



Health and Social Care Committee

House of Commons London SW1A 0AA

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From Rt Hon. Jeremy Hunt MP

1 June 2020

Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP

Dear Prime Minister,

Re: 24 hour test results for Covid-19

Thank you for appearing in front of the Liaison Committee last week. During this session we discussed the need to speed up the time it takes to get a result from a test for Covid-19. You said you had “absolutely” set a target for all test results to be delivered within 24 hours. I wanted to record my welcome and support for this target as I believe fast turnaround times for tests are critical if the NHS Test and Trace Service is to work effectively.

I also believe that setting a deadline for this target to be achieved is vital. The dramatic effect that the 100,000 tests a day target had on the system shows how important it is for targets to have deadlines. You were reluctant to commit to one at the Committee but I wanted to write to urge you to do so now. Many countries that have successfully contained this virus all aim to deliver test results within 24 hours. We should do the same and we should do so quickly.

In reply could you therefore please do the following -

1. Confirm that the government does have an official target of returning tests results within 24 hours?
2. Assuming this target exists set a date by which you it will be reached by?
3. Confirm the number of tests currently being returned within 24 hours as you pledged to do during the Liaison Committee session.
4. Commit to publishing the breakdown on a daily basis of the number of test results received within 24 hours so the public can track progress towards the target.

I hope you agree that committing to a firm date by which the 24 hour target will be achieved will mean it is achieved quickly and will help ensure the NHS Test and Trace Service is fully effective.

Yours sincerely,

Rt hon Jeremy Hunt MP
Chair, Health and Social Care Committee