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Oifig Ceann na n-Oibríochtaí, Cúraim Phríomhúil, Oibríochtaí Pobail  
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16<sup>th</sup> November 2020

Deputy Neale Richmond  
Dáil Eireann,  
Leinster House,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2.

**PQ 33427/20 -To ask the Minister for Health the measures in place and being considered to ensure that arthritis sufferers can access rheumatology services such as physiotherapy, occupational therapy, appointments and treatments during level 5 restrictions and beyond; and if he will make a statement on the matter.**

**-Neale Richmond**

Dear Deputy Richmond,

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

The HSE have developed a formal programme of work under the governance of the Chief Clinical Officer and Chief Operations Officer namely the Continuity of System Wide Healthcare Services Steering Group. The focus is to plan the recommencement of the delivery of Non-COVID Services to address ongoing clinical demands while maintaining capacity for COVID-19 rapid response.

All service areas are considered as part of this planning process however at this point we would not be in a position to be definitive about the actual date of when these services are expected to return to pre-Covid-19 levels. This programme of work is a priority for the Health Service Executive and every effort will be made to restore Non-COVID services as soon as possible in a safe and effective way.

Service resumption is within the context of; “A safe return to health services – restoring services in a Covid Environment” and public health guidance as it evolves through implementation of the Governments “Resilience and Recovery 2020 – 2021: Plan for Living with Covid-19”.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Siobhán McArdle', written in a cursive style.

Pp

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Siobhán McArdle,  
Head of Operations Primary Care,  
Community Operations