



13th Jan 2022

Deputy David Cullinane,
Dáil Éireann,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2

Issued via email to: david.cullinane@oireachtas.ie

PQ Number: 62679/21

Question: To ask the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to a policy of requiring patients presenting at some hospitals or at HSE Covid-19 testing facilities to wear a surgical mask rather than higher grade masks such as FFP2 and N95 which they arrived with and the requirement to replace the latter with a surgical mask should a patient present with one; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Cullinane,

I refer to the above Parliamentary Question which has been referred by the Minister for Health to the Health Service Executive for direct response and apologise for the delay in responding to same.

Wish to advise that it is practice in the test centres that a clean surgical mask is provided to people when they attend for a testing appointment. It is not feasible to determine if a mask worn by a member of the public has been freshly applied when they present for a Covid-19 test.

We have considered the concerns expressed by some members of the public. While we continue to offer a clean surgical mask and consider that this is the appropriate mask for use in this setting, testing centres will accept that people with a clear preference may wear their own mask provided that it is intact, visibly clean and covers the nose and mouth completely.

The HSE Covid-19 Community Testing Service is committed to the timely provision of safe, accessible, quality swabbing services within the community setting. To note Covid-19 testing is one part of the strategy in relation to managing the pandemic. It is key that the public continue to follow Public Health guidance, such as hand hygiene, mask wearing and keeping socially distanced to help in the prevention of the spread of Covid-19.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Damien McCallion
National Director
National Lead Test & Trace and Vaccination Programme