
From: Charles Hearne
Sent: Thursday 18 November 2021 08:21
To: Paul McGuinness
Subject: Re: Rapid Antigen Testing Kits

Please order 1000 kits, I'll explain shortly

Charles Hearne
T. 01 6183985

From: Paul McGuinness
Sent: Thursday, November 18, 2021 7:45:03 AM
To: Charles Hearne
Subject: Re: Rapid Antigen Testing Kits

Hi Charles,

Before we go ahead with this, if the requirement is going to be for each person on site to do 2 antigen tests per week and we expect there to be at least 300 people on site each week, 1,000 tests, wouldn't even last us 2 full weeks.

Can you give me a call at some point this morning to discuss before I order.

Thanks
Paul

From: Charles Hearne
Sent: Wednesday, November 17, 2021 10:21 p.m.
To: Paul McGuinness
Cc: Siobhán Malone; Liam Doherty
Subject: Rapid Antigen Testing Kits

Paul,

I discussed this with Michael Errity this evening.

Please order one thousand (1,000) test kits.

I will provide more info tomorrow.

Charles Hearne


From: Charles Hearne
Sent: Wednesday 17 November 2021 16:55
To: Liam Doherty
Subject: RE: Antigen Testing

I will work further on this tonight

From: Liam Doherty [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday 17 November 2021 13:27
To: Charles Hearne [REDACTED]
Subject: Antigen Testing

Charles,

Link to [Antigen Testing](#) document

Liam Doherty
Príomhoifigeach Cúnta | Assistant Principal
Seirbhís Thithe an Oireachtais | Houses of the Oireachtas Service

[REDACTED]

Úsáidim na forainmneacha sé/é. My pronouns are he/him

Cuireann Seirbhís Thithe an Oireachtais fáilte roimh chomhfhreagras i nGaeilge

Proposal – provision of Rapid Antigen Diagnostic Test Kits (RADT) to Members

Precautions and essential context.

Before discussing antigen testing, it is important to emphasise that they have a very specific purpose, and that they must not be used to displace compliance with public health advice. They may be suitable for use in specific circumstances as an additional tool with which to help suppress transmission of the virus.

Nobody with symptoms of COVID-19 should come on site. Nobody with symptoms should be using an antigen test. If symptomatic, PCR tests should be used, and public health advice must be followed. If you have a confirmed case in your household, you must isolate for 5 days – a negative antigen test result cannot set this requirement aside.

Among people who are asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic, antigen tests can sometimes be used to detect the virus. A negative result is not a licence to proceed freely – rather it means that one may proceed to comply with all of the safety measures in place.

As TDs, we must also be mindful of government advice to work from home if possible.

It's also critical that footfall in Leinster House be further reduced. The onsite headcount of staff of the Service is already reduced by about 50% - and more on non-sitting days. Members and parties / groups **MUST** bring about a matching reduction in the headcount of political staff on site.

The government's Work Safely Protocol continues to advise that the basic infection prevention and control measures (e.g. mask wearing, sanitisation, social distancing and ventilation) are the best way to reduce the spread of COVID-19. However, antigen test kits could be provided for Members who wish to use them. Members have the highest number of interactions with other members of the parliamentary community and face the greatest challenges in maintaining physical distancing. The nature of Members' representational role places them at particular risk, and their legislative role is essential.

The question of use of test kits by civil servants and others must be considered separately in more detail and must also await central guidance from the Department of Public Expenditure. Consultation with staff representative bodies would also be required. For the purposes of this discussion, we are concerned only with the provision of test kits for use by Members.

Rapid Antigen Diagnostic Test kits for Members

Test kits could be provided for **voluntary** use by Members, preferably before leaving home to travel to Leinster House. This would reduce the chance of commuting while infectious.

Kits could be distributed through party administrators / group coordinators for collection by Members who wish to use them.

It really must be emphasised that no person who has symptoms may use a negative antigen test result as justification for coming on site or to ignore public health advice regarding the key infection prevention and control measures when on site.

Regardless of whether RADT kits are used, all positive cases in the parliamentary community should be reported to the COVID-19 Support Team at fmuc19@oireachtas.ie

The Service can currently obtain test kits – the best quote obtained so far is €2.60 + VAT per kit. It is proposed that this cost will be met by the Commission. It is possible that availability may change shortly.

Specific guidance would be provided regarding optimal use of kits. Guidance can also be provided on-

1. when test should be used and when they should not be used
2. where tests should be conducted,
3. how to deal with a positive result,
4. how to respond to a negative result, and
5. how to dispose of used test kits.

Charles has escaped this morning and is in the Dáil chamber, but Michael Errity and Liam Doherty are available to answer any questions.

More detailed notes are below.

Antigen Diagnostic Testing in the Houses of the Oireachtas

The Work Safely Protocol continues to advise that the best way to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in a workplace is to wear masks/face coverings, practice physical distancing, adopt proper hand hygiene, follow respiratory etiquette, and increase ventilation and get vaccinated. In addition, it repeatedly emphasises the need for symptomatic people to isolate and get a PCR test.

