



Deputy Pádraig O'Sullivan
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

1st Decemeber 2020

PQ 36551/20

“To ask the Minister for Health when full public health services will be restored (details supplied) allowing for baby development checks to be carried out on time; and if he will make a statement on the matter. - Pádraig O'Sullivan

Details Supplied: The Public Health Nurse Service is a Community based service aimed at promoting and protecting the health of the population. I am writing to you in relation to baby developmental checks. I had a baby during the first lockdown back in March. I was discharged from hospital on 31st March. We were visited at home by a Public Health Nurse from my local Health Centre on 3rd and 7th April to check the baby. The baby had his two and six week checks with my GP as normal. However, my baby hasn't had any developmental checks since. I received a letter at the end of June to say that his 3 months check was cancelled. The 6 months check never happened in September. I rang the Health Centre from the 5th to the 9th of October to discuss the issue. I was told that my baby wouldn't be having a developmental check until he was 9 months or perhaps 12 months if at all. This would all be COVID dependent. I feel that this isn't good enough, my baby will be almost a year old by the time any aspect of his development will be assessed. I am a primary school teacher myself and understand how crucial early identification and intervention of developmental issues are. The public health staff were redeployed in the fight against Covid. At no point during this crisis have the hospitals been overrun, so why have the public health services been allowed to collapse. I would appreciate it if you could look into this matter please as it will have many implications for children over the coming years as their welfare is being neglected at present. Many more intense interventions and therapies will be required to fix problems that would be easier to fix in a younger child. Thank you.”

Dear Deputy O'Sullivan

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 Health for response.

The HSE is not be in a position to comment on individual cases at this time. Regarding developmental checks in general, due to Covid-19 all non essential clinical work was suspended in mid-March 2020 including all routine child developmental checks. A level of service continued to be provided for those referrals considered to be a priority.

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.

A date for the full resumption of routine services has not been set but the preparatory work in terms of infrastructure readiness to ensure a clean and safe environment is underway. Every effort will be made to restore all Non-COVID services as soon as possible in 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



TJ Dunford

Interim Head of Primary Care Operations/AND.
Community Operations.