

3<sup>rd</sup> Dec. 2021

Deputy Claire Kerrane,  
Dáil Éireann,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2

Issued via email to: [claire.kerrane@oireachtas.ie](mailto:claire.kerrane@oireachtas.ie)

**PQ Number: 59381/21**

**Question: To ask the Minister for Health if consideration will be given to reopening the Covid-19 testing centre in Athlone, County Westmeath to save persons from having to travel long distances for a Covid-19 test given the current difficulties for persons seeking a PCR test; and if he will make a statement on the matter.**

Dear Deputy Burke,

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

In line with the National Test and Trace Operational Model, which ensures at least one testing centre in each county and providing access to over 90% of the population to a test centre within 45 minutes travel time, a long term location was established to serve as a Community Testing Centre for the people of Co. Westmeath. The Westmeath site located at St Lomans Hospital in Mullingar was selected following a detailed evaluation as it best met defined criteria including suitability and sustainability of the location as a long term testing centre, as well as the location of centres relative to observed travel times.

This site has consistently offered over 600 appointments per day. Testing Centres are continuously evaluated to ensure that capacity meets demand, including extension of opening hours and addition of testing stations to existing sites. As a result this site has been further scaled up in line with increased demand and in recent times has offered in excess of 750 appointments per day.

The HSE continually evaluate options to augment capacity in specific areas experiencing very high level of demands through the use of pop-up Testing Centres and through addition of new sites that are operated by the private sector working under HSE Governance. A new centre opened on Monday 29<sup>th</sup> November at Athlone GAA Club and will for the coming weeks offer Covid-19 PCR testing to the people from the midlands region.

The HSE Covid-19 Community Testing Service is committed to the timely provision of safe, accessible, quality swabbing services within the community setting.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely,



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