Title: Test and Trace Paper – NPHET

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Action required:
☐ For noting
☑ For discussion
☐ For decision

Approved for future publication: YES/NO (remove as applicable)
Testing and Tracing Paper, 11th of March 2021

Updates are provided below regarding the following aspects of Testing and Contact Tracing:

1) Testing and Tracing new initiatives,  
2) Activity levels across referrals, sampling, laboratory testing and contact tracing,  
3) Turnaround Times,  
4) Testing Programmes  
5) Recruitment

1. Testing and Tracing new Initiatives

We are currently working on four new key initiatives to the testing and tracing programme of work.

- **Source Investigation/Backwards Tracing** – commencing next week with a new report and progressing further after that with follow up calls to cases
- **Alternative referral pathway for testing** – to be ready in early April subject to technology build
- **Approach to Antigen testing pilot in schools/third level** – to be ready to commence by early April subject to agreement on approach with stakeholders internally and externally
- **Additional support for self-isolation/restricted movement** – to be ready later in March
- **Testing at Quarantine sites** – to commence 17th March

Each of these initiatives has had at least one working group meeting. Approaches are being developed for all programmes and tight timelines for implementing.

2. Activity levels across referrals, sampling, laboratory and contact tracing

Summary

Test and Trace Service performance indicators continue to show an abatement in terms of average weekly referral activity c. 4,200 from 1st – 7th of March (down 10.4% on last week and 75% on the peak). Positivity rates currently c.3.8% over the last 7 days (down from a peak of 24.5% from 31st December – 6th January). As of 8th of March, of those tested with close contacts, the average number of close contacts per case was 3.1. Demand planning scenarios are refreshed on an ongoing basis and proactive demand and capacity planning activities are being used to support operational planning across the end-to-end pathway.

Planning continues the development a medium-term view of the Test & Trace service to understand what the potential medium-term profile of demand and activity may be across various scenarios. Working groups have been established to consider enhanced usage of antigen testing and use of different referral pathways. A number of assumptions will be made regarding restrictions, serial testing, the impact of vaccination, variants of concern among other items which will inform the process. Many unknowns will remain, and as such the need for proactive monitoring and agile planning will remain. This activity will support the development of enhanced operational planning to ensure continued resilience and agility of the service as the Pandemic response evolves. Work is under way to define the service elements for each demand range. Once outputs are developed stakeholder engagement will be undertaken to ensure alignment on the service priorities and limits over the period.
**Referral Data and results**

Community testing referral data from 1st – 7th March shows that the group with the largest amount of all referrals is the 21-30 age group, which makes up 19.3% of all referrals. The detected rate for the 21-30 age group is c.12.2%.

The detected rate from tests taken in community test centres has remained stable over the last week, at c.11.8%. The overall detected rate is c.3.8% which is reduced with the inclusion of serial testing (less than 1% positivity) and acute testing (c.3% positivity). The positivity rate in Acute testing is trending downwards.

**Sampling in the community and in acute settings.**

Over the seven-day period, 3rd – 9th March, there has been approximately **97,275 swabs** taken for COVID-19 testing. Demand for testing continues to decline week on week despite the recommencing of close contact testing. Over the last week, demand for testing in the community has decreased by 10.4%.

A total of 32,782 swabs were taken in the community, the majority were performed at fixed testing sites and a portion as home visits. Approximately 41,262 swabs were taken in acute and private acute settings. The remainder 23,321 swabs were taken as part of the Serial Testing Programmes of staff in Residential Care Facilities including mental health facilities and disability facilities that meet the agreed criteria and staff in Food Production Facilities.
Laboratory Testing
Over the seven-day period 3rd – 9th March, there has been 96,233 lab tests completed. A total of 51,873 of these tests were processed in community laboratories, 28,111 tests were processed in acute laboratories and 16,249 were processed in private labs. Over the past seven days, there were no tests processed by our offshore laboratory partner.

Below is a breakdown of Covid-19 lab tests completed over the past four weeks, in community and acute lab settings.

Contact Tracing
Contact tracing is carried out in contact tracing centres in Galway, Limerick, Cork and Dublin. The gathering of enhanced Positive Patient Assessment data recommenced on Wednesday 10th February. On this date we also recommenced the Day 0 and Day 10 swabbing for close contacts.

From 23rd February to 1st March, there was a total of **3,461 call 1s** completed. During the same period there was a total of **2,907 call 2s** completed, completing contact tracing for this number of individuals. A number of individuals did not require contact tracing. There was a total of **4,424 call 3s** made to close contacts of a confirmed COVID 19 case.

On the 9th of March, of those tested with close contacts, the mean number of close contacts was **3.2**
3. Turnaround Times (3rd – 9th of March)

End-to-end turnaround time

We continue to keep sharp focus on end-to-end turnaround times, highlighting any opportunity for improvement, while recognising that some cases are increasingly complex in nature.

Over the seven-day period 3rd – 9th of March;

- The median end-to-end turnaround time, from referral to SMS, for not detected tests in the community setting was 1.4 days.
- The median turnaround time, from referral to communication of a detected result by SMS, in community setting was 1.6 days.
- The median end-to-end turnaround time, from referral to contact tracing SMS sent, for detected results in the community setting was 1.9 days.

Referral to appointment

In the community, the median time from referral to appointment was 0.2 days.

