
Director General for Regulation

Professor Sheila M. Bird
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(By email)

31 March 2021

Dear Sheila

Transparency around asymptomatic testing in secondary schools

Thank you very much for your correspondence to the Chair of the UK Statistics Authority outlining your concerns about the lack of transparency around asymptomatic testing in secondary schools in England.

We are taking this matter very seriously. We have reviewed the published evidence, guidance and statistics supporting the previous policy to not require a Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test following a Lateral Flow Device (LFD) test in schools. We consider that the transparency and clarity of communication of the evidence could have been better. We note that the Department for Health and Social Care announced yesterday that confirmatory PCR testing for LFD tests would be reintroduced.

We are pleased to hear that the Department for Health and Social Care has responded directly to some of your specific queries and that it is currently preparing further data for publication on asymptomatic testing in schools. It is important that where decisions about COVID-19 are supported by statistics or management information, the underlying data should be made available. In their reply to you, the Department referred to various evidence sources, and we have asked them to make this evidence more accessible publicly.

You have raised concerns about the detail provided in the published statistics on Rapid Asymptomatic Testing. We appreciate that the Department for Health and Social Care has been working hard to produce these statistics at pace and in a changing policy landscape. We are currently performing a rapid review of these statistics against the Code of Practice for Statistics. This will consider their strengths and limitations and make recommendations for improvement.

Yours sincerely



Ed Humpherson
Director General for Regulation