While acknowledging the increasing role antigen testing is playing across the world in “finding” cases of COVID-19, the Work Safely Protocol continues to caution that they should not be used to give a “green” light for a workplace to operate or an individual to behave in a particular way. There can be both false positives and false negative test results. It is essential that all other public health advice continues to be followed even with the introduction of antigen testing. As in the case of higher education authorities which have implemented rapid testing, it must always be voluntary, and the Service would manage the supply and delivery of the antigen testing kits but would not be involved in the collection of test results or have any access to test results of anyone within the parliamentary community.

To date, despite a significant increase in confirmed case numbers in recent weeks, there have been no clusters in the parliamentary community. As such, there would appear to be no immediate need for programme testing. In an outbreak scenario, if contact tracers felt that the virus was spreading in the workplace, they may instruct testing alongside existing HSE close contact procedures. The most effective testing in this scenario would be PCR testing.

When should tests be provided?

Symptomatic people

While rapid antigen tests work best when used in cases with high viral loads including symptomatic cases, one of our primary infection prevention and control measure is to ask **everyone staff** to not come on site if they are showing any signs of COVID-19.

We also have procedures in place for suspected cases that, in short, help that person to safely leave the campus as soon as possible. In addition, the HSE advice is that any symptomatic person, regardless of vaccination status, should isolate and get a PCR test.

Providing an antigen test to a symptomatic person on site is unnecessary as the person should isolate and get a PCR test in line with HSE and Government advice. If an antigen test was to produce a negative result it could result in this advice, and / or the basic infection prevention and control measures, not being followed.

On Request / General Distribution

Members of the parliamentary community could request testing kits from the Facilities Management Unit. There could be benefit in providing antigen testing for people who have been identified as close contacts, are fully vaccinated and are asymptomatic. However, the HSE's current policy¹ is to assign three antigen tests to fully vaccinated close contacts of a confirmed case. These tests are to be taken over a five-day period and if the individual develops symptoms at any time, they should contact the HSE for a PCR test.

The distribution of antigen testing kits could lead to an excessive, and more importantly, unnecessary, and inefficient use of the tests.

If virus levels or viral loads are low, the results of such tests may not be sufficient in finding those who are pre-symptomatic. However, rapid antigen tests are effective when used in cases with high viral loads – both pre-symptomatic cases and symptomatic cases within 5 days of onset – and so are useful in identifying people who are most infectious.

For this to be of benefit for the Service, testing at home could be encouraged to help identify pre-symptomatic cases for people who suspect they are close contacts but have not been contacted by the HSE or people engaged in “riskier” activities. This would also likely lead to a reduction of people coming on site with symptoms.

While unlikely, there is also the potential that providing test kits on request could lead to ‘stockpiling’ from members of the parliamentary community taking advantage of the availability of free kits.

Programme Testing for Specific Purposes

The Work Safely Protocol notes that repeat testing (e.g., twice weekly) can offer the largest benefits in terms of increased case detection. This would incur significant financial costs for the Service if rolled out across all members of the parliamentary community. We have also

¹ <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/covid19/testing/antigen-testing/>

previously been provided with legal advice that mandatory testing should not be introduced. Any programme of regular testing would be both voluntary and confidential.

In addition, the Work Safely Protocol recommends that a specific risk assessment be carried out in advance of any testing regime or programme being introduced. There are comparatively few activities within the Oireachtas where there are any difficulties in implementing the key infection prevention and control measures. A voluntary programme of rapid antigen testing should only be considered for specific purposes and in consultation with people working in those conditions.

Antigen test kits could be provided in sections where staff have no capacity to work from home such as cleaners, catering staff, the Superintendents Section and Members. These groups also have the highest number of interactions with other members of the parliamentary community and face the greatest challenges in maintaining physical distancing.

For this to be of increased benefit for the Service, testing at home should be encouraged to help identify pre-symptomatic cases

Procedures

Where are tests being carried out?

Testing in busy, shared spaces would be unsatisfactory.

It is important to note that self-swabbing, even if under supervision, can be challenging if it involves nasopharyngeal or nasal swabbing and may result in inconsistent application.

Testing should be completed on a clean, flat surface with no possibility of contaminating the sample.

Testing would be best carried out in an individual's home for the reasons outlined here and, as noted above, to ~~reduce~~ help identify pre-symptomatic cases before coming on site.

What to do with a positive result?

Individuals who return a positive test result should be treated as suspected case and reported to fmuc19@oireachtas.ie. The individual should immediately contact their GP, or the HSE directly with a view to booking a PCR test. They should isolate until the result of the PCR test is returned and follow HSE guidance.

What do we do with negative test?

If individuals are asymptomatic and return a negative test, they would not be requested to contact the Service. However, to continue protecting themselves and their colleagues they should continue mask wearing, maintaining their distance and hand and respiratory hygiene. A negative test result should not be used as a reason to circumvent these measures.

Disposal of used test kits

All components of test kits used onsite should be disposed of as biohazardous waste², this must be completed in line with the disposal of waste from the medical room in LH2000 or with the Sanitary waste collection service.

² <https://healthservice.hse.ie/filelibrary/staff/covid-19-antigen-diagnostic-testing-training-material.pdf>

From: Charles Hearne
Sent: Thursday 18 November 2021 00:28
To: Michael Errity; Paula Cowan
Cc: Liam Doherty; Jill Gray
Subject: Rapid Antigen Diagnostic Test kits

Michael, Paula,

A note on antigen test kits is attached.

