

Vaughan Gething MS

Minister for Health and Social Services

31 July 2020

Dear Minister

As you will be aware, the Committee's recent report into the impact of the Covid-19 outbreak, and its management, on health and social care in Wales highlighted the importance of quick turnaround times for test results and recommended that the Welsh Government aim for all test results to be returned within 24 hours. We are therefore extremely concerned by the latest data on turnaround times, particularly for Coronavirus Testing Units, where testing is prioritised for health and care workers but results are little better than those for the general public,

While the latest figures from Public Health Wales show a marginal improvement in the percentage turnaround within 1 day (36.6% compared with 32% the previous week) for Coronavirus Testing Units, this is actually a significant decrease on the figures for week commencing 22 June, when 46.4% of tests were returned within 1 day and significantly more tests were undertaken (10,878 compared with 7,958). This is in stark contrast to tests conducted in hospitals, where turnaround times have continued to improve and are currently recorded at 87.9% returned within 1 day.

The figures for Regional Testing Centres are even more concerning, with turnaround times deteriorating rather than improving, and only 26.8% being returned within 1 day, compared with 40.9% the previous week (and again fewer tests were undertaken – 5,252 compared with 6,451).

It is widely acknowledged that quick turnaround is key to effective contact tracing, and indeed, advice from the Welsh Government's own Technical Advisory Cell states that the most successful contact tracing schemes require test results within 24 hours. This will become increasingly more important as we move into the winter months, with the additional pressures this will bring.



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The Committee would therefore appreciate your urgent response to the following:

- what work has been undertaken to investigate the causes of the delays in turnaround times, and what are the findings of this work?
- linked to this, are there problems in particular regions, and if so which areas or regions are particularly affected and what are the causes of the problems?
- can you provide information on the measures that have been put in place to deal with the delays?
- what timeframes or milestones for improvements are you working towards?
- if these milestones are not met, what alternative actions will you take?

I look forward to receiving your response.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Lloyd". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D'.

Dr Dai Lloyd MS

Chair, Health, Social Care and Sport Committee

