



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Jeane Freeman MSP

Cabinet Secretary Health and  
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Via email only

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Dear Jeane

### **Health and Sport Committee consideration of the impact of COVID-19 Testing**

Thank you for giving evidence to the Committee on 27 May in relation to the provision of testing for the virus during the Covid-19 outbreak.

This letter seeks the further information you offered to provide along with clarification in a few areas. For ease and context I refer to specific passages from the Official Report of 27 May.

In your opening statement you indicated the PCR test, to identify whether a person has the virus, has a sensitivity of 91% and a specificity of 100% and that it cannot identify those in the incubation period who do not have high levels of the virus. At column 3 you indicate the debate and value in testing asymptomatic individuals has moved on and asymptomatic care home workers are being tested. Later, column 11, when discussing test and trace you indicated contacts who show no signs will not be tested, meaning they will require to self-isolate for up to 14 days, potentially needlessly and on multiple occasions. Could you clarify this apparent inconsistency when on the one hand asymptomatic care home workers are being tested while contacts identified under contact tracing will not be offered a test.

Brian Whittle (column 8) asked about the use of an App to assist in identifying contacts which led to an exchange on how the existing UK version operates and current issues the Scottish Government has with its operation. Can you indicate to what extent you are in dialogue with the UK Government to have the app's

functionality improved to meet Scottish requirements and how such discussions are proceeding.

In relation to self-testing, given the discomfort involved, are you monitoring whether there is any difference between the proportion of self-tests which are negative in comparison to those taken by staff at the testing centre?

You indicated you would provide the Committee with a copy of the memorandum of agreement with the UK government in relation to what quality assurance checks are put in place at testing centres and I look forward to receiving that.

When discussing antibody testing (column 15), you noted a lack of knowledge around how COVID-19 will behave, comparing it to the flu which changes on an annual basis. This impacts on the utility and crucially the longevity of antibody tests. Will the time that antibodies remain in a person be equally critical to the potential utility of antibody testing? Can you also indicate if the Scottish Government has any plans to procure the Roche test and if so how in what areas will it will then be deployed?

On travel into Scotland (column 18), you noted the Scottish Government does not have the power to control borders, can you indicate whether you have powers and any plans to test people arriving in the country by plane, ferry or train, including temperature testing?

Given our ongoing scrutiny of this subject I would be grateful for a response by 23 June.

Yours sincerely

Lewis Macdonald  
Convener, Health and Sport Committee