A total of 92.8% of community referrals are provided with a COVID-19 test appointment within 24 hours.

Swab to lab result

For swabs processed in a community lab, the median time for swab to lab result was 25 hours.
For swabs processed in an acute lab, the median time for swab to lab result was 22 hours.
The combined median time from swab to lab result was 22 hours.

Overall Swab to laboratory result communicated – Medians

- 24 hours in Acute.
- 25 hours in Serial Testing.
- 28 hours in Community.

Contact Tracing

The average time to complete all calls is 6.1 hours and the median time to complete all calls is 3.7 hours.

Education and Childcare Facility turnaround times

The median turnaround time from swab taken to result communicated in education and childcare settings was 1.1 days.
4. Testing Programmes

**Serial Testing in Nursing Homes**
Serial testing in Nursing Homes commenced on the 23rd of June. To date, the programme has completed 630,379 tests and identified 4,494 detected cases. This is a detected rate of 0.71%.

Cycle 9 of serial testing in Nursing Homes commenced on the 1st of March. To date, the cycle has completed 20,041 tests and has identified 46 detected cases. This is a detected rate of 0.23%. This is the lowest level since Cycle 2. In Cycle 2 there were very low levels of cases in the country as this was July/August 2020.

![Nursing Home Detected Rate per Cycle](image)

**Serial Testing in Mental Health Facilities**
Testing in mental health facilities commenced on the 25th of January. Facilities taking part in this testing programme will feature as a mixture of once off and serial testing. To date, the programme has completed 2,577 tests and identified 9 detected cases. This is a detected rate of 0.35%.

Cycle 2 of serial testing in Mental Health facilities commenced on 1st March. To date, there has been a total of 574 swabs carried out and 2 detected cases have been identified. This is a detected rate of 0.35%.

**Disability Facilities Testing Programme**
Testing in disability services commenced on the 25th of January. Facilities taking part in this testing programme will be included for a round of once off testing, which will be reviewed once a full cycle has been completed. In this current cycle to date, cycle 1, there has been a total of 5,632 swabs carried out and a total of 27 detected cases have been identified. This is a detected rate of 0.48%.

**Serial Testing in Food Production Facilities**
Serial testing in food production facilities commenced on the 21st of August. To date, the programme has completed 135,488 tests and identified 1,138 detected cases. This is a detected rate of 0.84%.

Cycle 6 of serial testing concluded on the 5th of March, and completed 25,318 tests, identifying 168 detected cases. This is a detected rate of 0.66%. This is the lowest detected rate for an entire cycle of testing in food production facilities since cycle 2. Cycle 2 was carried out during October and November 2020.

Cycle 7 of serial testing in food production facilities commenced on the 8th of March, and has completed 2,121 tests, with 3 detected cases identified. This is a detected rate of 0.14%, however it is early in the
cycle so this rate may increase as more testing is done.

**Education and Childcare Testing Programme**

COVID-19 testing has re-started in schools and is ongoing in special education and childcare facilities. In the last week (28th to 6th March 2021);

- 488 tests were completed in 37 childcare facilities resulting in a **8.8% positivity rate**.
- 113 tests were completed in 7 Special Education facilities resulting in a **0.9% detection rate**.
- 281 tests were completed in 17 primary schools resulting in a **1.4% positivity rate**.
- 135 tests were completed in 10 post-primary facilities resulting in a **0.7% positivity rate**.

**Weekly Comparison of Tests Completed in Schools**

The graph below provides a week to week view of the levels of testing and % increase/decrease of testing completed in **Schools and Special Education settings**.

- In the last week (week 9, 28th February – 6th March 2021), there were over 500 tests completed.
- This level of testing is similar to levels completed in early November, c.700 tests (week 45, 1st – 7th of November).
- Testing demand in schools will continue to be monitored as more students return in the coming weeks.
**Weekly Comparison of Tests Completed in Childcare facilities**

The graph provides a week to week view of the levels of testing and % increase/decrease of testing completed in Childcare Facilities.

- In the last week, (week 9, 28th February – 6th March 2021), there were c.488 tests completed.
- The number of tests completed in childcare facilities has remained stable since week 4 (24/01/2021 – 30/01/2021), at c.400-500 per week.

![Weekly Comparison of Tests Completed in Childcare Facilities](image)

**Weekly Analysis of Childcare Facility Testing by Week**

The graph below illustrates a six-week view of detected rate in childcare facilities. A similar view will be developed for schools in response to their recommencement, over the coming weeks.

![Weekly Analysis of Childcare Facility Testing by Week](image)

As of March 9th, a total of 1,754 facilities (primary school, post primary school, special education and childcare facilities) have had/are having some testing completed based on a Public Health Risk Assessment. A total of 49,664 tests have been carried out as part of this mass testing. From the 1,754 facilities that had mass tests, an additional 1,864 detected cases have been identified over and above original cases. This equates to a detected rate of 3.8%.
Recruitment
Recruitment of staff to support swabbing activity and contact tracing activity is ongoing. As of the 8th of March, a total of 755 swabbers have been hired and placed to support swabbing activity. As of the 8th of March, there is a total of 873 staff supporting contact tracing. Of these 873 staff, 801 have been hired and retained as part of the dedicated workforce to support the contact tracing function. The remaining 72 staff are deployed staff from the HSE and other public service roles.