



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

26th June 2020

Dear Constance,

RE: CORONAVIRUS – TESTING FOR NHS STAFF.

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of Coronavirus testing for NHS staff; your comments upon which I read with great interest.

In terms of the vote in Parliament on Wednesday evening on an Opposition Day motion, Conservative MPs voted again to praise the work of our fantastic NHS, and in support of regular testing for NHS and social care staff as required, and entirely in line with the recommendations of expert advice. Labour voted regrettably, once again, to try to score political points on something we can surely all agree on, and I am sorry if you have been concerned about this issue as a consequence. With that in mind, I will set out what is actually happening.

NHS staff, social care workers and other medical professionals are on the frontline in the fight against Coronavirus, and I am in awe of their dedication, skill and professionalism, as is our entire community and the country as a whole.

Over recent months, we have significantly increased our testing capacity in this country – we are now able to carry out more than 200,000 tests a day – which means that we can ensure all NHS and social care staff are prioritised for regular testing.

The approach to the testing of NHS staff has been determined by clinical experts, including the Chief Medical Officer, and the NHS has set out plans for how it will work. This includes continuing to prioritise testing of all NHS staff with symptoms, regular testing of asymptomatic staff in situations where there is an incident or outbreak, and regular surveillance testing of staff. The Government is continually reviewing clinical evidence to ensure regular testing of staff without symptoms is undertaken where appropriate.

As I'm sure you will understand, we are taking a targeted approach to this testing, so that it is focused on the most high-risk areas. The clinical advice is to focus intensive asymptomatic testing in those areas, or settings, identified to have high prevalence. Staff working with patients on wards, for example, will benefit from regular testing far more than NHS staff working in offices or administrative roles where they do not come into regular contact with patients. This approach is crucial as, when prevalence of the virus is very low, the risk of misleading results is higher. This can undermine the value of testing.



Going forward, you can be assured that we will continue to support our brilliant NHS and social care staff throughout this pandemic, ensuring they readily have access to the equipment, tests and support they need as they continue to control the virus and save lives. There is absolutely no question whatsoever as to the Government's commitment to this.

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

With best wishes,

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

**TOM PURSGLOVE MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**