

20th Jan. 2022

Deputy Duncan Smith,
Dáil Éireann,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2

Issued via email to: duncan.smith@oireachtas.ie

PQ Number: 63259/21

Question: To ask the Minister for Health his plans to introduce a Covid-19 testing centre in Drogheda, County Louth; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Smith,

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 HSE has operated a Community Testing Centre in Co. Louth since March 2020. In line with the National Test and Trace Operational Model, a long term location was established to serve the people of Co. Louth. This site is located in Ardee and was selected following a detailed evaluation as it best met defined criteria including suitability and sustainability of the location as a long term testing centre, as well as the location of centres relative to observed travel times, noting travel times from both Dundalk and Drogheda less than 25 minutes.

The test centre in Ardee has consistently offered in excess of 600 appointments per day. Testing Centres are continuously evaluated to ensure that capacity meets demand, including extension of opening hours and addition of testing stations to existing sites.

The HSE continually evaluate options to augment capacity in specific areas experiencing very high level of demands through the use of pop-up Testing Centres. A pop-up testing centre was in operation in December in Co Louth on the dates below adding additional capacity for PCR testing to the Louth area –

- Dundalk: 2nd – 3rd December; 6th December; 9th – 10th December; 16th – 18th December, 20th – 22nd December, 29th – 31st December
- Drogheda: 4th – 5th December; 11th – 12th December; 18th – 19th December

In order to increase testing capacity, the HSE has engaged with private providers, with ten test centres open to date. In light of the continued high demand for testing in the North East, HSE entered into an agreement with a private provider who has access to a venue in Dundalk. This is providing additional capacity for testing in Co. Louth. It opened on 1st January and has offered over 4,000 appointments.

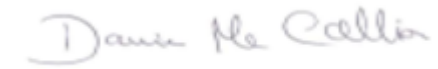
The HSE will continue to monitor demand for testing in all areas and where possible provide additional support to individual areas as capacity allows.

The HSE Covid-19 Community Testing Service is committed to the timely provision of safe, accessible, quality swabbing services within the community setting. To note Covid-19 testing is one part of the strategy in relation to managing the pandemic. It is key that the public continue to follow Public Health guidance, such as hand hygiene, mask wearing and keeping socially distanced to help in the prevention of the spread of Covid-19.

I can assure you that both our Vaccination and Test & Trace Programmes are absolutely committed to ensuring appropriate access points to our services in County Louth and surrounding areas.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Damien McCallion". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

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