

Media Release

Date: 29 March 2022

Scheduling and testing teams recognised ahead of PEH tent coming down

The Covid testing tent at the PEH is being taken down this week, culminating two years of mass PCR testing.

Senior HSC representatives joined several members of the scheduling and testing teams in the tent on Tuesday (29 March) to recognise their collective efforts in delivering more than 200,000 PCR tests since the beginning of the pandemic.

The teams were created at pace in early 2020, enlisting people from a wide range of backgrounds. From the initial swabbing process taking up to 45 minutes per person to complete, the efficiency and capacity of the service rapidly increased to the point that the drive through facility at the PEH was completing one car every minute. The tent saw around 1,000 people per day during the peaks of the pandemic, with the busiest week seeing more than 8,000 swabs being taken. More than 100,000 people have been swabbed through the PEH in total.

President of Health and Social Care Deputy Al Brouard said: 'We are indebted to the incredible efforts of the scheduling team and testing team who have delivered essential work to coordinate and complete thousands of tests to support our Covid response. The teams have worked hard since their creation, dealing with many challenging situations to help keep the Bailiwick safe during this pandemic.'

The scheduling team booked all of the Covid tests through the drive through testing centres and home visits. The clinical team undertook the tests in full PPE, ensuring safe and effective testing took place, whether it was in the tents or out and about in the community.

The first on-island swab was taken in the Emergency Department at the PEH in February 2020. Soon afterwards, swabbing temporarily took place in Victoria Ward while

preparations were undertaken to set up a swabbing centre at The Haven in the Oberland's. But this centre was only used for a matter of weeks before demand outstripped capacity. In early March the service was moved to the Guernsey Border Agency facilities at the harbour with the testing team working long hours in bitterly cold conditions.

By the start of the first lockdown on 25 March 2020 the swabbing service was becoming increasingly streamlined, with the scheduling process assisted by JESSC and the whole operation supported by a number of other States teams. Following the successful procurement and commissioning of testing equipment at the PEH, on-island testing was introduced on 28 March, with the team from Pathology processing the swabs. Initially, up to 200 tests were processed per day with this increasing to daily peaks of 1,500 due to the surge in demand.

At the beginning of May preparations were made to relocate the swabbing operation from the harbour to the PEH, with the clinic fully established there in July. The team worked closely with Public Health and Pathology, and was strongly supported by the hospital porters and the domestic and housekeeping teams to deliver the service.

Following the sudden introduction of the second lockdown in January 2021, the team expanded to opening a second testing facility at the Gateway Club on the PEH site as well increasing the size of the tent to allow more cars in at a time.

In addition to the testing, the team provided teaching and support to all nursing teams, care home staff and other community-based services to help protect the most vulnerable members of the community. This included working with the teams in Herm and Sark.

Covid Scheduling and Testing Team Manager, Cherie Norman, said: 'We are exceptionally grateful to all the services that we have worked alongside and those that have supported us to make this all happen over the last two years.

'The team have experienced things never expected in their career and I feel exceptionally proud to have seen them step up every day during this pandemic to deliver such a successful testing strategy.

'We wish to thank the community for all its support.'