



8th February 2021

Deputy Matt Carthy
Dáil Éireann
Kildare Street
Dublin 2

Re: PQ 4908/21

Question: “To ask the Minister for Health the average waiting time before a person unable to attend a Covid-19 test centre in person is contacted by a community health team; and if he will make a statement on the matter”.

Dear Deputy Carthy,

I refer to the above Parliamentary Question which has been referred by the Minister for Health to the Health Service Executive for direct response.

Community testing is a key component of the National Covid-19 strategy. Community testing ensures that testing facilities are available for people who experience symptoms of Covid-19 and / or have been in close contact with a confirmed case of Covid-19.

Referrals for a Covid-19 test may be made by a patient's GP if they are experiencing symptoms or it may be made routinely if they are a close contact of a confirmed case. A GP may select the option that a person is unable to travel, requiring a home visit, and in this case the referral is automatically routed to the list for the National Ambulance Service without the need for contact by the Community Testing Team.

Should a person receive a text message with an appointment at a test centre, they have the option to select that they are unable to attend an appointment and that they want to be contacted by the Community Testing Team. There is a dedicated team in each area who follow up with people, and will assign the referral to the National Ambulance Service when this is appropriate.

The overall turnaround times show timely appointments with c. 95% of people in the past 7 days having their appointment within 24 hours of the referral. The current turnaround time for persons being tested at home by the National Ambulance Service is 24 – 48 hours. We continue to keep sharp focus on end-to-end turnaround times, highlighting any opportunity for improvement, while recognising that some cases are increasingly complex in nature.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

Niamh O'Beirne
National Lead Testing and Tracing

