



DAVID T C DAVIES MP
Member for Monmouth

Please reply to:
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Date: 10 August 2021
Our Ref: DD5964
Your Ref:

Dr Andrea Coscelli CBE
Chief Executive
Competition and Markets Authority
The Cabot
25 Cabot Square
London
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Dear Dr Coscelli

I was delighted to hear the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) is to investigate fees for PCR Covid tests after Health Secretary Sajid Javid raised possible "exploitative behaviour" and "unfair practices" by 420 firms.

I fully agree a "rapid high-level" review is needed to protect holidaymakers who have complained of wildly differing prices and poor service from many firms. As part of this review, I would urge the CMA to look **very carefully indeed** at the cost of PCR testing in Wales.

Under Welsh Government policy, Welsh residents must use specific NHS PCR tests - booked through the Corporate Travel Management (CTM) web portal - on their return to Wales. There is a fine of £2,000 for arriving in Wales without proof of booked tests and a fine of £1,000 for using a private test provider instead. The Welsh system also applies to travellers flying into and from an airport in another part of the UK before returning to Wales. All travellers aged five and above must book a testing package.

Costs for NHS PCR tests in Wales are:

- amber country arrivals if you are fully vaccinated; one test that costs £88
- amber country arrivals if you are not fully vaccinated; two tests that cost £170
- green country arrivals; one test that costs £88

But in England, people can shop around and pay less than £50 per test.

The Welsh Government's argument for using NHS Wales Test, Trace, Protect tests rather than private tests is because they are processed through the UK Lighthouse



laboratories network and results are sent directly into NHS Wales' systems. This theoretically makes contact tracing quicker and easier. However, it strikes me as being nothing more than a monopoly. When quizzed in the Senedd, First Minister Mark Drakeford said he had no plans to change the policy.

I have received numerous complaints about the level of service from CTM, including problems with incomplete test kits and delays of four days for results. The question understandably being asked by aggrieved constituents is why there is such a big difference in cost compared to private test providers – and why the Welsh Government is refusing to offer multiple options and prices similar to England.

UK citizens living in Wales have no choice other than to solely use CTM and are being “ripped-off” as a result. I certainly feel the Welsh Government needs to be questioned on how the contract with CTM was negotiated.

With the vaccination programme going from strength to strength, if people want to go abroad – and they feel it is right for them to do so – then the Welsh Government should ensure an affordable, accurate and equitable testing process is in place.

Yours sincerely

David T. C. Davies

David T C Davies MP

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