Liam Doherty may need to correct some aspects of this, but I believe it is reasonably accurate. Liam will see this version of the note for the first time on Thursday morning.

I suggest that the first part of the note should be presented to the Business Committee by a civil servant. Faded text could be skipped if more brevity is needed. The CC might present the second part, and then invite members' comments.

[@Paula Cowan](#) - I will be in the Dáil chamber during the meeting– please forward an invitation to the meeting to Liam Doherty and let the CC know that Liam will be available to the meeting if any questions arise.

I'll be available until about 10:15 a.m. if needed.

Charles


From: Jill Gray
Sent: Thursday 18 November 2021 12:45
To: Peter Finnegan; Michael Errity
Cc: Charles Hearne; Liam Doherty
Subject: FW: Antigen Tests

Importance: High

FYI colleagues,

Kind regards,

Jill.

From: Jack Chambers <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Thursday 18 November 2021 12:36
To: Seán Ó Fearghail <[REDACTED]>
Cc: Jill Gray <[REDACTED]>
Subject: Antigen Tests

Dear Sean,

Further to the notification by the Oireachtas service at the Business Committee today of providing free antigen tests to the parliamentary community we feel it is necessary to ensure that parties and groups would make a full contribution to the cost of these tests if they are used by members or their staff. We would ask that formal arrangements be put in place to ensure that this can be facilitated for the three parties undersigned.

Yours sincerely,

Jack Chambers

Government Chief Whip- Fianna Fail

Brendan Griffin

Deputy Government Whip- Fine Gael

Marc O Cathasaigh

Green Party Whip

Designated Public Official under the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015. See lobbying.ie

From: Charles Hearne
Sent: Friday 19 November 2021 09:59
To: Jennifer McGrath; David O'Neill; Liam Doherty; Margaret Crawley; Mark Mulqueen; Paul McGuinness; Siobhán Malone; Sinéad O'Brien; Tara Murphy; Teresa Doolan; Verona Ní Bhroinn
Subject: Antigen testing

Colleagues

The beginning of a business case / proposal regarding provision of Rapid Antigen Diagnostic Test kits (RADTs) has been shared in MS teams.

This issue attracted some attention yesterday when it was discussed at the Business Committee, in the Dáil and extensively reported in the media. For the record, use of RADT kits was not recommended by FMU at any stage.

1,000 RADTs have been ordered after three quotes were obtained. These will be received next Wednesday. Distribution mechanisms have yet to be developed, and guidance on use and disposal will have to be developed also. I understand that demand has increased since this was highlighted yesterday, and it is likely that supply will tighten, leading to delays in fulfilment of orders

If RADT use is to continue, or if it becomes extensive, the Service will have to conduct a formal procurement process. This will have follow consideration by the MB, which will require information on legal considerations, DP, issues, IR issues, costs, procurement, PR issues,

Please access the business case and add text under the various headings which are on the last page (and feel free also to make corrections elsewhere in the document). If someone else in your section needs access, please add them to the chat and include all of the chat history.

I'm usually available at [REDACTED]

Charles

From: Charles Hearne
Sent: Monday 22 November 2021 23:57
To: Liam Doherty
Subject: Fwd: Antigen Testing

I hope we will get to discuss this on Wednesday - I just don't know when I might be available.

Charles Hearne
[REDACTED]

From: Jennifer McGrath [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, November 22, 2021 2:01:59 PM
To: Charles Hearne [REDACTED]; David O'Neill <[REDACTED]>
Subject: Antigen Testing

Charles, David,

My views are below on the antigen testing proposal. Based on the safeguards which will be in place I don't think there is an issue from a strictly data protection perspective with just providing antigen tests. I would recommend a DPIA (even where there is no processing to take place just to set out and consider any potential issues) and having a clear privacy notice in place.

I was asked before to consult with the DPC on this issue and after consideration with OPLA we decided that it would be better not to because their guidance is clear and raising the issue might give rise to more questions from the DPC. If there is consideration being given to mandatory testing or any other similar issues, would it be a good option to consult (David you may have a view on this)? I do think the Parliament is a very specific type of workplace and could it potentially be argued that the risks are higher for staff and therefore require more than just the standard measures to mitigate against them. This conflicts with the legal position set out in the advices and the fact that imposing additional measures such as checking vaccine status is really limited to health care facilities.

I would be happy to talk through the issues if that would be useful

Regards

Jennifer

Current Proposal

Factors

- Provision of antigen tests potentially conflicts with the current DPC position which only allows for staff to be instructed to hand wash , keep a social distance etc.
- There will be no new processing of special category data by the Service because the proposal is for the tests to be taken offsite and done in a private capacity
- Staff currently provide details of their health status to the Service when they fill out their *Safe to Work Forms* so there is no additional collection and processing of special category personal data required
- Ensuring notice is provided to staff on the optional nature of the tests and clarifying that there are no negative consequences for failing to take one should mitigate against a potential issue with the imbalance of power and the reliance on consent from the staff who must take the test.
- A DPIA would further allow any potential risks to be identified and mitigated against.

