Test and Trace: NPHET Update – 16th September 2021

1.0 Operations Monitoring

- The Testing and Tracing system is now in surge across the pathway. Demand is very high. Testing demand has exceeded capacity on numerous days over the last week. We experienced our highest community testing day on Monday 13th September, where overall (community and acute) we completed c.30,000 tests in one day. Demand is continuing to grow. Demand is driven by the testing of children under the age of 14 due to the return of school along with the return of seasonal viruses. Some areas are struggling to provide everyone with same day testing appointments – the East, in particular, is very stretched.

- We have had requests for over 2,000 primary/early year group testing exercises and over 1,000 secondary schools “circle of friends” testing exercises since the beginning of the academic year. On average there are 8.5 close contacts per child in a national school, 15 per child in a creche and 2-3 in a secondary school. This volume has been very significant for the teams in testing and tracing where all efforts have been made to keep pace with this demand, but it remains very challenging for all involved.

- From the 8th – 14th September, there were c.149,495 community referrals. Overall, total referrals have increased 24% in comparison to the same time-period last week.

From 8th – 14th September, there were:
  - 2,051 international travel portal referrals (↓ 13% compared to last week)
  - 94,696 self-referrals (↑99% compared to last week)

- From the 6th – 12th September, the group with the largest number of referrals were the 0-14 age group. The detected rate for the 0-14 age group is 6%.
Here we show the volume of testing in three age groups under 18 and the number of positive cases. The age group with the highest case growth is the 4-12 year olds, with 2418 positive cases in the last 7 days versus 1,632 in the prior week.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Number of Swabs - 30th Aug – 5th Sept</th>
<th>Number of detected cases - 30th Aug – 5th</th>
<th>Number of Swabs 6th Sept – 12th Sept</th>
<th>Number of detected cases – 6th Sept – 12th Sept</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 – 3 yrs</td>
<td>8,549</td>
<td>514</td>
<td>12,644</td>
<td>534 (increasing marginally)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 – 12 yrs</td>
<td>16,269</td>
<td>1,632</td>
<td>35,433</td>
<td>2,418 (increasing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 – 17 yrs</td>
<td>7,051</td>
<td>989</td>
<td>9,326</td>
<td>825 (decreasing)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Over the last 7 days, the total number of community swabs has increased by 20% (c. 134,888 from 8th – 14th September, compared to c. 112,444 from the 31st August – 6th September). The highest community swabbing day over the past week reached c.23,917 swabs.

Over the past week, c. 86.8% of people received a swabbing appointment in less than 24 hours. The median time to get access to swabbing is 0.3 days. The trend in respect of time to get a swabbing appointment in less than 24 hours has exceeded the target since mid-January 2021.

From the 8th – 14th September, there has been approximately 165,717 lab tests reported in community, private and acute labs. We are once again receiving data on volumes of lab tests completed by acute and private labs; however, this remains a partial view until both acute and private laboratories are fully reinstated.

In the community, over the last 7 days (8th – 14th September), the median end-to-end turnaround time from referral to:
- SMS for not detected tests was 1.1 day
- Communication of a detected result by call was 1.8 days
- Contact tracing completed, for detected results was 2.1 days

From the 8th – 14th September, the positivity rate in the community was c.7.9%.

Of those tested with close contacts during the same 7-day period, the average number of close contacts was 3.7. On the 14th of September, the average number of close contacts per person was 3.8.

From the 8th – 14th September, there were:
- 9,361 call 1s (↑ 7.3% compared to last week)
- 9,273 call 2s (↑ 9.8% compared to last week)
- 21,530 call 3s (↑ 11.4% compared to last week)
Serial Testing Programmes:

- Serial testing of Staff in Nursing Homes commenced on 20th June 2020. To date, 864,875 swabs have been completed in 598 facilities, identifying 5,012 detected cases, resulting in an 0.58% detection rate since the beginning of testing.

