

10th February 2021

**Deputy Paul McAuliffe
Dail Eireann
Leinster House
Kildare Street
Dublin 2**

Re: PQ 4266/21

Question: “To ask the Minister for Health if there was a backlog of undelivered text messages notifying close contacts of positive Covid-19 cases of their status as of 18 January 2021; and if so, the number of text messages that were undelivered.”

Dear Deputy McAuliffe,

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 advise that we have looked into this matter with a particular focus on the timeframe you refer to, the date of 18th January 2021 and we have not identified a backlog of undelivered text messages sent to close contacts of detected COVID-19 cases.

On the 18th of January 2021, 2892 SMS notifications were scheduled to issue to close contacts of detected Covid-19 cases. Of this total figure, 2737 were identified as delivered and 155 returned a status of failed or undelivered. The percentage of texts that returned a status of failed or undelivered on this date was 5.36% which is in line with expected SMS delivery failure ratios. SMS notifications and delivery/non delivery of the same are kept under review by the CMP as part of operational management processes.

In an instance where an SMS message fails or is undelivered, the contacts will remain on the Call 3 queue for a phone call. The current practice is that Contact Tracing Centre (CTC) staff make 5 attempts to call contacts over the course of 2 days. In some instances, the phone number provided is a landline and those people will receive a call. In instances where there are issues with the mobile number provided, the CTC staff make efforts to locate or correct the number e.g. by calling the Index case again to check the number provided. If CTC staff cannot make contact within the 5 call attempts the contacts are closed and marked as ‘Unable to Inform’.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,



**Niamh O'Beirne
National Lead Testing and Tracing**