



**Health Protection Surveillance Centre**  
25-27 Middle Gardiner Street  
Dublin, Ireland, D01 A4A3

22<sup>nd</sup> October 2020

**PQ Number: 24874/20, Joe McHugh, T.D.**

*PQ Question: To ask the Minister for Health the measures in place to ensure instant communication is made with the HSE when a student is tested positive for Covid-19 in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter.*

Dear Mr. McHugh,

Situation: A student resides in or is from Northern Ireland but attends an educational institution in the republic of Ireland. If that student is tested for COVID-19 in Northern Ireland what is the communication stratify between Northern Ireland and the republic of Ireland to communicate this positive result and subsequently to the educational facility.

If a student is tested in Northern Ireland and the test result is positive for COVID-19 that result is texted to the student to alert them regarding the positive diagnosis. The laboratory confirmation is uploaded to a database warehouse which sends updates twice daily to the Northern Ireland contact tracing database. The student is then contacted by the contact tracing team in Northern Ireland, their diagnosis is discussed, recommendations are given in line with the current guidelines and they are contact traced. During the contact tracing process, they are asked about settings where they have been, as far back as 48 hours prior to symptom onset. This is because evidence suggests that the student is potentially infectious during the 48 hours prior to symptom onset. If an educational facility is identified in this time frame, our Northern Ireland colleagues contact the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) in the Republic of Ireland by encrypted email to alert us of this complex setting. This email is acknowledged by reply.

Once HPSC are alerted, HPSC contact the Department of Public Health (DPH) in which the educational setting is located and inform them that there has been a positive case of COVID-19 in the educational setting, usually by email. The date when the positive case last attended the setting is also communicated as well as contact details of the positive student. The student is uploaded by the DPH as a positive case of COVID-19 on the Case Management Programme database (CMP). The Department of Public Health then contacts the student to identify all the classes and other potential exposures that could have occurred while in the Republic of Ireland and infectious. The educational setting is then contacted by the DPH to alert them that a positive case of COVID-19 had been identified in their institution. The DPH then works with the educational institution concerned to investigate and put in place all necessary infection prevention and control measures. This includes identifying students and teachers that may have been exposed to the positive case of COVID-19. These

people are in turn either contacted by the Department of Public Health or a contact tracing centre in the Republic of Ireland. They are informed that they are a close contact, told to restrict their movements and a test is arranged. If the close contacts are symptomatic, they are told to self-isolate and a test is arranged for them. I trust that this response answers your query.

Yours sincerely,

**Kirsty MacKenzie**

Knowledge Management and Communications Officer  
HSE-Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC)