

4th October 2021

Deputy Cian O'Callaghan,
Dáil Éireann,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2

PQ 44495/21 “To ask the Minister for Health the length of time it takes for schools with a Covid-19 case to be sent the relevant excel spreadsheet forms by the central admissions team to collect contact details and other required data; and if he will make a statement on the matter. - Cian O'Callaghan.”

Dear Deputy O'Callaghan,

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

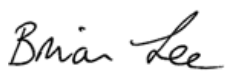
The Schools Covid 19 Testing Pathway was a key enabler to support the safe return to childcare / school at the end of Aug / early Sept 2021. The pathway is triggered following a public health risk assessment undertaken to establish if the Covid 19 detected (positive) individual was in the childcare / school environment during the infectious stage. Relevant close contacts are identified as part of this risk assessment and an 'excel' template is circulated to the service / school, by the Central Administration Team, to facilitate the collection of all necessary data to allow Covid 19 testing to be arranged and the contact tracing process of the identified individuals to be undertaken.

In early September 2021, due to the very high levels of public health risk assessments being undertaken in child care facilities / school settings i.e. up to 255 per day, there was an associated significant demand for school referral 'excel' templates experienced which led to delays in having these requests processed. Additional resourcing of the Central Administration Team and changes to the data requirements led to improvements in template circulation times with templates provided within on average two hours and 11 minutes of a sample taken in the week beginning 20th September.

A policy change was advised by NPHE where by the routine testing and contact tracing of asymptomatic children aged between 3 months and 13 years in early learning, school age childcare and education settings ceased with effect from Monday 27th September 2021. With the revised policy context, in the week beginning 27th September, there has been a significant reduction in the demand for schools referral templates which has again impacted on template circulation times, with templates now provided within on average 1 hour and 31 minutes.

I trust this addresses your question.

Yours sincerely,



Brian Lee
Assistant National Director
Head of Operations Monitoring & Improvement – Test and Trace