

Thursday 5 May 2022

Whilst the delivery of the Vaccination Programme has been effective overall, at times the Test and Trace Programme has not kept pace with the pandemic

Comptroller and Auditor General issues latest report

Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG), Lynn Pamment, has today, 5 May 2022 published a report on the ***COVID-19 Test and Trace and Vaccination Programmes***.

Both the Test and Trace and the Vaccination Programmes have been key tools as part of the Government of Jersey's COVID-19 pandemic strategy. The report focusses on the set up, governance, funding and operation of the Test and Trace and the Vaccination Programmes.

Lynn Pamment found that the Government acted at pace and in a reasonably controlled and measured way to effectively introduce and scale up an Island-wide Test and Trace Programme commencing in May 2020. The scale of the testing programme in Jersey was significantly larger than in comparable jurisdictions. In some instances however, the business cases that supported the Test and Trace Programme lacked sufficient detail and justification.

The strategic objectives set at the start of the Test and Trace Programme were consistently carried through the Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, despite a lot of effort, both internal and external communication could have been improved, particularly when explaining the complexities of a long running pandemic in simple terms.

Lynn Pamment found that, during the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Test and Trace Programme has had to significantly change how it operates to keep up with the evolution of the pandemic. Despite significantly increasing the Island's testing capacity, at key times the combined test and trace service could not meet demand. This was particularly the case in the third wave (Delta variant) during the summer of 2021 and in the fourth wave (Omicron variant) in the late autumn of 2021.

The C&AG found that the Test and Trace Programme did successfully produce health surveillance data to help track the progress of infections on the Island. In addition, the Test and Trace Programme did, to some extent, control the spread of COVID-19 infections on the Island. It is not possible however to conclude by what amount the rate of increase was minimised and whether that minimisation of infections represented value for money.

Lynn Pamment also found that, as a consequence of the delay in opening the in-house testing laboratory, the Government of Jersey incurred additional costs estimated to be in excess of £5 million.

In respect of the Vaccination Programme, the C&AG found that the objectives and purpose of the Programme were clearly stated in key strategic and project management documents, that there were clear lines of governance and good project management and control. Lynn Pamment also concluded that the Vaccination Programme communication was generally good.

The C&AG found that the provision of vaccines free of charge by the UK Government resulted in significant savings in the estimated cost of delivery of the first two doses. This enabled the cost of the first phase of the booster (the third dose) to be met from the initial funding allocation for the first two doses. The cost benefit to the Government of the free vaccine provision from the UK Government is considered to be in excess of £3.5 million in 2021.

Analysis by the Jersey Audit Office concluded that the cost of administering each vaccine during 2021 was similar to the cost seen in Scotland and lower than the cost seen in England. The C&AG also found that Jersey has performed well in comparison to other jurisdictions in terms of the percentage of the population that has been vaccinated.

Lynn Pamment said:

"The Government of Jersey moved at pace to establish a large scale Island-wide Test and Trace Programme in the spring of 2020. The programme established was extensive. Over the course 2021 however there have been times when the programme has not kept pace with the pandemic.

The Government of Jersey performed well to deliver an effective Vaccination Programme under very tight time constraints. The delivery of the Vaccination Programme in Jersey has, in overall terms, been effective."

The report *COVID-19 Test and Trace and Vaccination Programmes* can be found at: <https://www.jerseyauditoffice.je>

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For further information, please contact:

Rozena Pedley

M: 00 44 7797 733553 / T: 00 44 1534 629800

E: rozena.pedley@jerseyauditoffice.je

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- The remit of the C&AG includes the audit of financial statements, corporate governance, internal control and wider consideration of public funds, often expressed as 'value for money'
- The 2022 Audit Plan can be found at: www.jerseyauditoffice.je
- Lynn Pamment took up the Office of C&AG on 1 January 2020 for a fixed term of seven years. Following the introduction of the Comptroller and Auditor General (Jersey) Law 2014 the term of office is fixed at seven years and is non-renewable.
- The Office of Comptroller and Auditor General is known as the 'Jersey Audit Office'.
- Contact details are: de Carteret House, 7 Castle Street, St Helier, Jersey JE2 3BT / T:716800 / E: enquiries@jerseyauditoffice.je

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