

16th October 2020

Deputy Sorca Clarke
Dáil Éireann
Kildare Street
Dublin 2

Re: PQ 27711/20

Question: “To ask the Minister for Health the longest distance a person will be expected to travel to get a Covid-19 test”.

Dear Deputy Clarke,

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.

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 is currently being planned, with well in excess of 90% of the population having access to a Community Testing Centre within 45 minutes travel time from their place of residence. Members of the public living in more remote areas of the country, such as the extremities of counties at the Western seaboard will have a longer travel time but all have access to at least one testing centre within their county of residence. For members of the public who are medically unable to travel to a Community Testing Centre a home test is offered by the National Ambulance Service.

Centres operate on an appointment only basis, providing appointments for people with suspected Covid-19 symptoms referred by their GP. In addition close contacts of positive cases are referred by the HSE Contact Tracing Team for Covid-19 testing in the centres. Many testing centres support drive through testing and all accommodate appointments in the test centre itself to those that arrive on foot or bicycle.

The HSE continually monitors the demand for testing on both a national and regional 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. In the past two weeks temporary testing centres have opened in Donegal, Galway, Cork, Meath Wexford and Dublin in response to local increased demand.



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Oifig Niamh O'Beirne, ,Ceannasaí Náisiúnta Tástála agus Rianaithe
Ospidéal an Dr. Steevens, Baile Átha Cliath 8, D08 W2A8

Office of Niamh O' Beirne, National Lead for Testing & Tracing
Dr Steevens' Hospital, Steevens' Lane, Dublin D08 W2A8

The HSE Covid-19 Community Testing Service is committed to the timely provision of safe, accessible, quality swabbing services within the community setting. Over the past seven days, over 93% of all persons referred for testing were offered a test appointment on the same or next day

I trust this clarifies the issue you have raised.

Yours sincerely,

Niamh O'Beirne

Niamh O'Beirne
National Lead for Testing and Tracing