

Private & Confidential

22nd December, 2020

Deputy Pa Daly, TD,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare St, Dublin 2

PQ Number: 43069/20

Dear Deputy Daly,

The Health Service Executive (HSE) – South (Cork & Kerry) has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the following Parliamentary Question, which was submitted to this office for response.

PQ: To ask the Minister for Health the way in which nursing shifts, lunch breaks and toilet breaks have been affected at University Hospital Kerry due to the Covid-19 pandemic; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Pa Daly

Since the start of the pandemic in March 2020 UHK management have endeavored to ensure all rosters (inclusive of nursing) across the hospital have been comprehensively covered. This has been at times extremely challenging due to staff cocooning, close contacts, casual contacts and staff self-isolating frequently at very short notice. The amount of nursing staff on Covid-19 leave on any given day is discussed and risk assessed at the nursing operational handover meeting each morning and the ADON's/CNM3's for the relevant area manage their staff across their directorate and redeploy staff as necessary according to where the need is greatest. Staffing resources are reassessed on an on-going basis throughout the day.

Rest Periods in UHK, are informed by the statutory provisions of the Organisation of Working Time Act 1997.

- Employee entitled to a break of at least 15 min after working 4.5 hours.
- Employee entitled to a break of at least 30 min after working 6 hours (including the 15 min break).

It has not been brought to the direct attention of the Nursing HR /Allocations office of any staff missing lunch breaks or toilet breaks as a direct result of the Covid-19 pandemic. In the event of an emergency/exceptional situation arising in a clinical area where a staff member does not get their lunch break every effort would be made for the staff member to take the time back as soon as is feasible either later that day or by finishing their shift earlier or logging the time as time owed.

I trust this response is to your satisfaction; should you have any further queries however, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Fearghal Grimes
General Manager
University Hospital Kerry