



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

21<sup>st</sup> December 2020

Deputy Sean Sherlock  
Dáil Éireann  
Leinster House  
Dublin 2.

Rannan na nOspideil Ghearmhíochaine  
Aonad 4A – Áras Dargan  
An Ceantar Theas  
An Bothar Mileata  
Cill Mhaighneann  
BÁC 8

Acute Operations  
Health Service Executive  
Unit 4A - The Dargan Building  
Heuston South Quarter  
Military Road  
Kilmainham  
Dublin 8.

**PQ 44035/20\*** *To ask the Minister for Health the HSE therapy services that have been noted and scheduled for delay; and the counties in which delays for such services are scheduled in the case of a rise in the R number. **Supplementary clarification:** It is a general question on all therapies. If it is the case that the R number will not impact therapies that is accepted as an answer. Deputy Sean Sherlock*

Dear Deputy Sherlock,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

**Response:**

In response to your query and specifically in relation to Acute Hospital services, in early 2020 there was a significant reduction in all scheduled care activity across all Acute Services including outpatient clinics, inpatient and day case procedures. This is in line with the National Action Plan on COVID-19 (page 20). <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/47b727-government-publishes-national-action-plan-on-covid-19/>

The reduction in activity was to ensure patient safety and that all appropriate resources, both physical and human, are made available for COVID-19 related activity. Time-critical essential work continued throughout the system in line with the National Action Plan, Clinical Programme and World Health Organisation recommendations.

Arising from the NPHE decision in early May regarding resumption of services and aligned with the roadmap for reopening society and business, Phase 1 <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/ad5dd0-easing-the-covid-19-restrictions-on-may-18-phase-1/#health-and-social-care>, interim guidance has been developed in the

context of scheduled care for the resumption of services. This guidance, approved by the Expert Advisory Group (EAG) was issued to all hospital groups/hospitals to support the resumption of patient treatment.

There has been a continued increase in overall Scheduled Care activity since May 2020. Working within the guidance, ensuring patient and staff safety adds additional constraints on services and it has a rate limiting effect, as such activity is not up to the same levels as it was in 2019. The HSE continue to work with the Clinical Programmes and the Hospital Groups to ensure patient and staff safety and deliver on patient care.

Changes the “r” number do not result in an automatic alteration or reduction on service delivery, services will continue as planned within the guidance that has been issued to Acute Services. This said, as the “r” number increases there is a higher risk that patients or staff (along with the general public) could contract COVID 19. This potentially will directly impact service delivery as patients may not be in a position to attend for planned activity due to being a close contact, testing positive for COVID 19 or general COVID concerns and services in some hospitals may be reduced or in some cases suspended due to COVID outbreaks directly on sites where staff or patients are being identified as a close contact, testing positive for COVID 19.

Significant funding has been identified through the 2021 estimates process to support access to care. The HSE is working with Hospital Groups to ensure that available additional funding in 2021 is targeted at access to care for patients where care delivery has been affected by the Pandemic.

We have forwarded your PQ to Community Operations to respond from a Community perspective and this response should be with you in due course.

I trust that this answers your question.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert Kidd', written in a cursive style.

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**Robert Kidd**  
**Assistant National Director, Acute Operations**