

**2<sup>nd</sup> December 2020**

Deputy Eoghan Murphy  
Dáil Éireann  
Kildare Street  
Dublin 2

**Re: PQ: 37579/20 Question: To ask the Minister for Health the estimated cost to his Department of carrying out Covid-19 tests; the breakdown of the constituent costs of each part of the tests; and if the prices are in line with international prices.”**

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.

The end-to-end testing and tracing service pathway comprises four stages, as briefly outlined below.

**1. Referrals:**

The process of referring someone for a COVID-19 test and arranging an appointment. This is the first stage of the service pathway.

**2. Swabbing**

At present, we test for COVID-19 by taking a sample from the nose and the throat. We use a swab to collect the sample. We test the sample in the laboratory (using a swab). This is the second stage of the service pathway.

**3. Laboratories**

The process of analysing the sample via the laboratory testing process – either in a community or acute laboratory. This is the third stage of the service pathway.

**4. Results and Contact Tracing**

The Results process involves communicating the COVID-19 test result to the user. The Contact Tracing process identifies people who were in close contact with someone who is a confirmed case. This is the fourth stage of the service pathway.

Whilst we don't have a breakdown of the constituent costs of each part, the total expenditure on this testing and tracing process to the end-October is estimated at €256 million. This includes c.€60.5 million on referrals / swabbing, c. €182 million on laboratory testing, c. €900k on contact tracing and c. €13 million on other costs (i.e. IT and other support services).

This expenditure is additional incremental expenditure by the HSE and does not include the costs associated with the existing HSE and other public sector staff assigned to our Testing and Tracing Programme.

The HSE has benchmarked our costs as best we can at each key stage. It should be noted that in the initial response to the pandemic there was increased international competition for capacity and testing platforms. Challenges remain in this regard the HSE procurement continue to monitor the market to ensure we can maintain sustained supply lines for critical supplies to out testing

pathways. In addition, the HSE has continued to review its contracts with third-party laboratory testing providers and re-negotiate prices where possible, resulting in considerable cost savings being achieved.

In addition, the HSE has a regular financial monitoring process in place over our testing and tracing expenditure.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,



---

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