



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Mark Drakeford AM
First Minister
Welsh Government
5th Floor
Tŷ Hywel
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

30th April 2020

Dear Mark

We write with alarm in respect to the disparity that now exists in Covid-19 testing availability between England and Wales.

The UK Government has announced testing in England is now being offered in the community setting to all of the following groups, where symptoms are present:

- All key workers, including NHS and social care workers
- Anyone over 65
- Anyone who in employment but whose work cannot be done from home
- Anyone who lives with someone who falls into one of the above categories

In addition, testing is now being made available for the following with or without symptoms:

- Social care workers and residents in care homes, both to investigate outbreaks and, following successful pilots, as part of a rolling programme to test all care homes
- NHS workers and patients, in line with NHS England guidance

Testing in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland can already be arranged through a UK Government online portal.

In stark contrast, community testing availability in Wales is for symptomatic key workers (or household members) only. A different web-based booking system is being developed “to meet the specific needs in Wales”. Initially it will only serve Cardiff and Newport, with online bookings being “phased in” elsewhere in Wales.



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As a result of this disparity in Covid-19 testing availability, some of our constituents will unnecessarily contract Covid infection, while others will spend avoidable time self-isolating, and off work. Of particular concern is the fact that residents in care homes are likely to be placed at unacceptable ongoing risk. This is very disappointing and comes in the wake of failings in the dispatch of shielding letters; difficulties for the vulnerable in obtaining priority supermarket assistance; reporting errors for Covid deaths; failure to implement the GoodSAM volunteer programme; rejection of assistance from the Aviation Task Force; and delays in the replication of various UK Government schemes.

Our understanding is that all swab processing in Wales still requires the use of a single laboratory site in Cardiff. We would strongly urge you to rapidly develop additional antigen testing sites across Wales and to seek the use of laboratories elsewhere in the United Kingdom to ensure that the people of Wales are not let down in our fight against this pandemic.

Yours sincerely

Dr James Davies MP

Sarah Atherton MP

Simon Baynes MP

The Rt Hon Alun Cairns MP

The Rt Hon Stephen Crabb MP

Virginia Crosbie MP

The Rt Hon David Jones MP

Fay Jones MP

Robin Millar MP

Rob Roberts MP

Jamie Wallis MP

Craig Williams MP

c.c.

The Rt Hon Simon Hart MP

The Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP

David T C Davies MP