



Department of Health & Social Care

Freedom of Information Team
Department of Health and Social Care
39 Victoria Street
London SW1H 0EU

www.gov.uk/dhsc

Mr/Ms T Sanderson
request-691168-6be697e9@whatdotheyknow.com

12/10/2020

Dear Mr/Ms Sanderson,

Freedom of Information Request Reference FOI-1255240

Thank you for your request dated 12 September, in which you asked the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC):

"Dear Department of Health and Social Care,

1) Please could you tell me what the definition of a processed test under Pillars 1 and 2 of the testing programme is.

For context, I am surprised to see that the number of tests appears to be 2 or 3 times greater than the number of people tested. I am aware that there will sometimes be clinical reasons for people to be tested more than once, but the that the average person might need to be tested more than once seems surprising.

2) Please could you confirm that if PCR reactions are conducted in duplicate or triplicate for technical reasons, these are not counted as 2 or 3 separate tests. Another way of phrasing this is to ask you to confirm that each time a person is swabbed, this counts as only one test. If you are unable to confirm that, please explain how units of testing are defined.

*Yours faithfully,
T Sanderson"*

Your request has been handled under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

For ease of reference I have numbered the individual elements of your request.

DHSC holds the information you have requested.

1) The 'number of test processed' counts all tests that have remained within the control of the programme (and were counted at the time at which processed in labs) and those that have been sent out and subsequently returned to be processed in a lab. As such these includes tests which are negative, positive and may also include tests which were void. Tests are counted at the time at which they were processed. All test processed are counted irrespective of the testing channel and the figures are taken form the labs processed data. Note that the number of test processed in pillar

1 and 2 in a laboratory is different to the number of test results reported as part of the Test and Trace testing turn around times for England. This is because:

For pillar 1:

- the number of test results received is for England, whereas the number of tests processed is for the UK 3
- there are a small number of study samples and tests from private laboratories that have been excluded from the time taken to receive a COVID-19 test result, but which are included in the pillar 1 tests by nation
- differences in when the data is taken, which means that one source may be more up to date than the other

For pillar 2:

- the number of test results processed is for England, whereas the number of tests processed is for the UK
- the number of tests processed is reported for the day the test is processed in the lab, whereas the number of test results processed is reported for the day the swab was taken
- the data for test results processed does not include Randox tests

2) For the swab tests, one swab is one test. But multiple swabs may be collected into one vial for care home and other pilots. I believe that they only test one swab once so each time a person is swabbed, it is counted as only one test.

If you are not satisfied with the handling of your request, you have the right to appeal by asking for an internal review. This should be submitted within two months of the date of this letter and sent to FreedomOfInformation@dhsc.gov.uk, or to the address at the top of this letter.

Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communication.

If you are not content with the outcome of your internal review, you may complain directly to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have already appealed our original response and received our internal review decision. You should raise your concerns with the ICO within three months of your last meaningful contact with us.

The ICO can be contacted at:

The Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

<https://ico.org.uk/concerns/>

Yours sincerely,

Le-Anne Frankson
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