

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE JUSTICE MINISTER



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**FROM: NAOMI LONG MLA
MINISTER OF JUSTICE**

DATE: 1 APRIL 2020

**TO: ROBIN SWANN MLA
MINISTER OF HEALTH**

COVID 19 TESTING

At our Executive meeting on Monday 30 March, we heard from the Chief Medical Officer who updated us on COVID 19 testing. Dr McBride advised us that there is currently a global shortage of the chemical reagents required for testing and that this limits capacity. This message about the shortage of reagents was repeated by UK Government Ministers and officials during their daily press conferences this week.

As I'm sure you will have seen, media in recent days has reported that the Chemical Industries Association, which represents the UK's chemical industry, has disputed this shortage. The industry are unclear as to where the conclusion of a shortage of reagents originated, or why the UK Government believes it to be the case.

I am therefore writing to ask you whether you are aware of a shortage of reagents and what discussions you have had with both UKG and the chemicals industry on same.

I am still unclear as to what exactly is the limiting factor in rolling out testing in Northern Ireland on a much larger scale and would be grateful for your advice on the following queries:

- 1) How many testing kits does Northern Ireland currently have access to?
- 2) How many people who are qualified to carry out testing do we have in Northern Ireland?
- 3) What is the current list of laboratory locations at which tests can be processed in Northern Ireland?
- 4) Has the possibility of joint procurement with the Republic of Ireland been explored?

I appreciate that you have many demands on your time at the moment, but sharing this information will enable me to more fully understand the picture with regards to testing and would help me reassure constituents and colleagues who are understandably concerned about this.

Thanks,

Personal Data

**NAOMI LONG MLA
MINISTER OF JUSTICE**