testing from throughout the county.

At this time, there are no plans to open an additional testing centre in Cork county. However, the HSE continually monitors the demand for testing and attendance rates on both a regional and local level in order to ensure that Covid-19 testing is available to all persons quickly. As needed, increased capacity for testing is added. This is accomplished through the extension of testing centre opening hours and, as needed, the set-up of additional temporary testing centres.

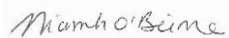
Further, the HSE provides information on its website for members of the public in relation to attending for a Covid-19 test in the community. The content of the website provides detailed

guidance on travelling to a test centre. A GP can request a home test if the person's medical condition makes them unable to attend a test centre, which is provided by the National Ambulance Service.

The HSE Covid-19 Community Testing Service is committed to the timely provision of safe, accessible, quality swabbing services within the community setting.

I trust this addresses your question.

Yours sincerely,



Niamh O'Beirne
National Lead for Testing and Tracing