



Department of Health & Social Care

*From the Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care*

POC_1372515

Dean Russell MP
Health and Social Care Committee
House of Commons
Westminster
London
SW1A 0AA

08 November 2021

Dear Dean,

I am writing to follow up on the discussion we had on Tuesday 2 November at the Health and Social Care Select Committee. You raised the question of why General Practices (GPs) can't do PCR tests and recounted your own experience of visiting your local GP where on-site testing was unavailable, and I committed to coming back with further detail on the policy rationale for this.

NHS Test & Trace has made COVID-19 swab testing available to all GPs in England, the service is available to all practices on a voluntary, opt-in basis. GPs can use their discretion to offer the swabs where they deem it to be clinically appropriate in order to streamline patient care and/or improve access to testing for patients who would otherwise be unlikely to get a test via the primary testing routes, for example, due to barriers around language, distance, disability or digital inclusion. By offering swab tests via GPs we hope to address health inequalities by reaching vulnerable patients who might otherwise not easily access testing. This is an opt-in only scheme and GPs are not required or expected to provide this service or administer swabs.

For any other PCR COVID-19 testing service: asymptomatic general population testing and/or day 2 and day 8 PCR testing for international arrivals, all organisations including GPs are required to self-declare against and be confirmed as meeting the government's minimum standards. If they are providing sample collection and/or sample testing services (Point-of-Care testing and/or laboratory-based PCR testing) they must apply for and be on their journey to obtaining accreditation. It is at the GPs discretion as to whether they want to be involved with providing this service.

This system was implemented to ensure that consistent standards were met across all COVID-19 end-to-end testing services, this extends beyond solely clinical factors to elements like administration and data management. For more information on the process of becoming a private provider, please read <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-become-a-private-provider-of-covid-19-testing>.

Thank you once again for your question and hopefully this resolved your query.

Please let me know if you have any further questions on this issue.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'S. Javid'.

RT HON SAJID JAVID MP