Mandatory Antigen Testing

- The DPC guidance considers the standard safety measures to be proportionate & necessary - including hand washing /social distancing etc. The Parliament is however a different type of workplace and staff may not be in a position to instruct the Members they have to work alongside to comply with these basic measures. In the specific context of Parliament where interaction with Members and visitors is required, could it be argued that additional measures (such as antigen testing) are necessary and proportionate? I know this was considered in detail in the previous legal advices.
- Should consultation with the DPC be considered at this point? Particularly where there is no guarantee that the tests will be voluntary, the focus on the specific circumstance that make a Parliament unique.

Jennifer Mc Grath,
Príomhoifigeach Cúnta | Assistant Principal,
Oifigeach Cosanta Sonraí | Data Protection Officer,
An tAonad Bainistithe Taifead | Records Management Unit,
Seirbhís Thithe an Oireachtais | Houses of the Oireachtas Service,
[REDACTED]
Cuireann Seirbhís Thithe an Oireachtais fáilte roimh chomhfhreagras i nGaeilge



**Tithe an
Oireachtais
Houses of the
Oireachtas**

COVID-19 RISK ASSESSMENT

COVID-19 Risk Assessment Guidance

The government's Work Safely Protocol continues to advise that the basic infection prevention and control measures, outlined below, are the best way to reduce the spread of COVID-19 while noting that repeat testing in specific circumstances can offer benefits in terms of increased case detection. In addition, the Protocol recommends that a specific risk assessment is carried out in advance of any testing regime or programme being introduced. There are comparatively few activities within the Oireachtas where there are any difficulties in implementing the key infection prevention and control measures.

Provision of rapid antigen testing for voluntary use at home should only be considered for specific purposes and in consultation with people working in those conditions. For example, antigen test kits could be provided in sections where staff have no capacity to work from home, where they have high number of interactions with other members of the parliamentary community and where they face the greatest challenges in maintaining physical distancing, wearing masks and so on.

For voluntary use of antigen testing to be of increased benefit for the Service, it should involve testing at home to help identify pre-symptomatic or asymptomatic cases before they arrive on site. Antigen test kits must not be used by anyone with symptoms of COVID-19.

In line with the Work Safely Protocol, Principal Officers / Section Heads could update their COVID-19 risk assessments in consultation with their staff to determine whether the voluntary use of antigen test kits is required as an additional control measure.

An **example** template has been provided below to illustrate how a COVID-19 risk assessment can be completed. The template considers the primary hazards (or modes of transmission) and then outlines the control measures that should be in place. To emphasise, these are example control measures and comments. Section heads, in consultation with their staff, are best placed to identify the hazards and required control measures for the workplace and work activities under their management control. The template below can be used as a starting point for completing section specific risk assessments, that reflect the specific circumstances of your section.

Many of the control measures will be consistent across the complex and are based on HSE advice and guidance and the key infection prevention and control measures that we are all familiar with. In addition, many of the control measures arise from central policy, some will be best managed by other units (e.g. FMU) and others are dependent on personal responsibility and action. However, section heads should satisfy themselves that the appropriate control measures are in place **and** being followed / implemented.

The risk assessment should explicitly consider:

- Whether staff can work from home.
- The nature of onsite work, including the ability and practicality of their staff following the key infection prevention and control measures.
- Whether any additional benefit would arise from voluntary provision of antigen testing.
- The specific circumstances of individuals.

Key Infection Prevention and Control Measures

Face Masks

COVID-19 is primarily spread through close contact and droplets that come from your nose and mouth when someone is talking loudly, shouting, coughing, sneezing and so on. Wearing face coverings reduces the spread of these droplets.

The Service requires that all members of the parliamentary community continue to wear face coverings except when eating, drinking, or contributing to debates or when employees are seated at their desk *and* they are more than two metres from the nearest person. Where a member of the parliamentary community has a medical condition, which prevents them from wearing a mask, they may be exempt from wearing a mask if they provide a medical certificate.

Physical Distancing

There is a higher likelihood of transmission of COVID-19 when people are less than 2 metres from each other. Physically distancing from other people is an effective means of reducing the likelihood of spread of the virus.

The Service continues to require staff to socially distance. We have assigned maximum room occupancies to help facilitate this. We also require section heads to continue to limit the number of staff on site at the same time so that when at their desks they are more than 2m from their nearest colleague. Section Heads should ensure that maximum occupancy signs are not removed and that the indicated maxima are observed.

Where it is not possible for people to maintain a 2m separation, we require that all members of the parliamentary community wear masks. For example, this can arise in the Dáil Chamber where a checkerboard arrangement has been designed to strike a balance between Members' constitutional right to attend the Chamber and maximising the distance between them. We have made medical grade masks available to all Members to reduce the risk of transmission. Medical grade face masks are also available to section heads on request.

Ventilation

Airborne transmission – the spread of a virus in respiratory particles – can happen over a longer distance and persist for a longer time than droplets. There are some situations in which there is an increased risk including poorly ventilated and/or uncontrolled indoor spaces. Ventilation systems have been tested in shared spaces. We also continue to encourage members of the parliamentary community to regularly open windows and to avoid in-person meetings. Air quality has been monitored in plenary chambers, circulation areas, committee rooms, communal areas like bars and restaurants, and large open plan offices, and has been found to be consistently good. Ventilation systems are maintained and cleaned according to manufacturer's recommendations.

