



Ein cyf/Our ref: WQ81290

Adam Price MS
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

16 January 2021

Dear Adam,

I am writing in response to coronavirus-related Written Questions, which you submitted and have not yet received an answer. Please accept my apologies for the time it has taken to respond to this question.

WAQ81290: Will the Welsh Government provide an update on the progress of efforts to improve Welsh testing capacity?

We have sufficient testing capacity to meet demand as a result of the investments that we have made in our testing infrastructure. Demand for testing fluctuates due to a variety of factors, including the prevalence of the virus in the population and other winter respiratory viruses which may have very similar symptoms. Current antigen testing capacity in NHS Wales laboratories is 15,167 tests a day.

At present, there are 57 testing sites in Wales: nine regional centres (with another due to open in the week commencing 25 January); 17 local testing sites (with up to 10 due to go online later this year); nine community testing units, and 22 mobile testing units (MTU). There are plans in place to add another 14 MTUs to the Welsh fleet.

There have been some well-publicised issues regarding turnaround times for the results of tests processed by the UK Government's Lighthouse laboratories network, but we are continuing to press the UK Government to resolve these issues and to ensure that improvements in performance and turnaround times are sustained. The UK Government took action to increase capacity because of these issues. As a result, the IP5 laboratory in Newport opened in October, and is currently processing 10,000 tests a week.

In August I announced an additional investment of £32 million in the Public Health Wales (PHW) testing capacity, to prepare for winter and a second wave. PHW's laboratories in Cardiff, Swansea and Rhyl are now working 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Five of the six hot labs planned at acute hospitals are operational, using rapid testing equipment (under four hours) from 8:00 am to 10:00 pm, seven days a week.

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

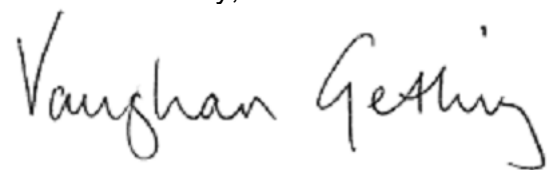
Gohebiaeth.Vaughan.Gething@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Vaughan.Gething@gov.wales

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.

These developments significantly increase our own laboratory capacity and resilience, both in the context of the current pandemic and in the longer term.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vaughan Gething". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Vaughan Gething AS/MS

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