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The Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
Department of Health and Social Care
39 Victoria Street London
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Dear Secretary of State

We welcome your warm words at the despatch box during the adjournment debate on the HIV Commission report and that you hope to publish the HIV action plan early next year. It was also welcomed when you said, “we should take and the default assumption of test, test, test—that sounds familiar, and we know that it works—as well, of course, as the expansion of testing.”

Despite the devastation caused by Covid-19, uptake for testing remains high. Tens of thousands of tests are processed each day. People aren't shying away from getting a Covid-19 test, in fact, there is an outcry for more. There is a sense of civic duty attached to our health, the likes of which I've never seen before.

In contrast to attitudes towards Covid, many people continue to be scared about getting a HIV test. There are 6,700 people who are living with HIV who are undiagnosed. This not only impacts the health of the person who is living with HIV, it means they could unknowingly pass on the virus.

The public is now attuned to the fact there are lots of ways to test for Covid-19, such as a walk-in centre or at home. The same is true for testing HIV. Gone are the days of having to sit in the basement of a hospital and wait weeks for your result. You can now test at home and get a result in just 15 minutes

The expected mass Covid vaccine programme in 2021 will mean people who have not engaged with the NHS in years will be face-to-face with it. This could provide a once-in-a-generation chance to engage people in a conversation about their wider health, including HIV status.

Is this suggestion something that your Department has looked into to see if it is feasible. This might mean that the efforts to cure the Covid-19 virus might not just help to beat one pandemic but two.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours Sincerely

Baroness Barker
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