

3. COVID-19 Contact Tracing Centres (CTCs) Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)



What is contact tracing?

Contact tracing is when health services identify who has been in close contact with someone who has an infection to see who may be at risk of catching it. In the case of coronavirus, it is about:

- Identifying who someone diagnosed with COVID-19 has been in contact with;
- Identifying the extent of that contact;
- Establishing if that person is at risk of catching the virus themselves, and providing them with advice;
- Engaging in active follow up and referring close contacts for testing.

What is a contact tracing centre?

A contact tracing centre (CTC) is the place where people (who are trained) contact people with COVID-19 and subsequently, their close contacts to provide advice to help stop further spread of the virus. A web based IT system is used to track and manage the calls.

Where are the contact tracing centres located?

There are a number of CTCs established across the country, at Universities, Government Offices and Statutory Agencies, including:

- Curragh Army Camp
- Health Information and Quality (HIQA) Dublin/Cork)
- Revenue Commissioners (Dublin / Limerick)
- Trinity College Dublin (TCD)
- Dublin City University (DCU)
- University College Dublin (UCD)
- University College Cork (UCC)
- National University of Ireland (NUI) Galway, Galway Mayo Institute of Technology and Merlin Park University Hospital

The HSE is also testing / implementing a virtual approach, with two virtual contact tracing groups working remotely. These are a group of people working on contact tracing remotely, linking in with a coordinator who manages rotas and provides oversight and support.

What do the contact tracing centres do?

A member of the call team working at the CTC telephones the person who is a confirmed/presumed case of COVID-19 to inform the person about contact tracing, and subsequently find out who they have been in contact with and therefore, may have been exposed to the virus. They also contact people who have been in close contact with a confirmed case of coronavirus to provide advice and guidance and to refer them for testing.

Who is working in contact tracing centres and how many are there?

There are over 1,500 people trained to work in CTCs. The CTC callers come from a variety of backgrounds. Some work in public health, some are army cadets, based in the Curragh, others work in public sector bodies like HIQA and the Revenue Commissioners, some are from universities and others work for the HSE.

What times do contact tracing centres operate?

The CTCs all operate at different times, but contact tracers are making calls to contacts seven days a week between 8am and 9pm.

How are people working in contact tracing centres keeping themselves safe from COVID-19?

People working in CTCs are implementing physical distancing while they are undertaking their work. They also have access to hand sanitizer and anti-bacterial wipes to ensure that their work station is clean.

3. COVID-19 Contact Tracing Centres (CTCs) Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)



How do people in the contact tracing centres know who to contact?

If a person has tested positive for coronavirus, their information is input into a computer system, called the COVID-19 Tracker. The callers have access to a password protected module within the COVID-19 Tracker system used for the Contact Management Programme. Using the IT system, the caller contacts the person with confirmed/presumed to have coronavirus to inform them of their test result and to find out who they have been in contact with (from 48 hours before the start of their symptoms). The information about the person's contacts is added into the COVID-19 Tracker for other callers to contact.

It is essential to maintain people's confidentiality while undertaking this work, so each person is allocated a COVID-19 Tracker ID on the system. Callers do not disclose the identity of the person confirmed/presumed to have COVID-19 to anyone contacted during this process.

What kind of questions will the contact tracer ask?

The CTC caller will confirm the person's name, ask for their address, ask about symptoms, and the name and phone numbers of people they have been in contact with if relevant.

How are the callers trained?

A HSE developed national training programme for everyone involved in the Contact Management Programme has been developed. All callers receive an induction and undertake training to ensure that they are ready to make calls in the CTC, and that they are able to use the COVID-19 Tracker system. They receive support and feedback from CTC support team leads and have access to super users and public health advice, if required. All training materials are accessible to the caller at any time to support them in their day-to-day work.

How do people know that someone from a contact tracing centre has tried to contact them?

The caller contacts the number they have been provided with. This will show up on the person's phone as a private number, or the display may say "no caller ID". If the person doesn't answer their phone, and the voicemail is activated, the caller will leave a message to let the person know that they have tried to contact the person and they will call the person again (a number of times).

Can people contact the contact tracing centre directly?

No, people can't contact the CTC directly or return missed calls. Be assured the callers will make more than one attempt to reach the person. The callers will call people again if required. There is also a lot of information on coronavirus and contact tracing on www.hse.ie and www.hpsc.ie for people to access if required.

Can someone else be nominated to take the call on the person's behalf?

If the person requires additional support on the call (e.g. English isn't their first language, they require support to understand the information that they are being given or they are unwell at the time), and they would like someone to take the call on their behalf, then they can nominate someone to do this for them. You can mention this if you are being tested and give the name and number of your nominated contact for inclusion on the system.

Are translation services available?

Translation services are available if people require the information in a different language.

Are there opportunities to help in the contact tracing centres or other areas of COVID-19 work?

There is a nationwide recruitment campaign "Be on Call for Ireland" to support the work of the HSE during the outbreak of coronavirus. To find out more information go to <https://hbsrecruitmentservices.ie/>.