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Deputy Catherine Murphy  
Dail Eireann  
Leinster House  
Kildare Street  
Dublin 2

1st December 2020

**PQ ref: 37723/20**

**Question: To ask the Minister for Health the details of locations at which persons may access a free HIV test; the details of waiting lists by location for HIV tests; and if delays in HIV testing related to the demand placed on the healthcare system due to Covid-19**

Dear Deputy Murphy,

Thank you for your question to the Minister for Health, which was forwarded to my office to respond to you directly.

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to unprecedented interruptions to normal healthcare activity, with most services affected, including public STI clinics and related testing services. Some facilities have been affected by the necessary redeployment of personnel to COVID-19 testing and contact tracing duties. Community HIV testing services have also been affected as many of the testing venues are closed.

HIV testing is included within a standard STI test and is free in public STI clinics. Nationally there are 22 public STI services: <https://www.sexualwellbeing.ie/sexual-health/hse-sti-services-in-ireland.html>. As a result of social distancing requirements, public STI clinics are continuing to face service restrictions, as waiting rooms can now only hold a fraction of patients compared to before the pandemic. Most clinics are operating an appointment only system and priority is being given to those with symptoms or requiring treatment. Generally those who have symptoms would be seen within a week and waiting lists for asymptomatic testing are likely to vary across clinics and depend on clinic space and capacity. The Gay Men's Health Service in Dublin 8 remains closed due to the redeployment of personnel.

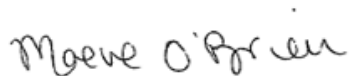
The HSE provides funding to community NGO partners who work with populations at higher risk of HIV. Free rapid HIV testing is available in Dublin, Cork, Galway and

Limerick through community NGO partners HIV Ireland, Sexual Health Centre Cork, Sexual Health West and GOSHH. As many community testing venues are closed due to COVID-19, the NGO partners have adapted their services and are currently providing free rapid HIV testing from their offices or alternative venues. More detail is available on their websites.

In general, work is ongoing with services, stakeholders and community groups in order to provide the best possible information and options to service users under the circumstances. Resources such as <https://www.sexualwellbeing.ie/>, <https://man2man.ie/> and <https://www.hivireland.ie/> are regularly updated to reflect the realities of current service delivery and to signpost users to the services they need, including currently available HIV testing options.

At a national level, the HSE advise that staff recruitment is ongoing with regard to the dedicated provision of COVID-19 services. It is envisaged that this will enable redeployed staff to return to their respective positions and resume service delivery in due course.

Yours Sincerely



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**Maeve O'Brien**

Interim Programme Lead

Sexual Health & Crisis Pregnancy Programme