

Message

**From:** Hugo Van Woerden [/O=HSCNI/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=54AF7BFDACC74232A354FBB5F51ECC9B-HUGO VAN WOERDEN]  
**Sent:** 01/04/2020 08:40:02  
**To:** DoH SpAd [spad@health-ni.gov.uk]  
**CC:** [redacted] NR [redacted]@hscni.net; Olive Macleod [olive.macleod@rqia.org.uk]  
**Subject:** RE: URGENT - Request from Minister Swann

Dear [redacted] NR

If a conversation with Gerry would be helpful please let us know. He is more than happy to speak to you.

Best wishes

**Hugo**

**Professor Hugo van Woerden**

Director of Public Health and Medical Director  
Public Health Agency  
12 – 22 Linenhall Street  
Belfast, BT2 8BS

[redacted] I&S



**From:** DoH SpAd [mailto:spad@health-ni.gov.uk]  
**Sent:** 31 March 2020 21:18  
**To:** Hugo Van Woerden; DoH Health Gold Sit Cell [redacted] NR [redacted] Private.office@dhsspsni.gov.uk; Pengelly, Richard; DoH Minister; Olive Macleod; Gordon, David; [redacted] NR  
**Cc:** [redacted] NR  
**Subject:** RE: URGENT - Request from Minister Swann

Thanks [redacted] NR

The Minister is aware that there is a difference between individuals tested and the number of tests. His point was more that even if every individual tested had had a duplicate test (which we know isn't the case) the number of tests would still have been far below what he had been told our testing capacity was going to be. For instance, in last Wednesday's Silver SitRep it was claimed that capacity was 'being increased to 1,000 tests a day by the weekend, with a further increase to 1,300 during next (this) week'. It's obvious that setting aside Sunday's & Monday's bulletin which both showed 500+ tests (which were inflated due to the inclusion of previous testing numbers) that we are still performing far fewer tests than what we were told we would be doing at this stage.

I also don't actually agree that the trajectory shows the number of individuals tested is continuing in an upwards direction. Setting aside the obvious initial scaling up of the lab, looking at the figures today compared to a week ago, testing has remained broadly stationary despite the additional testing in the two Trusts.

24 March	297
25 March	383
26 March	344
27 March	298
28 March	272
31 March	344

Whilst I'm aware of the pressures in respect of the shortage of reagent, as well as testing kits, the problem has been so consistent and so long running that I suspect there may be a more systemic issue at hand here.

I do appreciate **NR** that PHA is not responsible for the shortfall in testing, nor is it responsible as to why samples are not more forthcoming from the Trusts, but perhaps Richard this indicates a need for a designated person in the Department to take ownership and coordination of the testing issue? Similar to Sharon and PPE. For instance, it would have been really useful to just get a yes or no answer to my question earlier of whether the 387 HCWs supposedly tested yesterday will definitely be included in the surveillance bulletin. I also still have serious concerns about the robustness of the data being published every day in the PHA surveillance bulletin, as well as if the system is really collaborating and communicating to the level that it should be on the fundamental issue of testing.

**NR**

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**From:** Hugo Van Woerden [<mailto:Hugo.VanWoerden@hscni.net>]

**Sent:** 31 March 2020 18:43

**To:** DoH Health Gold Sit Cell <[healthgold.sitcell@health-ni.gov.uk](mailto:healthgold.sitcell@health-ni.gov.uk)> **NR** <[NR@health-ni.gov.uk](mailto:NR@health-ni.gov.uk)>; DoH Private Office <[Private.Office@health-ni.gov.uk](mailto:Private.Office@health-ni.gov.uk)>; DoH SpAd <[spad@health-ni.gov.uk](mailto:spad@health-ni.gov.uk)>; Pengelly, Richard <[Richard.Pengelly@health-ni.gov.uk](mailto:Richard.Pengelly@health-ni.gov.uk)>

**Cc:** **NR** <[NR@hscni.net](mailto:NR@hscni.net)>

**Subject:** FW: URGENT - Request from Minister Swann

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Please see response prepared by **NR**

Best wishes

**Hugo**

**Professor Hugo van Woerden**

Director of Public Health and Medical Director

Public Health Agency

12 – 22 Linenhall Street

Belfast, BT2 8BS



**From:** NR

**Sent:** 31 March 2020 15:53

**To:** Hugo Van Woerden

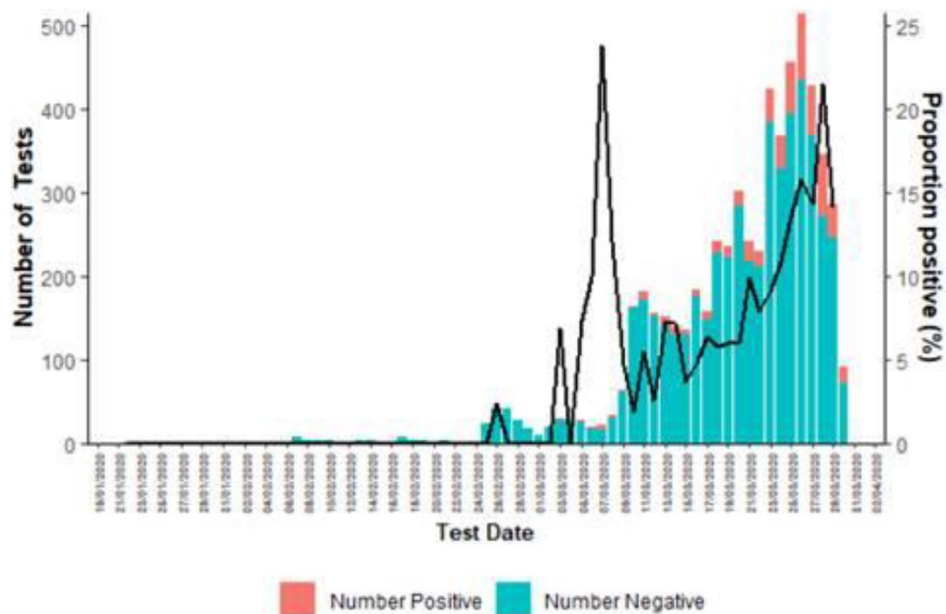
**Subject:** RE: URGENT - Request from Minister Swann