Cleaning regimes

The virus can also be transmitted from surfaces when someone who has the virus spreads droplets with the virus onto surfaces around them. When someone else touches that surface and then touches their eyes, nose or mouth before washing their hands, they could become infected too. The COVID-19 virus can survive for up to 72 hours depending on the material.

The Service has introduced enhanced cleaning and disinfection of surfaces with a focus on high traffic areas and common touch points to reduce the risk of transmission of the virus from surfaces. In addition, all staff and Members are expected to maintain hygiene standards and use hand sanitisers or wash their hands before and after touching shared surfaces.

Rapid Antigen Test kits

The Service can provide test kits in cases. Principal Officers should complete and return a risk assessment that considers whether the use of rapid antigen test kits by staff is an appropriate response to the identified risks. Test kits are provided for use at home before coming to work, and only where the user has no symptoms of COVID-19.

Anyone with symptoms must

1. Not attend Leinster House;
2. restrict their movements;
3. seek a PCR test and follow HSE / public health advice.

Test kits will be provided by Facilities Management Unit upon receipt of a written request.

COVID-19 Risk Assessment

Hazard	Who Might Be Harmed	Controls	Control in Place	Comments	Additional / Alternative Control
Contracting or spreading COVID-19 by returning to Leinster House	The parliamentary community and visitors	Service staff continue working from home where possible	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>In place where possible, however, 8 staff must be on site to carry out assigned duties</i>	<i>Staff provided with antigen test for voluntary use before leaving house. Staff have been directed to the HSE guidance on using antigen testing.</i>
		Publish a COVID-19 response plan, provide induction training and issue guidance in line with public health advice	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Published by safety team</i>	
		Require the completion of a COVID-19 declaration form for those that must attend onsite including employees, members, contractors and visitors	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		
		Ensure visits to site are recorded and limited to visitors considered essential to the sittings of the Houses and Committees	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		
		Protocols for dealing with a suspected case are followed	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Published by safety team</i>	
Contracting or spreading COVID-19 through inadequate social distancing	The parliamentary community and visitors	Ensure social distancing guidelines are followed	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<i>Nature of the work requires that staff work in teams of two in close proximity.</i>	<i>Medical grade masks provided. Staff working in pods. Staff provided with antigen test for voluntary use before leaving house. Staff have been directed to the HSE guidance on using antigen testing.</i>

		Introduce maximum occupancy numbers to facilitate social distancing	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Rota system employed and work adapted to reduce numbers in each location</i>	
		Reorganise or remove furniture to facilitate social distancing	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		
		Ensure face mask/face covering policy is followed	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		
		Display signage outlining hygiene, respiratory and physical distancing guidelines	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		
Contracting or spreading COV ID-19 from poor respiratory hygiene	The parliamentary community and visitors	Ensure face mask/face covering policy is followed	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		
		Ensure social distancing guidelines are followed	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<i>Nature of the work requires that staff work in teams of two in close proximity.</i>	<i>Medical grade masks provided. Staff working in pods. Staff provided with antigen test for voluntary use before leaving house. Staff have been directed to the HSE guidance on using antigen testing.</i>
		Display signage outlining hygiene, respiratory and physical distancing guidelines	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		
		Introduce maximum occupancy numbers to facilitate social distancing	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		
		Reorganise or remove furniture to facilitate social distancing	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		
Contracting or spreading COVID-19 from non-compliance or	The parliamentary community and visitors	Introduce changes to work practices or assignment of staff where adherence to guidelines is not possible	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Rota system employed and work adapted to reduce numbers in each location</i>	<i>Medical grade masks provided. Staff working in pods. Staff provided with antigen test for voluntary use before leaving house. Staff have been directed</i>

inability to comply with guidelines					<i>to the HSE guidance on using antigen testing.</i>
		Clear leadership and communication from the management team	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		
Contracting or spreading COVID-19 from airborne transmission	The parliamentary community and visitors	Ensure rooms are appropriately ventilated	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		
		Ensure face mask/face covering policy is followed	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		
		Introduce maximum occupancy numbers	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		
		Display signage outlining hygiene, respiratory and physical distancing guidelines	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		
Contracting or spreading COVID-19 as a result of poor hand hygiene	The parliamentary community and visitors	Provide enough hand washing and hand sanitising facilities to accommodate adherence to hand hygiene measures	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		
		Provide hand washing and hand sanitising facilities at convenient and high traffic areas and areas with high touch points	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		
		Provide information and display posters on how to wash and sanitise hands properly	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		
		Ensure arrangements are in place to clean and disinfect areas used by confirmed cases	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		
		Display signage outlining hygiene, respiratory and physical distancing guidelines	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		
Contracting or spreading	The parliamentary	Cleaning regimes for common and high-traffic areas and shared touch points	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		

COVID-19 from surfaces	community and visitors	Keep surfaces in communal areas clear to make cleaning easier	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		
		Provide hand washing and hand sanitising facilities at convenient and high traffic areas and areas with high touch points	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		
		Introduce and implement a clean desk and shared spaces policy	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		
		Reduce the need for staff to move around the workplace, as much as possible	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		
		Avoid sharing work equipment and stations or, where this is not possible, put in place cleaning regimes and remind staff of the need to wear face coverings, sanitise hand and practice respiratory etiquette	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		
		Provide more bins and ensure they are emptied regularly	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		
		Ensure arrangements are in place to clean and disinfect areas used by confirmed cases	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		

COVID-19 Risk Score

COVID-19 has the potential to cause death and severe disease while quickly spreading to impact large groups of people. As a result, the impact associated with the risk is considered to have a severity rating of 'Critical'.

