

24th February 2021

Deputy Róisín Shortall
Dáil Éireann
Kildare Street
Dublin 2

Re: PQ 9116/21 Question: “To ask the Minister for Health the capacity of each individual Covid-19 testing centre; the average number of tests completed per day in each of the past four weeks in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter.”

Dear Deputy Shortall,

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 HSE provides Covid-19 testing in the community as part of its pandemic response. There are currently 36 testing centres in operation nationally, a combination of permanent Community Testing Centres and temporary “pop-up” testing centres. I’m sure you can understand we cannot comment on individual facilities but the overall capacity for testing within this network is set such that it ensures that it can consistently deliver 15,000 swabs per day. We also ensure that across the network there is sufficient flex capacity on a local level to meet any localised surge in demand.

The following summarises the number of swabs taken at the Community Testing Centres in the last 4 weeks:

Week Commencing	Number of swabs
25 th January 2021	36,165
1 st February 2021	34,264
8 th February 2021	31,964
15 th February 2021	29,177

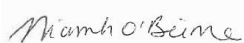
Currently all counties in Ireland have at least one testing centre which ensures that well in excess of 90% of the population have access to a testing centre within a 45-minute drive from their residence. Centres operate on an appointment only basis, providing appointments for people with suspected Covid-19 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. The HSE continually monitors the demand for testing on both a national, regional and local level in order to ensure that Covid-19 testing is available to all persons quickly.

Testing Centres opening hours may alter in response to observed demand and as needed, increased capacity for testing is added. This is accomplished through the extension of testing centre opening hours and expansion of available testing stations within a centre. Further, deployment of mobile pop-up units operated by the National Ambulance Services provides the system with ability to add additional temporary testing centres where demand requires this. This ability to deliver against a surge in demand was evidenced in the most recent surge when in excess of 20,000 testing appointments were offered on individual days at testing centres.

I trust this addresses your question.

Yours sincerely,



Niamh O'Beirne
National Lead Testing and Tracing