



**3<sup>rd</sup> February 2021**

Deputy Patricia Ryan  
Dáil Éireann  
Kildare Street  
Dublin 2

**Re: PQ 2346/21 Question: “To ask the Minister for Health if routine Covid-19 testing of staff in primary healthcare centres is taking place; and if he will make a statement on the matter.”**

Dear Deputy Ryan,

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

I wish to confirm that the HSE implements serial testing on the advice of the National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE). To date it has not been requested for staff in primary healthcare centres to be included in serial testing on a routine basis. Although we do have channels in which we prioritise testing for healthcare workers (HCWs) which I will outline below. We also continue to prioritise reducing our end to end turnaround time of all testing completed for COVID-19. The current overall median turnaround time from referral to communication of results nationally is approximately under 2 days.

In relation to referrals being made for healthcare workers in the Community by GPs, there is an option on the SwiftQueue system to prioritise a HCW when the referral is being made. In a healthcare setting where there is an outbreak in a part of a service or the whole service, the particular testing approach is taken following a Public Health risk assessment. This could involve testing every member of staff in the facility or service or those working in a designated part or unit of the service. There is advice on the HSE website for healthcare workers with regards to the testing criteria and I have included the link below for your information:

<https://healthservice.hse.ie/staff/coronavirus/testing/testing-for-healthcare-workers.html>

The HSE has also, in recognising the critical role of the GP practice, developed a testing pathway for symptomatic GPs and their practice colleagues to minimise the time from the point of referral to communication of result. The aim of which is to support efforts to reduce any interruptions to the delivery of GP services to the public. This enhanced testing pathway went live on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of November, 2020 and below is a link outlining this update.

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/news/newsfeatures/covid19-updates/covid-19-testing-and-tracing-update-25-november-2020.pdf>

I trust this addresses your question.

Yours sincerely,

*Niamh O'Beirne*

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**Niamh O'Beirne**  
**National Lead Testing and Tracing**

