



Ein cyf/Our ref WQ80143, WQ80144, WQ80428, WQ80500,  
WQ80647, WQ80734, WQ80260, WQ80732 and WQ81259

Janet Finch Saunders MS  
Welsh Parliament  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1SN

2 November 2020

Dear Janet

I am writing to respond 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 these questions.

**What is the Minister doing to address the regional disparities in waiting times for coronavirus test results experienced by front line workers? WQ80143**

**What steps is the Minister taking to significantly increase the number of health and social care staff who are offered a coronavirus test? WQ80144**

Our *Testing Strategy* – <https://gov.wales/covid-19-testing-strategy-html> - sets out our four priorities for testing in Wales – one of which is to protect our health and social care workforce. All NHS and social care staff are classed as critical workers for coronavirus testing.

We have increased our daily testing capacity significantly to ensure tests are available for people who need them. However, the recent well-publicised issues with the UK Government Lighthouse Labs system, mean some people have experienced delays in receiving results after a test.

**Will the Minister provide the average waiting time from when a care home orders a testing kit to it being delivered to the home, broken down by each health board separately? WQ80428**

The Welsh Government does not hold this information.

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:  
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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.

**Will the Minister clarify whether any guidance in relation to making testing available to all care homes has been issued to health boards in addition to the care home testing guidance on the Welsh Government website? WQ80500**

The Welsh Government's care home testing policy was first published on 7 May (it was subsequently updated on 7 August). It is available at <https://gov.wales/testing-process-care-homes-covid-19-html>

The Welsh Government's director of social services and the Chief Medical Officer wrote to registered providers and responsible individuals of care home services for adults and children in Wales about testing.

**Will the Minister provide a breakdown of drive through Covid-19 testing centres in Wales which can be booked directly by individuals and employers? WQ80647**

The Welsh Government does not hold this information – the mass testing centres are run by the UK Government.

**Will the Minister state the percentage of Covid-19 tests for care homes staff which have so far seen results provided within one day, two days, and three days separately? WQ80734**

The Welsh Government publishes testing statistics every week, which provide a breakdown of turnaround times for tests, including those carried out as part of the screening programmes for care home staff. The latest data is published at: <https://gov.wales/testing-data-coronavirus-covid-19-25-october-2020-html>

**Will the Minister consider making finance available to help individuals who have lost more than one family member to the coronavirus, to pay for funerals? WQ80260**

Wales was the first part of the UK to end the practice of charging fees to bury children.

At the start of the pandemic, we also introduced a death in service payment of £60,000 for an eligible beneficiary of frontline staff working in the NHS and social care, should they die in service as a result of coronavirus.

If people are struggling to pay for funerals, a funeral expenses payment (also called a funeral payment) may be available for people on certain benefits. Further details are available at: <https://www.gov.uk/funeral-payments>

**What steps will the Minister take to address the finding that Universal Credit and tax deductions will see some carers only receive £125 of the £500 extra payment for care staff? WQ80732**

The £500 extra payment was designed to recognise the hard work of social care staff. We are bitterly disappointed the Chancellor has decided to tax this one-off payment, which will take money directly out of the pockets of some the lowest paid staff in Wales.

**Will the Minister consider replicating the staged approach being taken to reintroduce visiting to care homes in Scotland? WQ81259**

We are in the middle of the two-week firebreak period, which runs until 9 November. This firebreak was introduced because of the serious situation we face in Wales – it has been designed to be short but sharp to bring the virus under control; prevent the NHS from becoming overwhelmed and to save lives.

During the firebreak people must stay at home, unless they have a reasonable excuse. Visits to places such as supported accommodation, children's homes, hospitals or care homes are permitted in exceptional circumstances, where they are allowed by the relevant setting. In each case, the service provider needs to put in place appropriate social distancing and safety measures before allowing visits, and you should contact them before travelling.

We know how important it is for people's wellbeing to have contact with loved ones but it is also important that we do all we can to prevent coronavirus from getting into care homes, where residents are particularly vulnerable to the virus.

We have published guidance for care home providers for adults and children to help them enable safe visiting during the coronavirus pandemic outside the firebreak period. This is available at: <https://gov.wales/visits-care-homes-guidance-providers>

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