Given the transmissibility of the COVID-19 virus, the potential for exponential growth in the numbers of people impacted and the potential for, and impact of, new variants, the absence of any of the infection prevention and control measures listed above, including the alternative / additional controls, increases the likelihood of occurrence to at least 'Unlikely' and consequently elevates the risk to an unacceptably high level.

The risk has been assessed as 'Medium' and has been reduced as far as reasonably practicable. The risk will be actively monitored by the section head to ensure the control measures outlined here are in place.

The impact and likelihood scores will be kept under review reflecting the prevailing public health advice and the roll-out of the vaccination programme.

Impact	Critical Accident or illness resulting in death or serious permanent injury/chronic illness or multiple major injuries	Medium	High	High	Extreme	Extreme
	Major Serious injury or illness (or near miss with the potential) causing prolonged absence or multiple significant injuries	Low	Medium	High	High	Extreme
	Significant Lost-time injury or illness (or near miss with the potential) requiring day(s) to fully recover or multiple moderate injuries	Low	Medium	Medium	High	High
	Moderate Minor injury or illness including Medical Treatment Cases and Restricted Work Cases or multiple minor injuries	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium
	Minor Slight injury or illness including First Aid Case. Does not affect work performance	Low	Low	Low	Low	Medium

Remote	Unlikely	Possible	Probable	Almost Certain
Likelihood				

Section _____ Risk is assessed as _____

Name _____ Signed _____ Date _____

From: Liam Doherty
Sent: Wednesday 24 November 2021 14:02
To: Charles Hearne
Subject: RA update to include consideration of antigen testing
Attachments: COVID-19 Risk Assessment Antigen Testing.docx

As discussed

Liam Doherty

Príomhoifigeach Cúnta | Assistant Principal

Seirbhís Thithe an Oireachtais | Houses of the Oireachtas Service



Úsáidim na forainmneacha sé/é. My pronouns are he/him

Cuireann Seirbhís Thithe an Oireachtais fáilte roimh chomhfhreagras i nGaeilge

From: Facilities
Sent: Friday 26 November 2021 10:05
To: Members_EML; Political Personnel_EML
Subject: FW: Provision of Rapid Antigen Test Kits

Correction – there is no VAT on antigen test kits – the cost will be €2.80 per kit (€14 per pack of five)

From: Facilities <facilities@oireachtas.ie>
Sent: Friday 26 November 2021 09:45
To: Members_EML <members@oireachtas.ie>; Political Personnel_EML <Political.Personnel@oireachtas.ie>
Subject: Provision of Rapid Antigen Test Kits

To all Deputies and Senators
To all staff of Members and political parties and groups

At the Business Committee meeting on Thursday 25th November, it was agreed that the Houses of the Oireachtas Service would make COVID-19 rapid antigen tests available to members of the parliamentary community upon request.

Advice on the Use of Antigen Tests

You must follow HSE advice on [using COVID-19 antigen tests](#). This includes advice on when to do an antigen test, how to do an antigen test, and how to interpret and respond to your antigen test result.

If you have [symptoms](#) of COVID-19 you should [self-isolate](#), get a [COVID-19 PCR test](#) and follow public health advice. You must not come on site if you have any symptoms of COVID-19. Use of a rapid antigen test if you of COVID-19 is not appropriate. Test kits are being provided for use at home before coming to work in order that any indication of infection is obtained before commuting and potentially infecting other commuters or colleagues at work. Test kits are not intended for use at work.

The Work Safely Protocol continues to advise that the best way to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace is to wear masks/coverings, practice physical distancing, wash your hands, cover coughs and sneezes, increase ventilation and get vaccinated.

Payment for Test Kits

In every case, the test kits will be paid for by the relevant employer i.e. the relevant TD, Senator, political party / group, or, the Houses of the Oireachtas Service. Deputies and Senators must pay for test kits which they request for their own use. The relevant employer will receive an invoice each month reflecting the volume of tests ordered by them and their staff and the costs of the tests to the Service. The cost of the tests are not expected to fluctuate significantly. The tests that are currently available cost €3.44 (incl. VAT) per test. Tests are provided in packs of five at a cost of €17.22 (incl. VAT). Tests are currently available only in packs of five – availability of tests in single packs is expected to arise in mid-December. Payment for tests must be made by EFT, no other form of payment is possible. Bank Account Details will be provided with Invoices. Staff who order test kits from the Service should consult with their employer beforehand.

How to order Test kits

To request test kits please complete this [Antigen Order Form](#) or have your employer make the request on your behalf.

