



17th November 2020

Deputy Róisín Shortall,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

PQ 36991/20 - To ask the Minister for Health the number of occupational therapists, speech and language therapists and psychologists that have been reassigned to the Covid-19 testing and tracing response by CHO in tabular form; the impact this has had on waiting lists for children waiting for assessments with occupational therapists, speech and language therapists and autism assessments; the timeline his Department is working toward to return all redeployed HSE staff to their original posts; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

- Róisín Shortall

Dear Deputy Shortall,

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 below table represents the total number of Occupational Therapists and Speech & Language Therapists who were reassigned to support Covid-19 testing and tracing, these figures are based on the Sept census of deployment:

Staff Type	Contact Tracing	Testing
Number of Occupational Therapists	8	106
Number of Speech & Language Therapists	16	187

Due to current considerable pressure on health service staff and the need to prioritise service delivery, the September census is the most recent that has been undertaken. Another census is planned to take place prior to year end following on going work on the recruitment of testing and tracing staff, the commencement of delivery of the Winter Plan and the finalisation of the 2021 National Service plan.

The redeployment of staff has mainly impacted on Primary Care and in particular therapy / clinical staff and there has been a corresponding loss of productivity in core services, this has led to an increase in the number of patients on a waiting list for therapy services.

The key document in terms of returning staff to their substantive posts is titled "Service Continuity in a Covid Environment. A Strategic Framework for Delivery".

This framework document was prepared in June 2020 and provides the framework for staff to return to their substantive posts from Covid related work.

A link to the document is provided below:

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/news/newsfeatures/covid19-updates/service-continuity-in-a-covid-environment-a-strategic-framework-for-delivery1.pdf>

Implementing the road map for staff to return to their substantive posts is a priority for Community Services that is being balanced with the dynamic and fluid requirements for Community Testing. HR Community Operations have given a commitment to the Trade Unions to agree a plan for this framework as soon as practicable.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maurice Farnan". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Maurice Farnan
A/A.N.D. Community Operations