



The Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
Department of Health and Social Care
39 Victoria Street
London
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10 August 2021

Dear Sajid,

During our four nations' health ministers' calls we have discussed the concerns I have about private sector providers of COVID-19 tests for international travel. The issue was also discussed at a COVID-O meeting on 22 July, where it was recognised that tougher enforcement is needed against those providers who do not meet Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

Protecting public health remains our main priority and as such, in Wales, we continue to require the tests people must take following their arrival to Wales to be provided by the NHS. This is because it is critical we can rely on test information flowing directly to our contact tracing teams, and genomic sequencing can reliably identify any variants of concern.

We are aware that some private providers are offering tests at a cheaper price and we have stated that when we receive sufficient assurances about the performance and monitoring of private providers, we will review our position. If possible, we are keen to achieve a position where there is a single accredited list of private providers upon which all four nations can rely. My officials have repeatedly raised our concerns and sought assurances on three main areas:

1. The nature of the published list of approved/accredited providers

Further work is needed to ensure the list of 'approved providers' clearly shows whether a provider has been fully accredited or is at the self assessment stage. It would also be helpful for the list to include information on customer service performance and presents accurate prices in a transparent manner.

2. Enforcement of KPIs and removal of underperforming providers

We are concerned that providers who fail to meet key performance indicators are not rapidly removed from the gov.uk list. Reassurance is needed both regarding the process of enforcement and the quality of performance monitoring, along with a commitment to sharing this data regularly with the devolved administrations. We also need clarity as to when the KPIs will be added to Regulations in England so they can be legally enforced.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

3. Data flow of test and sequencing results

We continue to experience issues with the quality and completeness of data being transferred from private labs via DHSC/PHE. Timely data flow including sequencing data must be reliable.

I welcome the progress that has been made in some of these areas, and the engagement of your officials with the devolved administrations through the Private Sector Testing Steering Group. It is important we continue to see progress at pace to resolve the remaining issues, to ensure private testing accurately identifies positive cases and new variants as quickly as possible.

A final area of concern is the forthcoming replacement of the CTM booking portal. CTM is the booking agent for NHS provided tests and as such, currently the only permitted mechanism for people travelling to Wales to book their post-arrival tests. We understand that the current contract with CTM ends in October 2021 and discussions are ongoing within DHSC as to the appropriate replacement. CTM is a four nations' solution and given the regulatory position in Wales, we require assurance that there will be a replacement booking system that meets the needs of all four nations.

I am copying this to our colleagues the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care in Scotland, the Minister for Health in Northern Ireland and the Secretary of State for Wales.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. E. Morgan'.

Eluned Morgan AS/MS

Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services