Dear Minister,

You have requested an explanation for the reported number of tests for SARS CoV2 reported in today's bulletin (attached) being fewer than those reported the previous day. I trust the following will address this.

On 30th March we reported that 513 individuals were tested whereas today we have reported 344 individuals were tested. We can only report on what has been tested from the data that is sent to us from the labs. These are not total tests, but total individuals. Therefore more than 334 tests may have taken place if duplicates are included. Reporting in this manner is consistent with that of our colleagues in England, Scotland and Wales. It is also important to note that there is likely a lag – with specimens taken yesterday only being tested today or over the next few days depending on batch numbers. This has been highlighted in the explanatory notes provided with the daily bulletin .

PHA can neither comment on testing capacity nor provide any commentary as to why that capacity may not have been reached – this is a service issue and will be addressed by PMSI/HSCB when the new reporting mechanism comes into effect. When we look at total number of individuals tested each day it does fluctuate as part of normal variation. Rather than focussing on a single day's variation, it is important to look at trends over time. The graph below shows daily changes since testing began. It will not be surprising if the numbers increase again tomorrow as the overall trajectory of total number of individuals tested continues in an upwards direction.



Yours etc

NR

Assistant Director of Public Health (Health Protection)

Public Health Agency  
4th Floor  
12-22 Linenhall Street  
Belfast  
BT2 8BS

Irrelevant & Sensitive



**From:** DoH Health Gold Sit Cell [<mailto:healthgold.sitcell@health-ni.gov.uk>]

**Sent:** 31 March 2020 12:13

**To:** WN-Cov

**Cc:** DoH Health Gold Sit Cell; DoH SpAd

**Subject:** URGENT - Request from Minister Swann

Colleagues

Please see below from the Minister.

Can you please advise as to why the number of tests completed has dropped again?

An urgent response is requested.

Regards

NR

Sit Cell



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**From:** DoH Minister

**Sent:** 31 March 2020 12:00

**To:** DoH Health Gold Sit Cell <[healthgold.sitcell@health-ni.gov.uk](mailto:healthgold.sitcell@health-ni.gov.uk)>; **NR** <[NR@health-ni.gov.uk](mailto:NR@health-ni.gov.uk)>; DoH Private Office <[Private.Office@health-ni.gov.uk](mailto:Private.Office@health-ni.gov.uk)>; DoH SpAd <[spad@health-ni.gov.uk](mailto:spad@health-ni.gov.uk)>; Pengelly, Richard <[Richard.Pengelly@health-ni.gov.uk](mailto:Richard.Pengelly@health-ni.gov.uk)>

**Subject:** RE: COVID-19 31/03/2020 NI Daily Report from Health Silver

Do we have a reason for the number of tests completed dropping again?

regards,

Robin Swann MLA  
Minister of Health.

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**From:** DoH Health Gold Sit Cell <[healthgold.sitcell@health-ni.gov.uk](mailto:healthgold.sitcell@health-ni.gov.uk)>

**Date:** Tuesday, 31 Mar 2020, 11:53 am

**To:** **NR** <[NR@health-ni.gov.uk](mailto:NR@health-ni.gov.uk)>, DoH Minister <[minister@health-ni.gov.uk](mailto:minister@health-ni.gov.uk)>, DoH Private Office <[Private.Office@health-ni.gov.uk](mailto:Private.Office@health-ni.gov.uk)>, DoH SpAd <[spad@health-ni.gov.uk](mailto:spad@health-ni.gov.uk)>, DoH Health Gold Sit Cell <[healthgold.sitcell@health-ni.gov.uk](mailto:healthgold.sitcell@health-ni.gov.uk)>, Pengelly, Richard <[Richard.Pengelly@health-ni.gov.uk](mailto:Richard.Pengelly@health-ni.gov.uk)>

**Subject:** FW: COVID-19 31/03/2020 NI Daily Report from Health Silver

Morning Minister

Daily Report from Health Silver attached

Regards

**NR**

Sit Cell

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**From:** Health Protection - PHA [<mailto:hp-epi@hscni.net>]

**Sent:** 31 March 2020 11:43

**Subject:** COVID-19 31/03/2020

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Dear all,

Please find attached the Daily COVID-19 surveillance bulletin for 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020 which has been developed by the PHA Health Protection Respiratory Epi-surveillance team on behalf of the Director of Public Health.

Kind Regards,

COVID-19 EOC – Surveillance Subgroup

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