



10th June 2022

Deputy James Lawless,
Dáil Éireann,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2

Issued via email to: james.lawless@oireachtas.ie

PQ Number: 27982/22

Question: To ask the Minister for Health the procedures and next steps for the winding-down of the Puchestown Covid-19 polymerase chain reaction testing centre, including details of the re-allocation of all the existing staff of the testing centre; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Lawless,

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

Community testing has been a key component of the National COVID-19 strategy, since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, ensuring that testing facilities were available for people who experienced symptoms of COVID-19 and / or had been in close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19.

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. We expect that testing requirements will change further later this summer and ultimately COVID-19 testing will only take place for the purpose of surveillance or if a clinician believes it is necessary for treatment purposes.

The Covid-19 test centre in Puchestown will remain in operation June – August 2022. As the demand for testing has reduced significantly, a smaller number of staff will be required to meet this demand. The HSE has engaged with staff on the following:

- A survey of staff was carried out to determine their interest in a role within the HSE beyond Test and Trace, followed by one to one meetings with their line manager;
- An Expressions of Interest process was undertaken to determine which staff will continue working in Community Covid-19 testing July – August 2022;
- Remaining staff whose role with the Community Covid-19 testing service will conclude at end June 2022 are being supported in;
 - Return to their substantive post;
 - Assignment to a suitable vacancy in the HSE;
 - Signposting of positions for which the person may wish to apply.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely,

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