

3rd Dec. 2021

Deputy Peadar Tóibín,
Dáil Éireann,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2

Issued via email to: peadar.toibin@oireachtas.ie

PQ Number: 58435/21

Question: To ask the Minister for Health the results of the antigen pilots that occurred in the childcare sector (details supplied).

Dear Deputy Tóibín,

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 Health Service Executive supported the roll-out of an antigen testing pilot programmes in a number of childcare facilities. Over 200 staff across 19 childcare sites completed the pilot programme. The purpose of the pilots was to assess the operational feasibility of rolling out an antigen testing programme. The HSE, working with the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth used these pilots to learn more about how antigen testing might be used more widely in childcare settings. To note, the pilot programme involved staff only and the testing of children was outside the scope of the pilot.

There were 1,232 antigen test results reported directly from pilot sites in the first phase of the programme with only 1 recorded result being positive and which was confirmed on PCR testing. For the second phase, from 17th September onwards, results could be reported directly through the online system. There were 855 antigen results reported on the online platform, of which 184 were positive and 104 confirmed on PCR testing. However, these results were self-reported and not tracked directly to the pilot sites so could include other antigen users from within the childcare sector but outside of the antigen testing pilot programme.

Further to guidance from the National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE) the HSE recently implemented antigen testing for close contacts in the community. On Monday 29th November the provision of antigen tests for asymptomatic children and staff in Primary schools, who are identified as members of a pod with a confirmed Covid-19 case also commenced. The HSE continues to actively engage with the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth on the operational aspects of implementing the wider use of antigen testing in childcare settings which would follow a similar pathway to that used in Primary Schools.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely,



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