The form allows for the selection of a number of packs of 5 tests. However, the Service currently has 200 packs available and will distribute the tests on a first-come, first served basis. Given the limited number of packs initially available we are limiting orders to one pack per person. If you are ordering multiple packs for your staff, please limit the number to one pack for each staff member who has requested a pack of tests. Additional test kits have been ordered and will be distributed as soon as possible.

Please use one form per order, i.e. if test kits are going to two different addresses please use one form per address.

Facilities Management Unit

From: Facilities
Sent: Friday 26 November 2021 09:45
To: Staff_EML
Subject: Provision of Rapid Antigen Test Kits

To all Staff

At the Business Committee meeting on Thursday 25th November, it was agreed that the Houses of the Oireachtas Service would make COVID-19 rapid antigen tests available to members of the parliamentary community upon request.

Advice on the Use of Antigen Tests

You must follow HSE advice on [using COVID-19 antigen tests](#). This includes advice on when to do an antigen test, how to do an antigen test, and how to interpret and respond to your antigen test result.

If you have [symptoms](#) of COVID-19 you should [self-isolate](#), get a [COVID-19 PCR test](#) and follow public health advice. You must not come on site if you have any symptoms of COVID-19. Use of a rapid antigen test if you of COVID-19 is not appropriate. Test kits are being provided for use at home before coming to work in order that any indication of infection is obtained before commuting and potentially infecting other commuters or colleagues at work. Test kits are not intended for use at work.

The Work Safely Protocol continues to advise that the best way to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace is to wear masks/coverings, practice physical distancing, wash your hands, cover coughs and sneezes, increase ventilation and get vaccinated.

Payment for Test Kits

In every case, the test kits will be paid for by the relevant employer i.e. the relevant TD, Senator, political party / group, or, the Houses of the Oireachtas Service. Deputies and Senators must pay for test kits which they request for their own use. The cost of the tests are not expected to fluctuate significantly. The tests that are currently available cost €3.44 (incl. VAT) per test. Tests are provided in packs of five at a cost of €17.22 (incl. VAT). Tests are currently available only in packs of five – availability of tests in single packs is expected to arise in mid-December.

How to order Test kits

Principal Officers may request test kits for distribution to staff in their section(s) by sending an email to facilities@oireachtas.ie. The Service currently has 200 packs (each containing five test kits) available. Additional test kits have been ordered and will be distributed as soon as they are delivered. Given the limited number of packs initially available, we are limiting orders to one pack per person. Section heads are asked to prioritise the provision of test kits to staff in certain types of positions (e.g. those positions in which staff are unable to social distance or are exposed to greater risk. If you are ordering multiple packs for your staff, please limit the number to one pack for each staff member who has requested a pack of tests.

Facilities Management Unit

From: Liam Doherty
Sent: Friday 26 November 2021 11:41
To: Olive Murphy; Facilities
Subject: RE: Provision of Rapid Antigen Test Kits

Hi Olive,

In line with [current HSE advice](#) the sentence should read “Use of a rapid antigen test if you **have symptoms** of COVID-19 is not appropriate.”

Hope that helps.

Liam Doherty

Príomhoifigeach Cúnta | Assistant Principal

Seirbhís Thithe an Oireachtas | Houses of the Oireachtas Service

Úsáidim na forainmneacha sé/é. My pronouns are he/him

Cuireann Seirbhís Thithe an Oireachtas fáilte roimh chomhfhreagras i nGaeilge

From: Olive Murphy <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Friday 26 November 2021 09:50
To: Facilities <facilities@oireachtas.ie>
Subject: RE: Provision of Rapid Antigen Test Kits

To whom it may concern

Thank you for the information provided on rapid antigen test kits. There may be a typo in the following sentence. “**Use of a rapid antigen test if you of COVID-19 is not appropriate.**” Could you please correct it as the meaning is not clear?

Kind regards

Olive

From: Facilities <facilities@oireachtas.ie>
Sent: Friday 26 November 2021 09:45
To: Staff_EML <EX-DL-Staff_EML@oireachtas.ie>
Subject: Provision of Rapid Antigen Test Kits

To all Staff

At the Business Committee meeting on Thursday 25th November, it was agreed that the Houses of the Oireachtas Service would make COVID-19 rapid antigen tests available to members of the parliamentary community upon request.

Advice on the Use of Antigen Tests

You must follow HSE advice on [using COVID-19 antigen tests](#). This includes advice on when to do an antigen test, how to do an antigen test, and how to interpret and respond to your antigen test result.

If you have [symptoms](#) of COVID-19 you should [self-isolate](#), get a [COVID-19 PCR test](#) and follow public health advice. You must not come on site if you have any symptoms of COVID-19. Use of a rapid antigen test if you of COVID-19 is not appropriate. Test kits are being provided for use at home before coming to work in order that any indication of

infection is obtained before commuting and potentially infecting other commuters or colleagues at work. Test kits are not intended for use at work.

The Work Safely Protocol continues to advise that the best way to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace is to wear masks/coverings, practice physical distancing, wash your hands, cover coughs and sneezes, increase ventilation and get vaccinated.

