

17<sup>th</sup> June 2022

Deputy Sean Canney,  
Dáil Éireann,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2

Issued via email to: [sean.canney@oireachtas.ie](mailto:sean.canney@oireachtas.ie)

**PQ Number: 29041/22**

**Question: To ask the Minister for Health the reason that the contract tracing system is being centralised to HSE headquarters in central Dublin; if he will consider decentralising the contact tracing system to an area outside of Dublin in which workers would find more affordable accommodation and ease commuter congestion in the capital; and if he will make a statement on the matter.**

Dear Deputy Canney,

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 reduction in the prevalence and impact of COVID-19 has meant that our Test and Trace service is changing. Over the last number of months – particularly since the change in testing requirements announced at the end of February, we have seen a substantial decrease in the demand for COVID-19 testing. That has obviously had an impact on the number of cases identified and the subsequent need for contact tracing. We expect that testing requirements will change further later this summer and ultimately our test centres will close and COVID-19 testing will only take place for the purpose of surveillance or if a clinician believes it is necessary for treatment purposes.

Many of our contact tracing staff contracts are due to finish on 30<sup>th</sup> June. Over the last number of weeks we have been working closely with other HSE services and indeed other government departments to identify what support our teams could provide to them after June 30<sup>th</sup>.

While we know we will require significantly less contact tracing staff after June 30<sup>th</sup>, our plan is to retain our centre in HSQ Dublin and our centre in Cork for the purposes of any contact tracing requirements that may arise between now and the end of this year. An options appraisal was carried out to inform the future state model for contact tracing. The criteria was based on the capacity in each location, the lease arrangements for each contact tracing centre, the geographic location and workforce population, attrition across the locations, number of HSE employed within the workforce and opportunities available to retain staff on other funded HSE projects. We have also agreed that some of the team in HSQ Contact Tracing Centre (CTC) will undertake other HSE related call-based work.



We expect that the contact tracing function will cease in our Limerick and Galway centres after June 30<sup>th</sup>. We have worked with the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) who have a requirement for staff in their Limerick office and we have identified opportunities for our Limerick-based staff to work with the DFA in their passport service. This work will be call-based work and staff will be based in the DFA's Limerick office. We will work directly with the team in Limerick to agree the process to facilitate this for those who wish to be involved in this project.

We identified a need with the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth to support that Department's work with those who have arrived into the country from the Ukraine. As a result opportunities for Galway based staff have been agreed to transfer for this service. The teams carrying out this work will remain in our existing office in Galway and again this is an option for CTC staff based in Galway.

The HSE will maintain a core team in both testing and contact tracing that will continue to respond to current public health advice. In addition we are developing a plan for future surges of COVID-19 or emerging variants of concern.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Damien McCallion".

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