

LibDems say hundreds waited a week for Test and Protect interview

LibDem leader Rennie uncovers 300 people waited a week for Test & Protect interview after positive test

Scottish Liberal Democrat leader Willie Rennie today said The Scottish Government “must ramp up the testing and tracing capacity to meet the challenge of the new strain of the virus” after uncovering that in the second wave of the virus Test and Protect regularly took up to a week and longer to interview people after logging their positive test result.

Figures acquired by the Scottish Liberal Democrats through freedom of information show that between 3 August and 15 November:

- 1,272 people waited 72-96 hours (4 days) between Test and Protect logging a case in their Contact Management System and the individual who tested positive being interviewed about their contacts and whereabouts;
- 566 people waited 5 days;
- 221 people waited 6 days;
- 134 people waited 7 days;
- And 168 people waited over a week, including 39 in the week ending 18 October. Public Health Scotland could not disclose what the longest anyone waited for a Test and Protect interview was.

Edinburgh30 July 2020 Pictured: Willie Rennie MSP – Leader of the Scottish Liberal Democrat Party. Nicola Sturgeon MSP – First Minister of Scotland and Leader of the Scottish National Party (SNP) giving a ministerial statement: COVID 19 Next Steps. Credit: Colin Fisher/Alamy Live news/SP Pool.

Willie Rennie commented: “People have made huge sacrifices this year to save lives and buy time. But these figures show that the Scottish Government must ramp up the testing and tracing capacity to meet the challenge of the new strain of the virus.”For the first time we know that hundreds of people waited up to a week for an interview after Test and Protect was told about their positive result. The wait was over a week for a further 168 people to tell where they had been and who they had been in contact with.”Every minute counts when tracking down this virus. Ministers gave the impression that their system was superior, had all the staff it needed and could withstand whatever the virus threw at it. The First Minister repeatedly told me that Test and Protect was working well.”In reality, we didn’t have enough tracers to be able to go and hunt down the virus during the summer lull, or enough tracers to follow up leads when it took off again the autumn. The operation needed to be much bigger from the get go.

“Week after week I asked about preparing Test and Protect, the quarantine traveller spot check target that was missed for four months, and mass testing students to ensure their safe arrival at university. We know these events furthered the spread of the virus, contributing to the difficult position we are all in this Christmas.

“The Scottish Government’s New Year’s resolution must be to ensure that Test and Protect always has enough staff and expertise ready to deal with the massive challenge from this new strain of the virus.”