Payment for Test Kits

In every case, the test kits will be paid for by the relevant employer i.e. the relevant TD, Senator, political party / group, or, the Houses of the Oireachtas Service. Deputies and Senators must pay for test kits which they request for their own use. The cost of the tests are not expected to fluctuate significantly. The tests that are currently available cost €3.44 (incl. VAT) per test. Tests are provided in packs of five at a cost of €17.22 (incl. VAT). Tests are currently available only in packs of five – availability of tests in single packs is expected to arise in mid-December.

How to order Test kits

Principal Officers may request test kits for distribution to staff in their section(s) by sending an email to facilities@oireachtas.ie. The Service currently has 200 packs (each containing five test kits) available. Additional test kits have been ordered and will be distributed as soon as they are delivered. Given the limited number of packs initially available, we are limiting orders to one pack per person. Section heads are asked to prioritise the provision of test kits to staff in certain types of positions (e.g. those positions in which staff are unable to social distance or are exposed to greater risk. If you are ordering multiple packs for your staff, please limit the number to one pack for each staff member who has requested a pack of tests.

Facilities Management Unit



Mr Ken Foxe

Our Ref: OIR-FOI-2020-0120

Date – 21/12/2021

Dear Mr. Foxe,

I refer to your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2014 for:

copies of all records held by members of the Safety team, Facilities Management Unit and relevant senior management referring or relating to the decision process to provide antigen tests to staff members and/or members of the Oireachtas. This request to cover the period 1 October 2021 to date of receipt of the request.

which was received by the Houses of the Oireachtas Service on 29/11/2021.

Fourteen records exist. In accordance with the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2014, I have decided to grant access to twelve of the records requested. I have refused two records under section 42(k) of the Freedom of Information Act 2014.

Section 42(k) of the FOI Act provides that the Act does not apply to:

a record relating to any of the private papers (within the meaning of Article 15.10 of the Constitution) of a member of either House of the Oireachtas or an official document of either or both of such Houses that is required by the rules or standing orders of either or both of such Houses to be treated as confidential.

Article 15.10 of the Constitution provides as follows:

Each House shall make its own rules and standing orders, with power to attach penalties for their infringement, and shall have power to ensure freedom of debate, to protect its official documents and the private papers of its members, and to protect itself and its members against any person or persons interfering with, molesting or attempting to corrupt its members in the exercise of their duties.

The Standing Orders of Dáil Éireann describes private papers of a member as:



"...all documents concerning which the member has a reasonable expectation of privacy, and:

(a) which are prepared for the purposes of, or purposes incidental to:

(i) transacting any business of the Dáil or any Committee of the Dáil; or

(ii) the member's role as public representative; but

(b) which are not:

(i) where the member is an office-holder, documents relating to the member's functions as office-holder (whether those documents are held by the member, by the office-holder's Department or Office, by any of his or her special advisers, or by some other person); or

(ii) lawfully in the public domain."

I find that those records that I have refused relate to private papers of a member of the Houses of the Oireachtas.

I trust this is to your satisfaction. However, you may seek an internal review of this decision by a more senior member of the staff of the Service. To do so, you should write to:

*FOI and Records Management Unit,
Library & Research Service,
Houses of the Oireachtas Service,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2,*

referring to this decision.

You should make your appeal within 4 weeks from the date of this notification, where a day is defined as a working day excluding, the weekend and public holidays. However, the making of a late appeal may be permitted in appropriate circumstances. The appeal will involve a complete reconsideration of the matter by a more senior member of the staff of this body.



Seirbhís Thithe
an Oireachtais
Houses of the
Oireachtas Service

Teach Laighean
Sráid Chill Dara
Baile Átha Cliath 2, Éire
T: 01 618 3000

Leinster House
Kildare Street
Dublin 2, Ireland
www.oireachtas.ie

Should you have any further queries regarding these records you should contact Verona Ni Bhroinn, Press and PRO on [REDACTED] or by email at [REDACTED]

Details regarding fees for internal review are below. If you have any queries in relation to these fees, please do not hesitate to contact the FOI Officer, Ms Leah Hensey at 01 [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]
Liam Doherty
Assistant Principal



Seirbhís Thithe
an Oireachtais
Houses of the
Oireachtas Service

Teach Laighean
Sráid Chill Dara
Baile Átha Cliath 2, Éire
T: 01 618 3000

Leinster House
Kildare Street
Dublin 2, Ireland
www.oireachtas.ie

Fees for internal review

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2014, a standard fee of **€30** must accompany an application for internal review under chapters 1 & 2 of the Act. A reduced fee of **€10** applies if you are covered by a medical card, in which case you should supply details of the medical card registration number and your consent to verification of these details. The fee can be paid by cheque or postal order payable to the “Houses of the Oireachtas Service”.

- The following internal review applications are exempt from fees:
 - (a) an application in relation to a decision concerning records containing only personal information related to the applicant.
 - (b) an application in relation a decision under section 9 (right of amendment of records relating to personal information).
 - (c) an application in relation to a decision under section 10 (right of person to information regarding acts of public bodies affecting the person).
 - (d) an application in relation to a decision to charge a fee or deposit, or a fee or deposit of a particular amount.

If you have any queries in relation to fees for internal review, please do not hesitate to contact the FOI Officer, Ms Leah Hensey at [REDACTED].