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Baroness Harding
Executive Chair, NHS Test and Trace
By email to: Dido.Harding@dhsc.gov.uk

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Dear Dido

I am very anxious to support your work on Test and Trace but I am struggling to put into context a number of business cases arriving in an uncorrelated way. Most of these, which I view as part of Cabinet Office spend controls, relate to additional testing capacity. I am of course aware of the Prime Minister's capacity target of 800,000 tests per day by Christmas. But it is unclear to me how that capacity is going to be made up, and how it compares to your current and expected testing load. Without this context it is extremely difficult to see which business cases should be approved without giving rise to considerable overcapacity.

Therefore, I would appreciate understanding what your long-term strategy is for the range of possible tests now available. In particular, my immediate questions are:

1. With the emergence of the vaccine program do you anticipate it making a significant difference to infections and hospitalisations?
2. Do you anticipate that this will reduce the volume of testing required and if so when?
3. We now have a number of test options available to us. How do you see the different tests being used for the different use cases?
4. What is the strategy for ramping up our supply of antibody tests?

Overall volume of tests

In order to ensure the efficient approval of business cases I would be grateful if you could supply a spreadsheet showing the different use cases (by month) up to the end of 2021, mapped to the technology that will be used to deliver them. This enables us to see what demand you expect for each type of technology by month. Given that these would only be forecasts, please could you provide a base, high and low estimate. This will allow us to understand the range you think Test and Trace will be working within during 2021. I gather a similar request was made at the Treasury Approval Point meeting last week.