

PETER GIBSON MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

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*Dear Constituent*

Thank you for your email about NHS Test and Trace and outsourcing.

NHS Test and Trace is essential in our fight against Covid-19 and regular testing is a vital tool to stop transmission as we cautiously ease restrictions. I am extremely proud of the fact that, after building a testing system from scratch, we have carried out over 110m coronavirus tests and have increased PCR test capacity to 800,000 per day. This is more than any other comparable European country, with the UK having the largest testing capacity in Europe.

Testing and NHS Test and Trace services are being provided through the NHS, and while it is true that providers like Serco and Sitel are working with the public sector to deliver these services, I am confident that these providers will be held to the highest standards to ensure that the best service possible is delivered. It is a testament to the ingenuity of British businesses that they have been able to adapt existing resources in a time of great need for the country, and I am extremely grateful to all organisations that have offered their services at this time.

That being said, I absolutely agree that it is vital data is shared with local authorities as quickly as possible, particularly as we move forward with the easing of restrictions in the Government's Roadmap and as we work to prevent the spread of new variants. The Department for Health and Social Care has outlined that granular data is being made available to specialist teams through local dashboards, and that this service has been expanded to provide more data for local areas.

I understand that all 314 local authorities have joined forces with NHS Test and Trace to provide an enhanced contact tracing service, enabling NHS Test and Trace to go further in supporting people who have tested positive for Covid-19 and tracing their recent contacts. Together, they are successfully reaching 88.9 per cent of people who've tested positive for coronavirus and 88.8 per cent of their close contacts. A series of pilot schemes, known as "Local-0", are ongoing and I know that the DHSC is monitoring these closely. The initiative supports local authorities to contact positive cases faster by bringing them in right from the start of the tracing journey, at the same time the case is entered into the national NHS Test and Trace system. I look forward to learning more about the outcome of these pilots. Alongside this work, however, I do see a continuing value in the national Test and Trace system which has a built in resilience that councils may be unable to replicate if cases were to increase.

***Member of Parliament for Darlington***

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Protecting communities and saving lives is the Government's first priority and every pound spent on Test and Trace is contributing towards efforts to keep people safe. I firmly support the £22 billion spent during 2020-21 to support this programme, with a further £15 billion budgeted for 2021-22, funding which provides vital support for this crucial service. 80 per cent of NHS Test and Trace's budget is spent on buying and carrying out coronavirus tests, with the remainder spent on contact tracing and other areas of the programme.

The Government is now providing regular rapid testing for NHS and care home staff, thousands of businesses where employees cannot work from home, teachers and secondary school children and their parents. Regular rapid testing identifies new cases of the virus we would not otherwise find, preventing the spread of the disease and saving lives.

NHS Test and Trace is successfully reaching over 90 per cent of the contacts of positive cases - with 98 per cent being contacted within 24 hours, and the contact tracing service has already reached more than 9.1m cases and contacts, making a real impact in breaking chains of transmission.

Once again, thank you for taking the time to contact me and if I can ever be any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

yours Sincerely  
Peter Gibson

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