- Cycle 15 concluded on 12th September. In total, the cycle completed 11,915 swabs and identified 184 detected cases. This results in a 1.54% detection rate.

- Serial Testing of Staff in Mental Health Facilities commenced on 21st of January 2021. To date, 8,449 swabs have been completed in 93 facilities, identifying 26 detected cases, resulting in a 0.31% detection rate.

- Cycle 8 of Serial Testing in Mental Health Facilities concluded on the 12th of September 2021. In total, the cycle completed 386 swabs and identified 0 detected cases. This results in a 0.00% detection rate.

- Cycle 9 commenced on the 13th of September. To date, 19 swabs have been completed in 1 facility, identifying 0 detected cases. This results in a 0.00% detection rate.
• **Serial Testing of Staff in Food Production Facilities** commenced on 21st of August 2020. To date, **253,518 swabs** have been completed in **91 facilities**, identifying **1,761 detected cases**, resulting in a **0.69% detection rate** since the beginning of testing.

• **Cycle 13** commenced on 23rd August. To date the cycle has completed **10,483 swabs** and identified **86 detected cases**, resulting in a **0.82% detection rate**.

![Swabs completed and detection rate per cycle in Food Production Facilities](chart)

• Recruitment of staff to support swabbing and contact tracing is ongoing. As of the 12th of September 2021, 912 swabbers and 936 contact tracing staff have been hired and places. Of the 936 contact tracing staff, 818 have been hired and retained as part of the dedicated workforce supporting contact tracing function whilst the 118 remaining are deployed staff from the HSE and other public service roles.
2.0 Update on Testing initiatives

1. **Alternative referral pathway for testing** – Pop-up walk-in centres are currently operational in Tallaght Stadium as well as Ballycoolin (Dublin), Buncrana (co. Donegal) Deeppark Road (Athlone) and Old Mallow Road (Cork) with a further site planned for Sandyford Business Park (Dublin). Activity remains high for all self-referrals - c. 1,255 people per day are attending as walk-ins, and an average of 12,420 per day are booking appointments via the online portal. Activity for day 5 testing through the travel portal is currently c. 300 tests per day.

2. **Approach to Antigen testing pilot in schools/third level** –

   The first phase of the pilot is almost complete with 13 of the 14 sites involved having completed 4 weeks of testing. The second phase of the pilot has commenced in Early learning and childcare, with 10 additional sites now involved in testing. Results reported to date consist of 1,721 Not detected, 3 Detected and 9 Invalid. The Detected antigen results were all confirmed as positive Covid-19 cases on PCR testing.

   Three additional 3rd level sites have signed up for the programme and are currently preparing to start testing. The HSE Report your Antigen webpage to facilitate reporting of antigen test results is due to go live later this week, and this will be a key enabler to rolling out antigen testing more widely in Education and other sectors.

3. **Testing at Quarantine sites** – As decided by the Department of Health, all passengers arriving into Ireland from designated states are now required to pre-book accommodation in a designated quarantine facility. Testing resources have been made available in Quarantine Facilities since 26th March 2021 and are available at the on a daily basis to accommodate the testing of all new arrivals. The scope of testing includes the below:

   - Testing of passengers arriving into Ireland from Category 2 Countries on Day 0 and Day 10
   - Testing of Passengers arriving into Ireland from Category 1 countries that have not been able to produce a negative test result
   - Testing of Quarantine Hotel Staff on a weekly basis
   - Unaccompanied Minors arrive into Ireland from a Category 2 country

   **Data as of 10:00am-14th September 2021**

   - 8 x Quarantine Facilities Tested *(2 currently in operation)*
   - 82 x Unaccompanied Minors Tested
   - 32,679 x Referrals for Mandatory Quarantine Testing
   - 26,554 x Swabs
   - 695 x Covid-19 Detected Tests *(2.6% Detection Rate)*
   - 620 x Covid-19 Detected Cases