



29<sup>th</sup> June 2021

Deputy Michael McNamara  
Dáil Éireann  
Kildare Street  
Dublin 2

**PQ 22975/21 “To ask the Minister for Health the overall expenditure on PCR testing to date; if he will itemise the breakdowns in totals payment to the entities supplying PCR test kits and or laboratory services; and if he will make a statement on the matter.”**

Dear Deputy McNamara,

I refer to the above Parliamentary Question which has been referred by the Minister for Health to the Health Service Executive for direct response. We have not been in a position to issue our response until now due to the Cyberware attack on our systems but please now see below information.

I wish to advise the attached Appendix provides the most up to date overall expenditure on PCR testing.

At the start of the pandemic in early 2020 Ireland like many countries were highly reliant on testing capacity within its acute hospital network, public analyst laboratories and the National Virus Reference Laboratory (NVRL). This was combined with volume from a small number of commercial clinical diagnostics providers for routine testing. The Department of Health and NPHET recognised the requirement for greater capacity. As an emergency response mechanism the HSE acquired access to ‘off shore’ testing in early 2020 at a time when Europe was experiencing substantial clinical diagnostic shortages, and access to SARS-CoV-2 testing was severely limited at a global level. The HSE retained access to this off-shore facility to ensure that surge capacity could be obtained if required.

Additionally, much of the laboratory materials required to conduct testing in early-mid 2020 were also in global short supply. The NVRL (UCD), in partnership with the HSE, played a key role in augmenting the national acute testing capacity through its own expansion, and its relationship with the Department of Agriculture, Food & Marine (DAFM) and associated laboratories. The HSE simultaneously embarked on a programme to increase the capacity of the acute hospital system.

In response to direction from the Department of Health and NPHET, the HSE had increased its acute hospital capacity for Winter 2020/2021. In anticipation of an additional wave of Covid-19 and in preparation for the winter season NVRL (UCD) in collaboration with DAFM, commenced operation of a dedicated Covid-19 testing facility at Backweston. By Winter 2020/2021 the HSE had increased its access to testing (through a combination of expanded acute hospital capacity, NVRL and commercial providers) to over 22k per day by January 2021, with additional off-shore capacity available upon demand. Off-shore testing was last utilised by the HSE in early 2021.

The HSE recognises the role of commercial providers in supporting the Covid-19 response programme and the value of additional capacity at times of significant surge. All contracts are commercially confidential to the individual providers. Clinical diagnostics services are part of the standard HSE procurement programme, and it is anticipated that the HSE will issue requests to tender over the coming months.

I trust this addresses your question.

Yours sincerely,

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



### Appendix: Breakdown of costs for Private Labs & State Resources:

	Mar-20	Apr-20	May-20	Jun-20	Jul-20	Aug-20	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20	Jan-21	Feb-21	Mar-21	Apr-21	TOTAL
	€	€	€	€	€	€	€	€	€	€	€	€	€	€	€
<b>Private Labs</b>	3,221,217	8,099,674	10,190,324	13,381,783	13,174,590	12,431,541	20,932,270	28,463,421	18,018,214	25,274,619	35,883,070	21,217,731	19,513,246	19,730,985	249,532,686
<b>State Resources</b>	3,484,945	10,887,221	10,980,865	8,708,515	10,212,264	7,289,641	10,287,189	11,555,952	9,796,484	9,381,341	9,178,957	8,779,135	10,810,030	9,706,554	131,059,094